

# INSIGHTS

The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

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## New Mormon Studies Review a Scholarly Feast

Emerging from a 22-year tradition of penetrating scholarly reviews and essays is the new *Mormon Studies Review*. Formerly titled *The FARMS Review*, it sports a sleeker design and larger format and



promises to survey a broader spectrum of topics.

In his editor's introduction, Daniel C. Peterson reprises the *Review's* history and attainments during the past two decades. He notes how it will continue to defend LDS scripture and

faith claims through the kind of "vigorous and learned discourse" tempered with satire and wit that has set it apart from the beginning.

Headlining the offerings in this inaugural issue is the 2011 Neal A. Maxwell Lecture, in which Marilyn Arnold, BYU emeritus professor of English, describes how her career focus on literary scholarship meshed with the high calling of discipleship that she responded to as a result of her journey of discovery into the literary richness of the Book of Mormon.

In the section on Book of Mormon studies, archaeologist John E. Clark abridges and updates his classic treatment on evaluating proposed Nephite geographies according to their fidelity to the Book of Mormon's internal geography, and Mesoamericanist Brant A. Gardner argues that many features of Nephi's writing are best explained as the result of his formal training as a scribe in Jerusalem.

Associate editor Gregory L. Smith demonstrates the consistency of LDS Church apostle Boyd K. Packer's past and present teachings on

sexual morality as part of a larger critique of LDS same-sex marriage advocates who oppose the Church's stance on homosexuality and gay marriage.

A 2008 issue of *Literary and Linguistic Computing* reported the findings of three Stanford-based researchers who used an innovative and, as it turns out, seriously flawed approach to determining Book of Mormon authorship. The findings were refuted by G. Bruce Schaalje, Paul J. Fields, Matthew Roper, and Gregory L. Snow in a 2011 study published in that same journal. The *Review* features a less technical treatment of that significant study on stylometry and follows it with a related study by Roper and Fields that once again quashes the moribund Spalding-Rigdon theory of Book of Mormon origins.

In other offerings, Brian M. Hauglid evaluates a compendious volume on the Book of Moses, Noel B. Reynolds comments on a prominent New Testament scholar's important book arguing that "the Gospels were written under the direct influence of living eyewitnesses," Richard E. Bennett praises a new biography of the staunch 19th-century Mormon defender Thomas L. Kane, and Louis C. Midgley reviews a primer on Christian church history and contemplates whether it is even possible to tell an all-encompassing, neutral story of the "now mostly lost history of Christianity." What's more, Hugh Nibley's essay "Beyond Politics," which Nibley excluded from his Collected Works series, is included. As usual, several Book Notes are included to round out the lineup.

*Mormon Studies Review* (vol. 23, no. 1) is available for purchase at [www.byubookstore.com](http://www.byubookstore.com). It is also available online at [maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=23&num=1](http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=23&num=1). ♦

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## The Perspective of History

The perspective of history can be sobering, even humbling. Not so recently, two men from the same faith tradition but different perspectives joined in a debate about whether and how a man whom they both acknowledged as a prophet could have seen what he said he saw and be who he claimed to be. As it unfolded, their discussion touched upon many aspects of what it means to have faith in such a person and in his revelations. The role of reason in relation to revelation, the relevance of history to faith, and the connection of language to perception were all explored. The power of poetry and other idioms of popular culture in establishing the credibility of one's chosen narrative were on display. Their debate was not an isolated event; it was just one of many in an ongoing phenomenon of cultural and spiritual contestation and negotiation. And although the two men in this case lived eleven hundred years ago, that same process of debate that they engaged in is still under way in our own times and is very much a part of our cultural climate today.

The two men were the famous Isma'ili missionary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. ca. 933) and the even more celebrated Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925), the physician and philosopher known to medieval Europe as "Rhazes." These two—a Shi'ite and a (nominal) Sunnī, respectively—were towering figures of premodern Islamic thought, and the record of their famous argument has now been published in the Maxwell Institute's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative as *The Proofs of Prophecy*, translated by the eminent and prolific Cambridge scholar Tarif Khalidi.

This debate brings us into immediate contact with some of the most intellectually exciting topics of medieval Islamic culture. Abū Ḥātim marshals evidence for his position from the Qur'an, the hadith (sayings of Muhammad), and pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, as well as from the Jewish and Christian scriptures. The freshness and vividness of the debate lose little of their excitement for a

modern reader interested not merely in medieval Islamic but Christian thought as well.

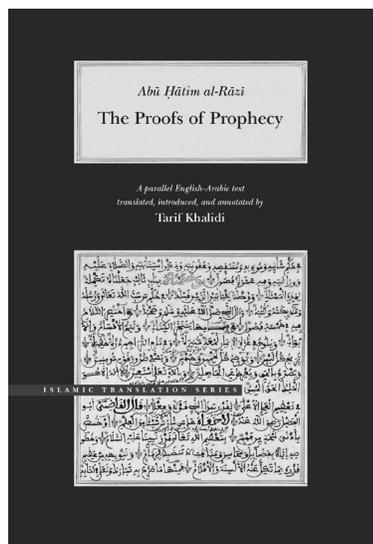
By the time *Proofs of Prophecy* was composed, Islam was already older than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now. And yet, viewed in historical terms, Islam was still in its adolescence. Its sister faith, Christianity, was approaching its first millennium, and Judaism was much older still. As Latter-day Saints, we sometimes forget how new on the scene we really are. We do not tend to view the Church as still

struggling to work out the meanings and implications of its message the way Islam was in its third century. Professor Khalidi writes of this period in Islam's development as the "Age of the Great Debate," during which theological questions between Muslims and Christians, and among Muslims themselves, were being argued with greater and greater sophistication.

If Mormonism today seems to have a greater sense of theological self-confidence than Islam did by this point, that is hardly to say that all questions have been

settled and there are no more to be raised. It is true that the Latter-day Saints have been strengthened as a people by their commitment to the principle of continuing revelation and prophetic guidance, whereas Islam came to view Muhammad as the last of the prophets and the end of direct revelation by God to the earth. Nevertheless, the historical experience of Islam may not be wholly irrelevant either. After all, the story of the Restoration is now being told and retold by Mormons and non-Mormons alike. It is being negotiated and renegotiated as never before, across the country and across the world, in forums large, small, and too numerous to quantify. Where will this conversation—which Mormons can join but no longer control—lead?

The least that can be said is that the Church is still young. President Boyd K. Packer recently spoke from this perspective when he said that the LDS youth of this generation should plan to raise children, grandchildren, and perhaps even great-grandchildren of their own.<sup>1</sup> Who is to say what



the Church might look like in another generation, or three, or more? If we could view ourselves today from the perspective of half a millennium of growth and effort and cultural evolution, how might we characterize our particular “Mormon moment” in history? Perhaps what we are witnessing is not so much the culmination of our history as a people but an adolescent coming-out event. And perhaps we may yet find something instructive in the experience of another prophetic

tradition with a fantastic story to tell the world—a tradition that was once as young as we are now.

*The Proofs of Prophecy* is available for purchase through the University of Chicago Press and [www.byubookstore.com](http://www.byubookstore.com). ♦

By D. Morgan Davis

Director, Middle Eastern Texts Initiative

1. Boyd K. Packer, “Counsel to Youth,” *Ensign*, November 2011, 16–19.

## BYU Hosts Papyrology Summer Institute

This past summer Brigham Young University, in collaboration with the American Society of Papyrologists (ASP), hosted the Seventh International Papyrology Summer Institute (June 20–July 29, 2011). The ASP began hosting these institutes in 2003 and plans to continue through 2015. The objective of the seminar is to teach participants how to read and use papyri and to provide them with the kind of practical experience that would enable them to make productive use of papyrus texts in their own research. Fields of study include Classics, ancient history, Egyptology, archaeology, ancient religions, and biblical studies.



