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Title Editor's Introduction: "To Cheer, to Raise, to Guide":
Twenty-Two Years of the *FARMS Review*

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Abstract A history of the *Review*, including editorial philosophy, range of content, title changes, important contributions, and commitment to vigorous and learned discourse on aspects of Latter-day Saint thought and practice.

“To Cheer, to Raise, to Guide”: Twenty-Two Years of the FARMS Review

DANIEL C. PETERSON

The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. He plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation. . . . He is the world's eye. —Emerson¹

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, in 1988—I never really envisioned myself becoming as old as I now am—John W. Welch, the moving force in the establishment of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) roughly a decade earlier, approached me with a question. Would I be willing to launch and edit a new annual volume reviewing books about the Book of Mormon?

I had been an enthusiastic fan of what came to be known as FARMS from its founding in 1979, but I had been unable to do much about my

enthusiasm during that time, since, from the fall of 1978 through the late summer of 1982, I had been living in Egypt and since, from the summer of 1982 to the fall of 1985, I was busy with my doctoral program at the University of California, Los Angeles. (California was a very long distance from FARMS in those days, to say nothing of Egypt. Some younger readers will find this difficult to imagine, but there was no Internet in 1979. Few people even had personal computers.)

By 1988, though, I had been on the faculty at Brigham Young University for roughly three years, and I had begun to involve myself with the work of FARMS.

Still, Jack Welch's invitation represented my first opportunity to be formally connected with FARMS. So I leaped at the chance. And, thus, the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, as it was originally called, was born.

From the beginning, though, I wanted our new periodical—FARMS's *first* periodical—to

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar,” speech given on 31 August 1837.

be more than just a simple collection of book reviews. I thought about the way I myself used the work of music critics: When I went into a music store to buy a recording of, say, Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, I would first walk over to the bookshelf, if the store had one, to consult various guides to, or magazines on, classical recordings. Having familiarized myself with what the commentators had to say, I would put the guides back on the shelf and buy the version I had selected. But I never bought any of the guides. Why should I? They had served their purpose when I made my choice. For me, they had little or no intrinsic value; they were merely a means to an end.

I wanted the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* to be something that would have value in itself, that would be worth buying and reading in its own right.

Fortunately, that goal was achieved right from the start.

I’ll use as my illustration of that fact John Clark’s review of F. Richard Hauck’s *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*. When I first approached Professor Clark, already a very experienced Mesoamerican archaeologist, with the proposal that he review the Hauck book, he was—to put it mildly—reluctant. He was busy, often on the road, preoccupied with digs in Chiapas, Mexico. He wasn’t particularly eager to wade into the squabbles over Book of Mormon geography.

Frankly, I did not expect to receive anything from him. But then he came through, in spectacular fashion, with a marvelous review essay entitled “A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies.”² It eventually yielded fifty-one

pages in the printed edition, complete with maps, tables, and figures. Going beyond simply reviewing a specific book, it set forth ten fundamental requirements that had to be met by any aspiring geographical model for the Book of Mormon. It was precisely the kind of thing that, just as I had hoped, would have value in itself and would be worth buying and reading in its own right. From then on, in every issue of the *Review*, there has always been at least one essay—often more than one—that has had value independent of (and sometimes much greater than) the book or other item that it was reviewing. Some of the books being reviewed provided an excuse for important contributions to the scholarship on a topic.

Another characteristic feature of the *Review* was also established with the very first issue: its willingness to be critical even of books by friends, by people on our “side.” Todd Compton, a classicist and an old friend of mine from graduate-school days at UCLA, opened his review of three volumes in the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley by saying that “one approaches Hugh Nibley with a mixture of awe and anguish.”³ The sweep and genius of Nibley were stunning, but, Compton said, sometimes the details were a bit inaccurate. Likewise, Louis Midgley’s review of the first two volumes of Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet’s *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* faulted seeming tendencies to recast our scriptures as—though, of course, no believer would actually say it this way or be less than offended at such a thought—messy and inadequate attempts to do dogmatic theology,

2. John Clark, “A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies,” review of *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, by F. Richard Hauck, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 20–70. We have included in this issue of the *Review* a slightly modified version of Clark’s original essay with all references to Hauck removed.

