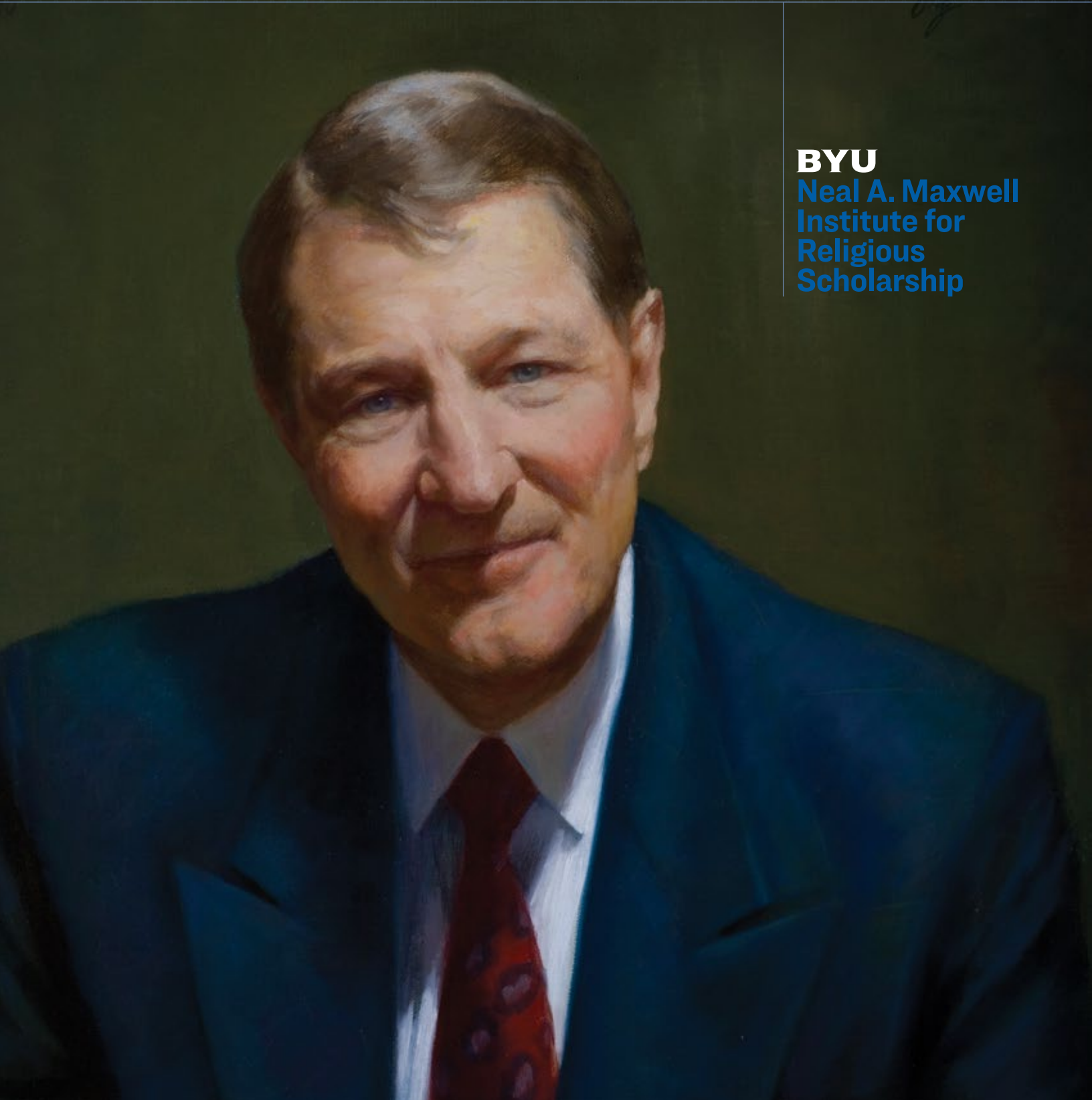


2016-2017

ANNUAL REPORT



BYU
Neal A. Maxwell
Institute for
Religious
Scholarship

BYU Maxwell Institute



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A Research Community of Disciple-Scholars

J. SPENCER FLUHMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, our institutional namesake, provided what surely amounts to our institutional credo in an essay he published in 1995. “For a disciple of Jesus Christ,” he wrote, “academic scholarship is a form of worship.”¹ Accordingly, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship dedicates itself to gathering and nurturing the kinds of scholars who seek that meeting place between the study of religion and the disciplined practice of it. Put another way, together we seek that space—in turns challenging and transcendent—where study and faith work together to ascertain truth. As with all other units at Brigham Young University, we are inspired and provoked by the revelations that frame Elder Maxwell’s memorable phrasing, perhaps chief among them the excerpt from Joseph Smith’s 1832 “Olive Leaf” revelation that so marvelously blurred the rational and the revelatory: “And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”²