Courtesy of the Center for the Tebtunis Papyri, University of California, Berkeley

During this six-week seminar, nine doctoral students and one junior faculty member from universities in the United States, Canada, Egypt, Austria, Belgium, and Germany gathered at BYU to hone their skills in deciphering Greek papyri. The on-site coordinators of the seminar from BYU were Roger Macfarlane, Lincoln Blumell, Thomas Wayment, and Stephen Bay. John Gee, the William “Bill” Gay Research Professor of Egyptology at the Maxwell Institute, taught classes during the seminar. Additionally, a number of world-renowned papyrologists attended

and helped run the seminar. These included Peter van Minnen (University of Cincinnati), Roger Bagnall (New York University), Josh Sosin (Duke University), Nikos Litinas (University of Crete), Todd Hickey (University of California, Berkeley), Maryline Parca (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Klaas Worp (University of Amsterdam), Rodney Ast (Heidelberg University), and Arthur Verhoogt (University of Michigan).

This most recent seminar’s theme was Roman Egypt. Since BYU’s papyrological holdings are rather small, UC Berkeley generously loaned BYU a number of papyri from its Tebtunis collection. All the documents from the Berkeley collection were written in Greek and dated between the first and third centuries AD. As a result of the work done on these texts during the seminar, participants in the seminar will publish these papyri in full editions with translations over the course of the next few years. Among the various texts edited were a couple of ancient letters, including one from a soldier serving in Pannonia and sent back to his family in Egypt, two land registers, a few contracts, some first-century court proceedings, and some land leases.

BYU’s reputation in the field of ancient texts and manuscripts has been greatly bolstered. BYU now joins an elite group of universities that have previously held this seminar (Yale, Berkeley, Cincinnati, Columbia, Stanford, and Michigan). Funds to host the seminar were provided by Religious Education at BYU as well as by the College of Humanities and the Maxwell Institute. ♦

By Lincoln Blumell

Assistant Professor, Ancient Scripture, BYU

## Website's Multimedia Offerings Expand

Videos of each lecture from the series “The Work of Hugh W. Nibley” are now available for viewing on the Maxwell Institute website. Speakers include Daniel C. Peterson, Richard L. Bushman, Robert L. Millet, Terry B. Ball, Ann Madsen, Eric D. Huntsman, Marilyn Arnold, Michael D. Rhodes, C. Wilfred Griggs, Alex Nibley, Zina Nibley Peterson, and William A. (Bert) Wilson. Bushman’s video begins with an introduction to the series and an overview of Nibley’s work by Paul Y. Hoskisson. The lectures celebrated the 100th anniversary of Nibley’s birth (27 March 1910).

### From Elder Neal A. Maxwell



May we emulate the feelings for the scriptures held by Tyndale and Paul? Tyndale was imprisoned for translating holy scripture, and Paul was martyred for providing and testifying of holy

scripture. The parallels are powerful: Heroic Tyndale, from a cold, dark dungeon where he stayed for 16 months and from which he would soon go to be strangled and then burned, sent a letter begging for “a warmer cap . . . a warmer coat also . . . also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings . . . but above all my Hebrew Bible.” Heroic Paul, aging Apostle—in Rome waiting to be brought before Nero a second time and then to be martyred, deserted by friends—asked Timothy to bring his “cloke,” “the books,” and “especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13). (“Thanksgiving for the Holy Scriptures,” local Thanksgiving speech, 24 November 1982, as quoted in *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 297-98)

These latest videos join a wide assortment of other live presentations posted for viewing on the Maxwell Institute website.

Heading up these online offerings are two annual Neal A. Maxwell Lectures: “On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar,” by BYU president Cecil O. Samuelson, and “To All the World: Reinventing the Church’s Media Businesses,” by Mark H. Willes, president and chief executive officer of Deseret Management Corporation. Also featured is Nibley’s 15-part Pearl of Great Price lecture series, followed by a variety of other popular lecturers such as Daniel C. Peterson, Robert L. Millet, Joseph F. McConkie, John W. Welch, Noel B. Reynolds, and Donald W. Parry.

To access these videos, go to [maxwellinstitute.byu.edu](http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu) and select “multimedia” under the “publications” tab. Some of these lectures are also available in audio formats. ♦

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By furthering religious scholarship through the study of scripture and other texts, Brigham Young University’s Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship seeks to deepen understanding and nurture discipleship among Latter-day Saints while promoting mutual respect and goodwill among people of all faiths.



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