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Latest *FARMS Review* Offers Well-Rounded Fare

The latest incarnation of the *FARMS Review* (vol. 20, no. 2, 2008) sizes up recent books dealing with evolutionary science, plural marriage, Book of Mormon geography, and even the lost ark of the covenant. It also reviews the latest volume in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* and introduces a new feature called the Neal A. Maxwell Institute Lecture, which this time features two talks by General Authorities who were guest speakers at the Maxwell Institute's annual lectures in 2007 and 2008.

In his editor's introduction, "Debating Evangelicals," Louis Midgley draws on his long experience in discussing countercultists' reliance on creedal formulae and theology (issues often debated among themselves) and contemplating the questions of if and how Latter-day Saints should respond to critics of their faith.

In "On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar," BYU president Cecil O. Samuelson, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, honors Elder Maxwell's intellectual curiosity and life of Christian discipleship by recounting lessons learned firsthand as one of this remarkable leader's "people projects." Elder Bruce C. Hafen, also of the Seventy, takes up the related theme of resolving the seemingly tense relationship between reason and faith.

Theories surrounding the possible location of the ark of the covenant, as well as tidbits of scriptural history, are discussed in John A. Tvedtnes's review of Tudor Parfitt's *The Lost Ark of the Covenant: The Remarkable Quest for the Legendary Ark*, a work that begins with reliance on the Bible but develops a theory ironically at odds with it on many counts.

George D. Smith's recent treatment of plural marriage during the Nauvoo era is reviewed by Gregory L. Smith (no relation to author), who shows it to fall short of minimal scholarly standards with its blatant reliance on selective citation and misinterpretation of sources. Robert B. White quickly reaches the same conclusion in a humorous review almost as short as what he needed to read of *Nauvoo Polygamy* (dust jacket and first two pages) in order to form an accurate opinion of its demerits.

Mesoamericanist Brant A. Gardner evaluates Wayne N. May's *This Land* series, which champi-

ons a U.S. setting (mostly in Ohio) for the Book of Mormon narrative, and shows that it fails to meet very specific geographic requirements. May also embraces the "Michigan Relics" as real, though, as Gardner explains, they have long been shown to be an archaeological hoax. (It turns out that May's coauthor, Edwin G. Goble, author of the faulty geography, has since retracted his claims regarding both the faulty geography and the disputed artifacts.)

In regard to Trent D. Stephens and D. Jeffrey Meldrum's recent book *Evolution and Mormonism*, Duane Boyce discusses the untidy nature of scientific practice, specifically how scientific investigation can, contrary to its ideal aim, "exert a suppressive influence on the generation and acceptance of new hypotheses."

Two contributors take up the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a troubling event in Utah history that has seen renewed public discussion in recent years. Robert H. Briggs reviews the long-anticipated *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*, by Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard. This book avoids the polarizing, demonizing approaches of the past, Briggs notes, and deals head-on with the question of how basically good people can commit violent atrocities. The author's use of "a growing scholarly literature on mass killings and violence" enabled them to develop "an analytical framework that makes the massacre explicable" and thus make a significant contribution. Providing historical perspective on the Utah War and the massacre at Mountain Meadows is an insightful and entertaining piece by William B. MacKinnon.

In his review of *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*, Louis Midgley shares instructive personal anecdotes and perceptive discussion of Nibley's faith and intellectual interests that provide a helpful lens for approaching this latest volume. Of related interest is a response by longtime Nibley editor Shirley S. Ricks to recurring allegations that Nibley misused sources to buttress his arguments. Ricks marshals statistics and testimonials by those who worked on Nibley's books to show that, to a remarkably high degree, his footnotes and translations are reliable and that, more often than not, supposed inaccuracies reflect the reader's ignorance of the incredibly wide range of sources under Nibley's command. ♦