3. Todd Compton, review of *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, by Hugh Nibley; *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Nibley; and *Since Cumorah*, by Nibley, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 114–18.

tendencies that he saw implicit in the books he was reviewing.⁴

Other characteristics of the *Review* that were apparent even in the first issue included its editor's very laissez-faire attitude toward review lengths. I sought out people who I thought were qualified to have something interesting to say about the books they had been asked to review, and then I stood out of their way. I didn't tell them what approach to take nor whether to be positive or negative. I didn't even tell them how many words they had to make their points. It was probably a bit unnerving to some of them, but when they asked how long their reviews should be, I simply said that their reviews should be as long as they needed them to be in order to say what they wanted to say. Given such free rein, the *Review* has, over the years, published some quite lengthy essays. I'm happy about that.

And many of them have been my own. From the start, although my maiden effort came to only six pages,⁵ I (and occasionally others) have written substantial editor's introductions to each issue of the *Review*. I didn't ask permission to do so, and nobody came forward to stop me. It has been a bully pulpit for more than two decades now.

There was one other factor that greatly helped to ensure the *Review's* success: Shirley Ricks. Shirley had married one of my companions from the Switzerland Zürich Mission, my longtime friend and now colleague in BYU's Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Professor

Stephen Ricks. Holding a PhD herself, in studies relating to the family, she had become an editor with FARMS. Her contribution as the *Review's* production editor was essential from the very first. Meticulous at her craft, she was also the crucial person who saw to it that issues of the *Review* actually went to press and emerged for distribution. Consummately well organized, in later years she also managed to impose at least some minimal measure of discipline on wide-ranging and often hilarious *Review* editorial meetings.

The second volume of the *Review* appeared in 1990. A few new things appeared in it, harbingers of things to come. First of all, though every item contained in it was related to the Book of Mormon, not everything in it was a book review. It led off with the text of Richard Dilworth Rust's "Designed for Our Day," the annual FARMS lecture. (We have, since that time, published the texts of a number of important FARMS- and now Maxwell Institute-sponsored lectures.) It also included Daniel McKinlay's response to Alan Goff's 1989 BYU master's thesis entitled "A Hermeneutic of Sacred Texts: Historicism, Revisionism, Positivism, and the Bible and Book of Mormon."⁶

In addition, it contained my review of Peter Bartley's *Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book and the Cult*.⁷ Taken with Ara Norwood's critique of Vernal Holley's attempt to derive the toponyms and the geography of the Book of Mormon from Joseph Smith's nineteenth-century environment,⁸

4. Louis Midgley, "Prophetic Messages or Dogmatic Theology? Commenting on the Book of Mormon: A Review Essay," review of *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 1: First and Second Nephi*, by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet; and *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 2: Jacob through Mosiah*, by McConkie and Millet, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 92-113.

5. Daniel C. Peterson, editor's introduction, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): v-x.

6. Daniel B. McKinlay, review of "A Hermeneutic of Sacred Texts: Historicism, Revisionism, Positivism, and the Bible and Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1989), by Alan Goff, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 86-95.

7. Daniel C. Peterson, review of *Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book and the Cult*, by Peter Bartley, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 31-55.

8. L. Ara Norwood, review of *Book of Mormon Authorship: A Closer Look*, by Vernal Holley, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989):

which appeared earlier, this represented the first in a long and continuing series of responses by me and others to what is quite accurately described as sectarian or countercult anti-Mormon literature. Though such responses have never dominated the *Review*, they have been one of its serious areas of focus and specialty over the more than two decades of its subsequent history. And gratifying anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some prominent anti-Mormon writers, who were once able to get away with just about anything (confident that their work would neither be reviewed nor noticed by serious, informed Latter-day Saint authors), found this very, very shocking.

One of my own personal favorite reviews was published in the third issue of the *Review*. Loftes Tryk's *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon* was (unintentionally, I think) among the funniest books I had ever read, and I absolutely loved reviewing it. Any critic of the church who argues, in print, that the initials *LDS* reveal the true origin of Mormonism because they stand for "Lucifer Devil Satan" is definitely going to have my attention:

Last year, in this *Review*, I examined Peter Bartley's polemic against the Book of Mormon, and termed it "rather worthless." I had not yet read Loftes Tryk's *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon*, which is incomparably worse. For all his many, many flaws, Peter Bartley now seems to me by contrast the Shakespeare, the Michelangelo, the Aristotle, the Einstein of anti-Mormonism. If Bartley's book is no Rolls Royce—if, indeed, it more closely resembles an engineless Studebaker sitting on grass-covered blocks behind a dilapidated barn—it is nonetheless infinitely

more sober and respectable than Loftes Tryk's literally incredible volume, a gaudily painted Volkswagen disgorging dozens of costumed clowns to the zany music of a circus calliope.⁹

This issue also featured one of the most memorable opening lines we've ever published, when Stephen Robinson began his review of a revisionist volume from Signature Books with "Korihor's back, and this time he's got a printing press."¹⁰ One of our finest essay titles would come in volume 5 (1993): "Playing with Half a Decker," Louis Midgley's review of Dean Maurice Helland's doctoral dissertation.¹¹

Professor Robinson's insightful response to a collection of mostly sectarian criticisms of the Book of Mormon resulted in the publisher and owner of Signature Books, George D. Smith, instructing his attorney to threaten legal action. By so doing, Smith was seeking to use the courts to silence responses to criticisms of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon rather than employing the traditional tools of scholarship, argument, and the analysis of evidence. I was determined not to be intimidated by this gambit, and I responded to this legal mischief in the next editor's introduction to the *Review*.¹² Subsequently,

9. Daniel C. Peterson, "A Modern *Malleus maleficarum*," review of *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon*, by Loftes Tryk, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 231–60.

10. Stephen E. Robinson, review of *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 312–18.

11. Louis Midgley, "Playing with Half a Decker: The Countercult Religious Tradition Confronts the Book of Mormon," review of "Meeting the Book of Mormon Challenge in Chile," by Dean Maurice Helland (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1990), *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 116–71. The reference in the title is to the notorious anti-Mormon mountebank, charlatan, and demagogue Ed Decker, best known for his once-popular, sensationalizing, anti-Mormon pseudodocumentary *The God Makers*.

12. Daniel C. Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," *Review of Books on*

when criticisms of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon have trickled out from Signature Books, comprehensive responses have regularly appeared in the *Review*.¹³

There has been at least one additional effort to silence and punish financially those Latter-day Saints who even mention the name of one very litigious countercult author, let alone those who have the temerity to examine his opinions on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. But this amusing story cannot be told here, nor can the name of this fellow even be so much as mentioned: in *Review* circles we simply refer to him as “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.”

The *Review* has always had an impish sense of humor and a penchant for irony and satire. This

the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): vii-lxxvi.

13. For an account of the relatively small yet still significant number of subsequent attacks on the faith of the Saints that have been issued by Signature Books, see Louis Midgley, “The Signature Books Saga,” *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 361–406. For works reviewed after this article, see John A. Tvedtnes, “Isaiah in the Bible and the Book of Mormon,” review of “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah,” by David P. Wright, in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, *FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004): 161–72; Ryan Parr, “Missing the Boat to Ancient America . . . Just Plain Missing the Boat,” review of *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*, by Simon G. Southerton, *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 83–106; Andrew H. Hedges and Dawson W. Hedges, “No, Dan, That’s Still Not History,” review of *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, by Dan Vogel, *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 205–22; Alan Goff, “Dan Vogel’s Family Romance and the Book of Mormon as Smith Family Allegory,” review of *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, by Vogel, *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 321–400; Richard N. Williams, “The Book of Mormon as Automatic Writing: Beware the *Virtus Dormitiva*,” review of “Automaticity and the Dictation of the Book of Mormon,” by Scott C. Dunn, in *American Apocrypha*, ed. Vogel and Metcalfe, *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 23–29; Gregory L. Smith, “George D. Smith’s *Nauvoo Polygamy*,” review of *Nauvoo Polygamy: “. . . but we called it celestial marriage*,” by George D. Smith, *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 37–123; Robert B. White, “A Review of the Dust Jacket and the First Two Pages,” review of *Nauvoo Polygamy*, by Smith, *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 125–29; Alan Goff, “How Should We Then Read? Reading Mormon Scripture after the Fall,” review of *Making of a Prophet*, by Vogel, *FARMS Review* 21/1 (2009): 137–78.