Our part in that aspirational university mission is to be the unit on campus dedicated solely to research on religious topics. For the most part, we do not teach. We do not house a large number of permanent faculty. Instead, we provide what comes so rarely to scholars in regular academic departments: *time* and a *research community*. That is, the Maxwell Institute functions as a hub, a gathering place, where scholars dedicate themselves wholly to research and writing about religion, surrounded by others engaged in related fields.

We think of the Institute like a prism. A steady stream of scholars from BYU and around the region and nation come through the Institute, bringing with them energy, expertise, inspiration, and insight. The “magic” comes with gathering them together. Out of this community springs an array of remarkable effects, which we are excitedly still discovering. Publications, relationships, influence—these and more stream from the kinds of collaborations and events we convene.

We have several permanent scholars and a larger number of visiting scholars who come for a season. Together they form a dynamic and brilliant mix of minds dedicated to the study of religion in the context of Latter-day Saint faith and practice. We call these researchers “disciple-scholars,” a designation lifted from Elder Maxwell’s essay quoted above and the title of the collection where it appeared, presumably chosen by its editor, Elder Henry B. Eyring. That hyphenated phrasing conveys something of the opportunity that falls to

each scholar at the Institute. Were one a disciple only, one could reasonably ignore the life of the mind and the various academic fields related to religion. On the other hand, were one a scholar only, one could conceivably treat secular academic life as preeminent and approach religious practice and belief as mere objects of study. Given our hyphenated commitments at the Institute, however, neither part of the pairing can be ignored. Both demand careful attention here.

It falls to each scholar to determine how best to communicate to the various audiences interested in these matters. We are convinced, however, that real influence and good can come when we consider both LDS and scholarly audiences and communicate meaningfully with each. Both audiences demand different skills and sensitivities, after all. Academic audiences expect specialized training and technical language. They require wide knowledge and competence with current theories and broad questions. Conversely, LDS audiences share with disciple-scholars convictions about certain texts or voices having unique authority and spiritual illumination. Both care deeply about the moral and spiritual dimensions of this or that theory or argument. LDS audiences want to know how scholarly conversations relate to their faith. Writing for both audiences at once demands rare skill indeed, so we ask our scholars to be conscientious about when and how to write for each.

We believe our influence with Latter-day Saint readers consists chiefly in the reasons we provide for faith. We work in the conviction that religious life is deepened and broadened when rigorously considered. Through our comparative work with other religious traditions, LDS readers are better able to discern what we share with neighbors outside the faith and what stands out as the Restoration's unique contributions. Conversely, we influence scholarly audiences through scholarship that meets the highest academic standards. Many thousands of university students encounter LDS ideas, texts, and history in courses across the nation and globe each year. We pursue meaningful engagement with the fields and scholars behind those courses to help shape the perceptions of those eventual millions worldwide. Accuracy, balance, and understanding in those settings are only possible if we have seats at academic tables.


We work in the conviction that religious life is deepened and broadened when rigorously considered.





Consider a personal example—two of my own works. I am currently writing a book on the life of Elder James E. Talmage. Though the topic is of obvious interest to Latter-day Saints, I intend it for a scholarly audience and as a result opted to pursue publication with an academic press (the work is under contract with Oxford University Press). Accordingly, the manuscript must meet the standards of scholarship at a secular press, including non-LDS academic peer review, specialized scholarly language and tone, and a familiarity with academic concerns that may or may not be meaningful to LDS readers, including comparisons with non-LDS contemporaries, connections with non-LDS ideas, and so forth. For a much different audience, I recently published an article in the Church’s *Ensign* magazine entitled “The Triumph and Glory of the Lamb: Doctrine and Covenants 76.”³ In it I write as a scholar and not a Church leader, but my language and main concerns are LDS-specific and not intended primarily for professional colleagues outside the Church. There are different conventions and rules for each audience. Disciple-scholars, if they are to wield influence for good in either the Church or their professional circles, must know how to navigate those differences well. If not, they risk connecting with one but not the other. Disciple-scholars strive to become “bilingual,” in other words, as President Spencer W. Kimball described in his classic 1975 devotional address at BYU: “As scholars you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things.”⁴

