

From the Editor

John W. Welch



As we send this issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly* to press, I find myself reflecting on the influences of many people upon my life. Goodly parents and beloved family members always come at the top of my appreciation list. I recently met with many friends associated with *BYU Studies* and was filled with overwhelming thankfulness for the many editors, authors, advisors, administrators, readers, and subscribers, who sustain this extraordinary publication. And I feel more profoundly indebted to *BYU* for its increasingly unusual mission. As President Dallin H. Oaks recently said at a *BYU* leadership conference, the mandate given to *BYU* now has a new complexity: “Today Brigham Young University . . . needs to resist being homogenized by the world.” Using the analogy of “the battle group of CES” with *BYU* as the flagship, he charged this array of institutions to build up and defend the Church. This initiative also sets out to provide education for all members of the Church, wherever they may be, consistent with their circumstances. We have been called to rally our resources in this effort, and, at *BYU Studies*, we eagerly answer his call.

President Oaks encouraged *BYU* faculty to “offer public, unassigned support of Church policies.” He emphasized the word *unassigned*, for “the duty is inherent in the position.” *BYU Studies* hopes to place its corpus of valuable scholarship even more effectively at the disposal of scholars and Church members around the world. Our *BYU Studies* website and the social media channels of affiliated organizations are poised to educate and inspire people for good in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We invite you to join this effort, putting your shoulder to the wheel, submitting thoughtful and well-crafted materials, spreading the word,

without waiting to be assigned. All articles in this journal are typical of this BYU Studies mode of operation. They are voluntarily submitted, unsolicited. They are then rigorously peer reviewed and edited by experts whose personal yearnings support the Church.

What could typify better putting one's shoulder to the wheel than Mel Bashore's article in this issue on commemorative reenactments of Mormon handcart trekking? There are good reasons to memorialize our history and those who came voluntarily to Zion. And who better exemplifies the dedicated life of a disciplined Mormon than Joseph Fielding Smith, self-taught as a historian and inspired by his prophet-father? Reid Neilson and Scott Marianno's study helps us walk thousands of pages in his intellectual shoes. One key to evaluating and appreciating historical writing is to know what motivated or constrained its writer. Often overlooked, the influence of Joseph Fielding Smith's efforts was more methodological than is usually realized.

Walker Wright's article on religious and economic perspectives about immigration, strangers, and refugees is marvelously timely. He approaches the debate over immigration through a double lens: the Church's official statements and scholarly research on the economic effects of immigration. He demonstrates that the Church's accommodating approach is overwhelmingly supported by the research. Migration is often impelled by external pressures, but it is ultimately the voluntary response of those fleeing to improve their lives. Immigrants come unassigned, so people can reach out to them without needing to be asked.

I am confident that readers will be enriched by the essays and reviews in this issue: a timely book review of John Gee's introduction to the Book of Abraham; a summation of Royal Skousen's latest volumes in his monumental Book of Mormon Critical Text project; a review of the survival of temple precepts in rabbinic literature; an essay on an early Christian idea of the Trinity being composed of three persons characterized by relentless affection and concern for others; a discussion of John Turner's tracing of Mormon emphases on aspects of Jesus; and a celebration of the long-awaited final volume in Carol Madsen's two-part biography of Emmeline B. Wells.

For all of this we can certainly be grateful. As in all cases with good things in life, we go forward with faith and hope that we may, in the end, have joy and rejoicing, being thankful for the concerted and consecrated efforts of many contributors.