has offended some who have, I’m convinced, quite misunderstood what was going on. But it has entertained many, and, personally, I’ll choose dry wit over dry tedium any day of the week.

With such essays in volume 4 (1992) as Matthew Roper’s review of Weldon Langfield, *The Truth about Mormonism: A Former Adherent Analyzes the LDS Faith*,¹⁴ and John Gee and Michael Rhodes’s review of Charles Larson’s *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*,¹⁵ it was becoming clear that the *Review* was not going to limit itself solely to books about the Book of Mormon. Still, it remained heavily concentrated on such books, and every issue concluded with a comprehensive bibliography of relevant titles for the preceding year.

In 1994, the *Review* went from annual to semi-annual. The immediate impetus for this change was the publication of an anthology of mostly secularizing and reductionist essays on the Book of Mormon, largely authored by disaffected former believers and edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe, entitled *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*.¹⁶ We devoted essentially an entire issue of the *Review*—volume 6, number 1—to detailed responses to *New Approaches*. I was particularly delighted, when I was looking for somebody to respond to a chapter that argued that the population figures in the Book of Mormon were unrealistic, to come

14. Matthew Roper, review of *The Truth about Mormonism: A Former Adherent Analyzes the LDS Faith*, by Weldon Langfield, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 78–92.
 15. John Gee, “A Tragedy of Errors,” review of *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, by Charles M. Larson, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 93–119; and Michael D. Rhodes, “The Book of Abraham: Divinely Inspired Scripture,” review of *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus*, by Larson, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 120–26.
 16. Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).
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across Dr. James E. Smith, a Latter-day Saint and a professional demographer with particular expertise in the estimation of ancient populations.¹⁷ I hadn't even imagined that such a person existed.

Since Metcalfe had included an essay in *New Approaches* in which he argued that the complex literary device known as chiasmus (or inverted parallelism) could have appeared in the Book of Mormon simply by accident, I was especially pleased to have included in this same issue of the *Review* Bill Hamblin's subtle and yet devastating refutation of Metcalfe's conclusion.¹⁸

I have had occasion many times since to marvel at the range and depth of talent and training that exists, and that can be called upon, among members of the church. Another notable example of this came when I was looking for someone to examine Robert D. Anderson's reductionist *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*. I was delighted to discover Michael D. Jibson, MD, PhD, director of residency education and clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, who not only knew his stuff but also wrote so well that I'm not sure that we corrected so much as a comma in his submitted essay.¹⁹

With volume 8, in 1996, we made the first name change to the *Review*, altering it from *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* (and thus,

unfortunately, losing the wonderful acronym *ROBOTBOM*) to *FARMS Review of Books*. And, for the first time, we moved from an undifferentiated table of contents to a list of contents organized by type. For instance, the table of contents for *FARMS Review of Books* 8/1 featured items categorized under not only "Book of Mormon" but also "Books on Other Ancient Scripture," "Polemics," "Historical and Cultural Studies," "Study Aids," and "Fiction." These categories have shifted from issue to issue, according to need—the table of contents for *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2, the very next issue, was organized into "The Book of Mormon," "Other Scriptures and Ancient Texts," "Other Publications," "Publications for Children," and "Study Aids"—but they have always clearly signaled that the *Review's* concerns have broadened beyond the Book of Mormon alone. (In *FARMS Review of Books* 9/2 [1997], the category of "Mormon Studies" made its first appearance.)

Volume 11, number 2, published in 1999, was dedicated to responses to Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson's important book *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*.²⁰ It even included a lengthy review essay by Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser in which these two young evangelical scholars offered their own critique of Latter-day Saint doctrine.²¹ Although there were understandable concerns among some about providing yet another platform for others to argue against the faith of Latter-day Saints, I thought it worthwhile to showcase a pair of evangelicals who, at least, sought to do so honestly, charitably, and fairly. We had, entirely with justice, been complaining

17. James E. Smith, "Nephi's Descendants? Historical Demography and the Book of Mormon," review of "Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes," by John C. Kunich, *Sunstone* 14 (June 1990), *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 255–96.

18. William J. Hamblin, "An Apologist for the Critics: Brent Lee Metcalfe's Assumptions and Methodologies," review of "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," by Brent Lee Metcalfe, *Dialogue* 26/3 (Fall 1993), *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 434–523.

19. Michael D. Jibson, "Korihor Speaks, or the Misinterpretation of Dreams," review of *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*, by Robert D. Anderson, *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 223–60.

20. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).

21. Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser, review of *How Wide the Divide?*, by Blomberg and Robinson, *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 1–102.

so long about attacks on the church that were neither honest nor charitable nor fair that it seemed reasonable to celebrate, as it were, a hopeful sign of better (or, at least, less bad) things to come.²²

Another of my own favorite moments in the history of the *Review*—I’ve had to skip over many, owing to constraints of time, energy, and reader patience—came when, in 2001, *Review* 13/2 published the mature Davis Bitton’s biting critical review of a 1966 essay in *Dialogue* bearing the title “Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History”²³ and written by . . . the younger Davis Bitton.²⁴ (One of our editors, upon first noticing that the author of the review bore the same name as the author of the work that was being reviewed, called to warn me about the mistake. But that, of course, was the joke. The *Review*’s humor is, not uncommonly, directed at itself and its own authors.)

That issue also contained a fine article by Ari Bruening and David Paulsen examining the development of the early Mormon concept of God and looking specifically at claims that the Book of Mormon’s view of the Godhead is a form of modalism.²⁵

Perhaps most significantly, though, volume 13, number 2, marked the appointment of two new associate editors for the *Review*.

Louis Midgley, a retired professor of political science at BYU, had earned his doctorate at Brown University and had focused his research and writing on philosophical theology and its implications for doctrines of natural law and the moral underpinnings of government. He had already contributed several important essays to the *Review*.

George Mitton had followed graduate studies in political science and public administration at Utah State University and Columbia University with a twenty-five-year career in the government of the state of Oregon, where he was mostly involved with educational planning and administration of the state’s colleges and universities. He had previously joined in writing for the *Review* substantial and complex critiques of John Brooke’s *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* and of D. Michael Quinn’s *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*.²⁶ Since their appointment, Brothers Midgley and Mitton have been actively involved in securing, vetting, editing, and improving materials for the *Review*, as well as in writing their own essays (and sometimes editor’s introductions) for it.

In 2003, with *Review* 15/1, we saw another name change. The *FARMS Review of Books* dropped the “of Books” and became, simply, *The FARMS Review*. We had, for some time, been reviewing videos and websites and articles and theses, and even publishing freestanding essays,

22. Carl Mosser and Paul Owen were also the authors of the well-known article “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?,” *Trinity Journal* (Fall 1998): 179-205, in which they lamented the low quality of evangelical critiques of Mormonism and called, effectively, for more competent, honest, and fair polemics on their side.

23. Davis Bitton, “Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History,” *Dialogue* 1/3 (1966): 111-34.

24. Davis Bitton, “Mormon Anti-Intellectualism: A Reply,” review of “Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History,” by Davis Bitton, *Dialogue* 1/3 (1966), *FARMS Review of Books* 13/2 (2001): 59-62.

