

From the Editor

John W. Welch



I am once again pleased and proud to complete the production of this issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly* at the beginning of this fall season. These pages represent the harvest of another fine summer season of wonderful writing, reviewing, source checking, editing, and publication. Looking back over the past months and years, I speak for everyone in thanking all the extended family of scholars, friends, and supporters who have made this issue possible.

I am especially mindful of the crucial services provided voluntarily by the members of the BYU Studies editorial boards. These colleagues dedicate their time and keen critical eyes in directing the peer review process that vets and polishes all of the articles and reviews that appear in this journal, issue after issue. Without them, this scholarly LDS periodical would be nothing.

And so it is with special pleasure that I am very pleased to welcome Steven C. Harper as our new Editor in Chief. Steven comes with a host of wonderful personal talents, professional skills, and spiritual gifts. He has been involved with BYU Studies as an editor, author, and colleague for twenty-five years. We are all very excited to support and follow him going forward. Steve returns now to Brigham Young University from the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There he has served most recently as a General Editor and the Managing Historian for the new history of the Church, *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*.

Turning to the contents of this outstanding issue, we lead off with a powerful article by Tyler Johnson, an oncologist who uses the latest

technology in his practice of medicine. He warns about the dangers, both mental and spiritual, of the digital world that surrounds us. In keeping with the words of President Russell M. Nelson, inviting young men and women to go on a seven-day fast from electronic media, Dr. Johnson diagnoses from numerous clinical cases the ways in which relationships and revelation suffer if we become slaves to our devices.

Adding literary variety and vision to this issue, we publish here the first-place winner of this year's Richard L. Cracroft Personal Essay Contest. Patrick Moran sensitively ponders the difference between a journey and a commute.

In Royal Skousen's latest article, readers will find a compelling report of new conclusions coming out of his monumental Book of Mormon Critical Text Project. In these pages, Dr. Skousen conveniently describes some unexpected findings regarding the nature of English expressions that Joseph Smith dictated to his scribes. His technically precise data intriguingly enhances everyone's appreciation of the precise nature of the language of the Book of Mormon.

As BYU Studies will be releasing very soon a new biography of Martin Harris, written by historians Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter, we are pleased to present here a preview of this new book. The excerpt published in this issue tells of Martin's move as an elderly man from Kirtland, Ohio, to northern Utah in 1870, where he was rebaptized into the Church, of which he was an original member. The certificate of his rebaptism, printed for the first time on page 161 below, allows us to draw ourselves close to the return of this Witness who financially underwrote the publication of the Book of Mormon.

And speaking of recent books worth reading, this issue contains six full book reviews and six informative book notices. The dozen books discussed in this issue exemplify a constructive dynamic of harmonizing apparent divergences: art and history, unity and race, spirit and emotions, church and state, prophet and poet, science and religion, global unity and diversity, men and women, intellect and faith, and adobe homes in an urban setting. As I wrote in my first issue as editor of *BYU Studies*, one of the great strengths of the restored gospel is its ability to harmonize and transcend in a spiritual, intellectual, and practical unity elements that appear to be incompatible. Here, many of the traditional paradoxes are not viewed as competing opposites but as companions, unified through higher intents and purposes. "The objective is to embrace both."¹

1. John W. Welch, "Into the 1990s," *BYU Studies* 31, no. 4 (1991): 25.

My own documentary article in this issue publishes letters that shed new light on the last days of Joseph Smith's life. Letters delivered to three Iowa lawyers, written from Iowa on Sunday, June 23, 1844, reveal that one reason Joseph crossed the Mississippi River over to Iowa at about 2:00 AM was to have time and place to secure legal counsel for a trial scheduled for the next day in Carthage. Three Iowa lawyers would, in fact, successfully represent Joseph, Hyrum, and the Nauvoo City Council in that court proceeding at the county seat on Tuesday, June 25, two days before his murder there.

Finally, Noel B. Reynolds delves into the theological underpinnings of the gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Book of Mormon by examining three iterations of the covenantal blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Dr. Reynolds shows the precise and complex dependencies of various Book of Mormon prophets on this foundation of Judeo-Christian religion.

In the end, looking back to Father Abraham, I hope that Noel's study will inspire all to reach for and embrace these promised blessings. May all be blessed, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were blessed, with the gifts of obedience, with faithfulness, and with revealed foreshadowings of the Savior. May the ram be there in the thicket for all as an unexpected gift found in their willingness to sacrifice and to be sacrificed. May all be blessed, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were blessed, with priesthood assurances, with guidance home from their wanderings, with protection as they endured trials, and with happiness as they, their wives, and their families worked hard to make and keep sacred eternal covenants. May all be blessed as heirs of the blessings of Abraham and thereby find everlasting joy and peace through the love and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ.