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New Director Appointed for the Maxwell Institute

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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. 