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## From The Editor

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## From the Editor



Welcome to this first issue of volume 53 of *BYU Studies Quarterly*, opening the fifty-sixth year of this remarkable academic periodical. I am proud to say that there is truly no other journal like this one. Each issue contains an array of groundbreaking studies from all corners of higher education that are of particular relevance to Latter-day Saints. Here readers can find the intellect engaged with revealed truth and scholarly pursuits enlightened by the hope of faith. In this day of increasing academic specialization, few general journals have survived. But for Latter-day Saints, the goal is to be instructed in truths of all kinds (D&C 88:78–79), and that’s what *BYU Studies* is all about.

Leading off this issue are three articles that I find most interesting. They come from a conference on Enoch and the Temple that was cosponsored by *BYU Studies* in February 2013 at Utah State University and Brigham Young University. The keynote speaker at that conference was world-renowned biblical scholar George Nickelsburg. He and I have talked often not only about his landmark commentary on *1 Enoch* but also about his passion for family history and genealogy. His paper addresses for the first time the question: What does the book of *1 Enoch* tell us about the temple? A lot, it turns out. Enoch’s commissioning, being visited by three angels who took him by the hand, and ascension into the heavenly sanctuary shine in a new light when examined with temple themes in mind. Nickelsburg’s translation of *1 Enoch* is both elegant and inspiring. His lecture can be viewed on the web at <http://www.templestudies.org/home/2013-enoch-and-the-temple-conference/conference-videos/>.

Also coming from that Temple Studies conference, a paper by David Larsen asks the question: Did any ancient people think that an entire city or temple community could ascend to heaven as a group, or was this idea simply a Zion-building impulse of the Prophet Joseph Smith? The question is interesting because the Bible simply says that “Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him” (Gen. 5:24), while Moses 7:69 reads, “Enoch *and all his people* walked with God” and “Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom.” David, a newly minted PhD, offers several examples of closely knit ancient communities that sought to ascend together into God’s presence.

Carrying the Enoch conference theme further, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw gives an answer to yet another question: What is it that ties together the stories about Adam, Eve, Enoch, and Noah in the Book of Moses? The answer, unexpectedly, has to do again with temple motifs, all of which culminate with Enoch in Moses 6–7. I find Jeff’s insights beautifully compelling, especially when I remember that the idea of a temple ceremony was just a glimmer in the Prophet’s eye in December 1830, when he revealed those two Enoch chapters.

Later in this issue, Mauro Properzi statistically analyzes 344 printed articles about Mitt Romney, the Mormons, and the Mormon Moment in Italy during 2012. A native Italian and bright scholar, Mauro concludes that although changing gradually, the Italian media’s perception of Mormonism has become measurably more correct.

The team of Sloan, Merrill, and Merrill has assembled biostatistical data about gender ratios in various LDS age groups in seven regions around the world, wondering at what ages females outnumber males in the Church, and how that ratio compares with the world’s male:female ratio. Factors that affect shifts in this important ratio are identified but still await further exploration.

The article by Lynn D. Wardle, a widely known family law scholar, presents for the first time a comprehensive history of statements by LDS Church leaders about elective abortion. Church leaders have consistently taught that abortion should be illegal “in most but not all cases,” and a relatively high number (61 percent) of Mormons concur. Wardle credits this cohesive result mainly to the united, consistent, kind, and reasoned statements of Church leaders.

Typical of most issues of *BYU Studies Quarterly*, this issue also contains a large number of reviews readers won’t want to miss. Beyond perceptive reviews of scholarly books, we also review films, stage productions, and art exhibits of particular interest to Latter-day Saints.

Books reviewed here include Brian Hales's monumental three-volume study of Joseph Smith and polygamy. I highly recommend this work. Typical of the wide variety of books, films, and other media reviewed by BYU Studies, readers will not want to miss the review by John Stohlton of the Mormon Yankees, by Eric Samuelsen of peculiar portrayals of Mormons on stage and screen, by Randall Balmer (an Episcopal priest and professor at Dartmouth College) of David F. Holland's *Sacred Borders*, and several others.

The review essay by Kirsti Ringger advances an original argument that in order to understand abjection in modern art, which is admittedly often distasteful, one needs to ask, Where have artists, from the Middle Ages to modernity, tried to find reality? In the general or the particular? In the ideal or the mundane? In the attractive or repulsive? While modern trends have gone with a vengeance toward the latter, art exhibitions need not embrace this modern "pre-language" mode but must use words to help viewers "get" the forces behind deconstruction and abjection in art.

Finally, BYU Studies could not have hoped to invite a more knowledgeable scholar to review John Dinger's new critical text of the Book of Mormon than Royal Skousen. For a quarter century, I have closely followed Skousen's extensive work on the text of the Book of Mormon. Nothing short of intense personal labor goes into the production of a fully accurate publication that analytically presents original handwritten manuscripts on printed pages, and strict precision is critically required in textual work.

As editor of this long-time voice for the community of LDS scholars, I am deeply grateful to the many authors, editorial board members, peer reviewers, editorial staff, and others who work tirelessly, often as volunteers, to bring this publication out every quarter on schedule. And all of us are, in turn, most gratified when readers find the contents of this journal useful, reliable, well articulated, and insightful on significant subjects pertaining to the work of God at home and abroad. Recent comments from readers have included "consistently wonderful work," "particularly outstanding," and, "As I read, I felt peaceful feelings in the heart, which deepened my love for the Savior, and my testimony of the restoration." May every page of this journal serve you well and, on occasion, even exceed your expectations.

John W. Welch