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Rising Scholars Mentored through Summer Seminar

A select group of graduate and advanced undergraduate students participated in a seminar on Mormon thought at BYU this past May and June. The participants' papers presented at a public symposium on June 25 will be published in the near future.

Under the auspices of the Maxwell Institute, the seminar was conducted by Terryl Givens, Professor of Literature and Religion at the University of Richmond, and Matthew Grow, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Southern Indiana. Richard Bushman, Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies in the School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University oversaw the seminar.

The purpose of the seminar was to investigate the influence of Parley and Orson Pratt on the 19th-century Mormon thought. The Pratts were two of the most important figures in developing, systematizing, and promulgating the doctrines of early Mormonism. The eight graduate students in the seminar explored the theological, intellectual, and cultural contexts behind the Pratts' work and weighed its influence on Mormonism today. The seminar continued the tradition of the series of seminars on Joseph Smith begun by Bushman in the summer of 1997.

The fellows selected in this year's competition came from universities in the United States, Brazil, and Scotland. The Maxwell Institute mentors young scholars who are advancing in fields related to the

work and mission of the Institute. The summer seminar gives the next generation of scholars the benefit of mentoring by leading Mormon scholars who publish in the field of Mormon studies, such as Givens, Grow, and Bushman.

Recent events such as Mitt Romney's campaign for president of the United States and the PBS special "The Mormons," as well as the publication of Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, have focused national and international attention on Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Preceding the publication of *Rough Stone Rolling*, and contributing to it, were six summer seminars funded privately by a small group of individuals sympathetic to scholarly ventures. The seminars involved 40 advanced undergraduate and graduate students who, under Bushman's direction, built the *Archive of Restoration Culture* (*BYU Studies* 45/4 contains an article by Bushman describing the Archive project).

To support such programs, the Mormon Scholars Foundation was established in 2007. The Foundation, directed by Bushman, Givens, and Andrew Skinner (Professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU and former executive director of the Maxwell Institute), organizes and funds conferences and seminars in collaboration with other organizations such as the Maxwell Institute. Past topics for the summer seminars have included "Joseph Smith and His Critics," in 2008, and "Mormon Thinkers, 1890–1930," in 2007. Information about future summer seminars will be made available through the Maxwell Institute. ♦



From Elder Neal A. Maxwell

We need to make allowance for the role of irony in our individual lives and as a people. For instance, those chosen for service by the Lord would appear to be improbable selections. The same God who had his Only Begotten Son born in a manger and reared in despised Nazareth as the least appreciated but most beneficial individual in human history, also improbably

chose Moses, who was not eloquent but "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," to lead one of the greatest migrations in history. God also chose shepherds and fishermen, sent a mere boy to face Goliath, chose Paul (a persecutor of Christians) as an apostle, and selected an obscure boy to receive the remarkable divine manifestations at Palmyra. (*A Time to Choose* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975], 43–44, as quoted in *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 172.)