25. Ari D. Bruening and David L. Paulsen, “The Development of the Mormon Understanding of God: Early Mormon Modalism and Other Myths,” review of *Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution, 1830-1915*, by Kurt Widmer, *FARMS Review of Books* 13/2 (2001): 109-69.

26. William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace; Or, Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge,” review of *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, by John L. Brooke *FARMS Review of Books* 6/2 (1994): 3-58; and George L. Mitton and Rhett S. James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” review of *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*, by D. Michael Quinn, *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998): 141-263.

so the new title more accurately reflected what we were actually doing. I liked the change because it allowed the flexibility that we wanted, and because it reflected a common kind of academic-journal title exemplified by such venerable publications as *The Yale Review* and *The Sewanee Review*. I thought, wrongly as it turns out, that we had finally reached equilibrium, that we had the title we wanted, and that it would stay in place. *Review* 15/1 also saw the first “Book Notes,” relatively short and often (though not always) purely descriptive pieces on books to which we wanted to call our readers’ attention or about which we simply wanted to set out an opinion. These were often authored by one or more of the three editors—at first they were usually unattributed—but sometimes others contributed Book Notes as well. (In such cases, the authors of the notes were identified.)

In 2003, in *Review* 15/2, we began to address the then-boiling issue of Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon,²⁷ as well as a volume published by a retired Church Educational System instructor, written apparently while on the church payroll, attacking fundamental claims of the restoration.²⁸ As these two examples illus-

trate, when an issue seemed to warrant several essays, or when there are clearly different opinions on or approaches to a single topic, we have invited several authors to voice their opinions. In addition, we have invited several authors to respond to the same critic or criticism in several issues of the *Review*.

I could list literally scores of truly important reviews and essays published in the *Review* over the years, and I’m painfully aware of omitting many. One important exchange occurred in *Review* 19/1 (2007), when we published a critique of Latter-day Saint use of the well-known “ye are gods” passage from Psalm 82, written by the evangelical scholar Michael S. Heiser.²⁹ It was accompanied by a reply from David E. Bokovoy,³⁰ a Latter-day Saint graduate student of the Hebrew Bible at Brandeis University, which was followed by a rejoinder from Dr. Heiser.³¹ The exchange was a model, on both sides, of civil and charitable disagreement, and a fascinating tutorial on a very interesting topic (namely, the so-called divine council) in contemporary biblical scholarship.

With *Review* 19/2, Don Brugger replaced Shirley Ricks as the *Review*’s production editor. (She had been reassigned to help complete the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley in time for the centennial

27. We began doing this with a number of essays, including Daniel C. Peterson’s editor’s introduction entitled “Of ‘Galileo Events,’ Hype, and Suppression: Or, Abusing Science and Its History,” *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): ix–lx; Daniel C. Peterson, “Prolegomena to the DNA Essays” (pp. 25–34); David A. McClellan, “Detecting Lehi’s Genetic Signature: Possible, Probable, or Not?” (pp. 35–90); Matthew Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors: Book of Mormon Peoples and Pre-Columbian Populations” (pp. 91–128); Matthew Roper, “Swimming in the Gene Pool: Israelite Kinship Relations, Genes, and Genealogy” (pp. 129–64); Brian D. Stubbs, “Elusive Israel and the Numerical Dynamics of Population Mixing” (pp. 165–182); and John A. Tvedtnes, “The Charge of ‘Racism’ in the Book of Mormon” (pp. 183–197).

28. The reviews of Grant H. Palmer’s *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002) that were published in the *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003) included a statement by the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History concerning Palmer’s book (p. 255), which was followed by Davis Bitton, “The

Charge of a Man with a Broken Lance (But Look What He Doesn’t Tell Us)” (pp. 257–71); Steven C. Harper, “Trustworthy History?” (pp. 273–307); Mark Ashurst-McGee, “A One-sided View of Mormon Origins” (309–64); and Louis Midgley, “Prying into Palmer” (365–410). Later we also published James B. Allen, “Asked and Answered: A Response to Grant H. Palmer,” *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 235–85.

29. Michael S. Heiser, “You’ve Seen One *Elohim*, You’ve Seen Them All? A Critique of Mormonism’s Use of Psalm 82,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 221–66.

30. David E. Bokovoy, “‘Ye Really *Are* Gods’: A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 267–313.

31. Michael S. Heiser, “Israel’s Divine Council, Mormonism, and Evangelicalism: Clarifying the Issues and Directions for Future Study,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 315–23.

of his birth in March 2010.) After nearly two decades, the change was a bit painful, but Don has stepped into the role admirably and with superb editorial skills, and the work proceeds.

Over the more than two decades of its existence, under its various names, the *Review* has published hundreds of pieces by well over two hundred authors. These authors, chosen because they struck the editor(s) as having something interesting, valuable, or relevant to say and the qualifications to say it, have been left free to say pretty much what they wanted, at whatever length they wanted to say it. (We have published only a quite small number of unsolicited submissions.)³² They have dealt with many issues, from Amerindian DNA to recent arguments for so-called Heartland models of Book of Mormon geography that try to situate the story of the Nephites and the Jaredites entirely within the continental United States, from efforts to resuscitate the “Spalding theory” of Book of Mormon origins to sociological studies of the religiosity of American youth, from Margaret Barker’s work on ancient temple imagery to Mormon’s editorial method and the usefulness of religious history, from so-called Intelligent Design to contemporary Openness Theology, from the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* to the concept of remembrance in the scriptures and unique perspectives on the Sermon on the Mount.

I am unabashedly proud of the *Review*. The late University of Utah professor and former assistant church historian Davis Bitton once told me that, in his opinion, the best writing in the church was being published in its pages. (I agree.) And another former president of the Mormon History

Association took me aside many years ago at an MHA meeting to *complain* about the *Review*: whenever the newest issue arrived, he lamented, he had to put everything else down and read it from cover to cover, which absolutely destroyed his work schedule and his plans for the day.

By a very great distance, the *Review* has, since its first issue in 1989, been the publication of FARMS and now the Maxwell Institute most overtly willing to confront critics, most prone to engaging in controversy or polemics or overt apologetics. (These words are, it should be noted, not intrinsically negative or pejorative in normal English usage.) And yet, as I’ve already remarked, such apologetic, polemical, or controversial engagements represent only a minority portion of the *Review*’s content over the years.

Even a simple listing of some (not all) of the freestanding essays from just the past few years of the *Review* will give some sense of the range of topics it has addressed:

- Mark H. Willes, “To All the World: Reinventing the Church’s Media Businesses,” *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 1-13.
- Cecil O. Samuelson, “On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar,” *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 1-14.
- Bruce C. Hafen, “Reason, Faith, and the Things of Eternity,” *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 15-35.
- Ronan James Head, “A Brief Survey of Ancient Near Eastern Beekeeping,” *FARMS Review* 20/1 (2008): 57-66.
- James E. Faulconer, “The Myth of the Modern; the Anti-myth of the Postmodern,” *FARMS Review* 20/1 (2008): 219-36.
- Raphael Jospe, “‘The Glory of God Is Intelligence’: A Note on Maimonides,” *FARMS Review* 19/2 (2007): 95-98.

32. In my experience, at least, academic journals typically invite people to write book reviews. Of roughly fifteen reviews I’ve written for secular journals, only one or two were initiated by me.

- Steven L. Olsen, “The Theology of Memory: Mormon Historical Consciousness,” *FARMS Review* 19/2 (2007): 25–35.
- Terryl L. Givens, “New Religious Movements and Orthodoxy: The Challenge to the Religious Mainstream,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 201–20.
- M. Gerald Bradford, “The Study of Mormonism: A Growing Interest in Academia,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 119–74.
- William J. Hamblin, “Sacred Writing on Metal Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 37–54.
- Stephen D. Ricks, “*Dexiosis* and *Dextrarum Iunctio*: The Sacred Handclasp in the Classical and Early Christian World,” *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 431–36.
- Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Aaron’s Golden Calf,” *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2007): 375–87.
- Royal Skousen, “Conjectural Emendation in the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 187–231.

