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FARMS Review Stresses Biblical Studies, Remembrance, and Church History

Issue 19/2 of the *FARMS Review*, which is now available, follows a long tradition of dealing with a wide variety of fascinating topics. Of particular interest in this issue is a series of articles on preserving and enlarging the memory of the Saints. As Louis Midgley notes in his introduction to this section, “In the April 2007 General Conference, Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy delivered a powerful sermon entitled ‘Remember and Perish Not,’ in which he urged the Saints to pay close attention to the ways of remembrance in our scriptures” (p. 23). At the next conference, President Henry B. Eyring took up a similar theme when he gave an address entitled “O Remember, Remember.”

Complementing these conference talks, this number of the *Review* brings together four essays on the ways of remembrance: “The Theology of Memory: Mormon Historical Consciousness,” by Steven L. Olsen; “Remembrance and the Past,” by Gary Novak and Louis Midgley; “Acquiring and Preserving Written Records: A Sacred Commission,” by John Murphy; and “Remembrance,” by James E. Faulconer.

“It is not surprising,” writes Olsen, “that the memory of spiritual experiences is complex, elusive, even ineffable. Nevertheless, for the Latter-day Saints, the spiritual experiences that define their individual and collective lives are hardly ever exclusively intrapersonal. Hence, church members are counseled to share them with one another, where appropriate, in oral and written forms—in testimony meetings, in gospel discussions, in journals, and in family histories” (p. 34). Faulconer adds that “it is important to learn to see the spiritual in the mundane, to find spirituality even when not emotionally wrought, to recognize that the Spirit usually brings peace (John 14:27) and speaks quietly. . . . Most Saints have experienced moments of spirituality to which their souls are anchored. Those who have not will—sometimes in answer to prayer, sometimes unbidden. My prayer is that, when we face doubt or difficulty, we will re-collect our souls by recollecting those anchoring experiences” (pp. 83, 87).

In the area of biblical studies, articles in this issue of the *Review* cover everything from baptism for the dead to the apocrypha. In his review of *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection*, John A. Tvedtnes notes that the author, Michael F. Hull, rejects the notion that at least some early Christians in Corinth performed proxy baptisms for the dead, even though many scholars acknowledge the practice. Hull goes on to argue that “any reading of [1 Corinthians 15:29] in terms of vicarious baptism is bound to evoke serious challenges” (p. 216). Tvedtnes counters that Hull has rejected the “plain sense of the verse” (p. 217). He then comments in detail on Hull’s analysis, pointing out that, although the latter makes no attempt to fully engage the Latter-day Saint practice of baptism for the dead, he nevertheless “provides an accurate explanation of the Mormon rationale for the practice” (p. 235). Tvedtnes concludes that Hull’s book and others like it “demonstrate the necessity of living prophets and additional scripture” (p. 237).

Kevin L. Barney, who reviews three different books on the New Testament in this issue, saves his highest praise for *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament: An Illustrated Reference for Latter-day Saints*, by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment. “At last,” rejoices Barney, “we have a one-volume general introduction to the study of the New Testament that is geared to Latter-day Saint students of scripture—a resource of high quality and impeccable scholarship that an average Saint might crack open and actually *read*. This is no small accomplishment. *World* fills a need that I have long felt existed, and I despaired that such a book would ever actually appear” (pp. 193–94).


Thomas Wayment, one of the authors of *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, is also a contributor to this issue of the *Review*, offering an essay on *The Pre-Nicene Testament: Fifty-four Formative Texts*, by Robert M. Price. “The entire volume contains virtually no citations to the vast body of secondary literature on the texts in question, but only textual notations concerning variant readings and random musings,” writes Wayment, “which begs the question of what purpose this volume is intended to achieve” (p. 209).

Tackling three of the more controversial topics in church history, John Gee, Allen L. Wyatt, and Craig L. Foster take on the Joseph Smith Papyri, plural marriage, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre, respectively. “Most of what we Egyptologists think we know about the Joseph Smith Papyri is demonstrably wrong,” announces Gee, “whether on the details of their history or on Mormon attitudes about them” (p. 259). Gee therefore suggests a few words of advice for those interested in working with the misunderstood papyri. “I do not think it is a good idea to attempt to hide one’s stance in areas of scholarly inquiry,” he continues, “because understanding the assumptions, presuppositions, and preunderstandings that lie behind one’s presentation of matters is crucial to understanding the arguments” (p. 246).

In his review of *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy, Its Origin, Practice, and Demise*, by B. Carmon Hardy, Wyatt comments that “it seems unfortunate that Hardy chooses, in his

words, to present, explore, and suggest information valuable to critics without presenting, exploring, or suggesting why those critics’ most long-held condemnations don’t seem reasonable when compared to the actual record” (p. 135).

Foster, in his exhaustive review of the movie *September Dawn* (and a book by the same name), makes his point quite succinctly: The producer and screenwriter of the film “set out to make a controversial movie attacking the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and used the Mountain Meadows Massacre as a backdrop. Unfortunately, contrary to their noble statements about honoring the victims of the massacre, the members of the fateful wagon train were nothing more than mere stage props and pawns in this poorly executed anti-Mormon melodrama” (p. 176).

To purchase this issue of the *FARMS Review*, or to view it online, visit the Maxwell Institute Web site at maxwellinstitute.byu.edu. 

New Director Appointed for the Maxwell Institute

In June Brigham Young University announced the appointment of M. Gerald Bradford as the new executive director of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Bradford, previously associate executive director of the Maxwell Institute, replaces Andrew C. Skinner, who has accepted an assignment at the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies and is returning to teaching and research.

“We express deep appreciation to Andrew Skinner for his service as Executive Director of the Maxwell Institute for the past three years. Jerry Bradford’s experience as an administrator and researcher have prepared him well to assume this role,” said BYU Academic Vice President John S. Tanner. “We’re confident that he will continue to inspire his colleagues to preserve and study critical texts and promote faithful Latter-day Saint scholarship of the highest order.”

Bradford joined FARMS in 1995 as director of research. Prior to that appointment, he was executive director of the Western Center of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences,

with offices on the campus of the University of California, Irvine. He also has taught courses in religious education and philosophy at BYU and religious studies courses at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Bradford earned his PhD in religious studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has a master’s degree in business administration and finance from San Francisco State University. He received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Utah. 