We have reprinted slightly edited or updated essays that had previously appeared elsewhere,³³ when we believed that they had been neglected, and we have also published one or two older essays that had previously circulated privately.

There are treasures here, not to be missed, in these and other essays, and in literally hundreds of reviews. Fortunately, all of the contents of the *Review*, from its first issue in 1989 down to the present day, are indexed and hence easily available, at no cost, online: <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/>.

33. Examples include Mark Ashurst-McGee, “Moroni as Angel and as Treasure Guardian,” *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 35–100; and Martin E. Marty, “We Might Know What to Do and How to Do It: On the Usefulness of the Religious Past,” *FARMS Review* 21/1 (2009): 27–44.

Now, though, we come to yet another name change. The *FARMS Review* becomes the *Mormon Studies Review*. The change, which I sincerely hope really *will* be the last one, signals the breadth of the subject matter that the *Review* has treated over the past several years. It relieves us of the obligation (which we once tried to meet but have long since abandoned) of trying to review every single item published on the Book of Mormon, however trivial, obscure, and/or insignificant. It was, however, largely compelled by the fact that, with the rise of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, the name *FARMS* is receding rapidly into the background and we didn’t want the name *The FARMS Review* to survive merely as a fossil reminder of that earlier stage of the history of the organization (particularly since the name *FARMS* has always been a bit awkward, drawing calls to our receptionists from members of 4-H clubs seeking counsel about raising pigs for competitions at the state fair).

The *Mormon Studies Review* will continue to be published semiannually, featuring reviews and essays dealing with a range of issues, most of which, in one way or another, will center on the scriptures. It will continue to defend the sacred writings of our tradition, as well as other aspects of Latter-day Saint thought and practice. The *Review* represents our commitment to scholarly excellence—we won’t hesitate to point out serious flaws, when we see them, in pro-Mormon publications as well as in the works of critics—and our deep conviction of the intellectual robustness of Latter-day Saint faith claims. Indeed, it will continue to commend them, to the best of our capacity, through vigorous and learned discourse.


We also welcome into our aging ranks a new associate editor, the energetic and prodigiously talented Canadian physician Gregory Smith.

Dr. Smith studied research physiology and English at the University of Alberta but escaped into medical school before earning his bachelor's degree. After receiving his MD, he completed his residency in family medicine at St. Mary's Hospital in Montréal, Québec. There he learned the medical vocabulary and French Canadian slang that he didn't pick up in the France Paris Mission and won the Mervyn James Robson Award for Excellence in Internal Medicine. He now practices rural family medicine in Alberta, with interests in internal medicine and psychiatry. A clinical preceptor for residents and medical students, he has been repeatedly honored for excellence in clinical teaching.

Dr. Smith has a particular research interest in Latter-day Saint plural marriage and has been published in the *Review*³⁴ (and elsewhere) on this

and other topics. His science background has also led him to write about DNA and the Book of Mormon. With twelve years of classical piano training, he is, he says, "a lifelong audiophile and owns far too many MP3 files." He further reports that he "lives happily with his one indulgent wife, three extraordinary children, and four cats."

He will be a marvelous asset to the continued progress of the *Mormon Studies Review*.

I deeply appreciate the efforts of those who have assisted in the development and production of this inaugural issue of the *Mormon Studies Review*: associate editors Lou Midgley, George Mitton, and Greg Smith; production editor Don Brugger, assisted by intern Julie Davis; editorial reviewer and typesetter Alison Coutts; and proofreaders Paula Hicken and Sandra Thorne. 

Daniel C. Peterson (PhD, University of California at Los Angeles) is professor of Islamic studies at Brigham Young University.

34. Gregory L. Smith, "George D. Smith's *Nauvoo Polygamy*," review of *Nauvoo Polygamy*, by George D. Smith, *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 37-123.