The Institute’s main focus is cultivating a community of disciple-scholars, but fruits of that cultivation also include books, periodicals, video, and audio material. The Institute publishes some of what our disciple-scholars produce, but we expect that they will place much of their work in other venues. We are busy making strategic partnerships with presses—both academic ones and those oriented toward LDS audiences—that can publish what our scholars produce. We use our Maxwell Institute publishing imprint for a significant book series called “Living Faith” and for three periodicals: the *Mormon Studies Review*, the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, and *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*. Our Living Faith series invites LDS scholars to face the Saints as fellow members of the body of Christ: “Living Faith books are for readers who cherish the life of the mind and the things of the Spirit. Each title is a unique example of faith in search of understanding, the voice of a scholar who has cultivated a believing heart while engaged in the disciplines of the Academy.”⁵



“As scholars you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things.”

—PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL

In addition, we host lectures, colloquia, and conferences related to disciple-scholarship on religion. Most of these events can be viewed via videocast shortly thereafter. Indeed, our Maxwell Institute Podcast, our blog, a YouTube channel, and a variety of social media outlets make our scholars and events available to a wide audience. Please follow us on your preferred outlet!

This annual report places on display the scholars, staff, events, and publications that create the magic of our new Institute model. It has been a wonder to watch so many gifts and talents come together to help shape a future worthy of the Institute’s past. It has been a busy and productive year and a half, to say the least. Take a look at the accompanying list of significant activities and developments at the Institute since my appointment as executive director in May 2016 (see pages 8–9). All of these changes allow us to focus on nurturing disciple-scholars and creating a research community of increasing significance.

The Institute’s future is bright. We are working hard to be worthy of the name it bears. Each day when I enter the Institute, I pass Elder Maxwell’s apostolic portrait, a generous gift of the Maxwell family that hangs in our lobby. The image graces the cover of this annual report. It never fails to inspire and motivate me. His blend of brilliant engagement with the world of words and ideas and his profound discipleship form the model for our aspirations. In the end, we are convinced that inspired scholarly endeavor is integral to the work of the Restoration. As Richard Bushman puts it in the essay that immediately follows this introduction, “The strain of believing in unbelieving times is not a handicap or a burden. It is a stimulus and a prod. It is precisely out of such strains that creative work issues forth. And we can take satisfaction in knowing that we are in this together.”⁶ The real challenge and opportunity, then, rests in refusing either to abandon the life of faith for modernity’s charms or, conversely, to turn one’s back on the secular world of scholarship and thereby fail to help shape it. To be simultaneously scholar and disciple marks the more challenging but more rewarding and consequential path. We gladly claim it as our own in the service of Brigham Young University and the Latter-day Saints.

NOTES

- 1 Neal A. Maxwell, “The Disciple-Scholar,” in *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar*, ed. Henry B. Eyring (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 7.
- 2 Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
- 3 J. Spencer Fluhman, “The Triumph and Glory of the Lamb: Doctrine and Covenants 76,” *Ensign*, October 2017, 64–71.
- 4 Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” in *Classic Speeches: 22 Selections from Brigham Young University Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1994), 1:136–37.
- 5 This language appears in the front matter of each Living Faith title. Learn more about the Living Faith series at mi.byu.edu/livingfaith.
- 6 The essay is also featured in J. Spencer Fluhman, Kathleen Flake, and Jed Woodworth, eds., “*To Be Learned Is Good*”: *Essays in Honor of Richard Lyman Bushman* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2017), 295–306.

Significant Activities and Developments at the Maxwell Institute

- We formed a distinguished advisory board to help guide the Institute. Members come from both within and outside university life, but all share interests in religious scholarship and deep commitments to the Church and BYU. See page 2.
- We invited our first cohort of visiting scholars to the Institute in 2017. They formed a dynamic intellectual and spiritual community indeed, described by the University of Richmond's Terry L Givens as "the most exciting and fruitful academic environment I have ever experienced in thirty years in the profession." See his report, and those of other Institute scholars, on pages 32–47.
- Since May 2016, the Institute has hosted four conferences or colloquia, fourteen lectures, one summer seminar (and cosponsored two others), and one writing workshop for faculty. Through these events, our campus community and the interested public had access to some of the most prominent LDS and non-LDS scholars of religion. Several thousands more have watched event videos or followed via social media. See pages 50–55.
- Since May 2016, we have published significant pieces of scholarship, including sixteen books and five journal issues. These treated topics ranging from creativity and the gospel to the law of consecration, from Islamic mysticism to Christian martyrdom. These publications are detailed on pages 57–62. In addition, Institute scholars published many books and articles with other academic or popular presses. See our scholar reports on pages 32–47 for notices of their publications.
- The Institute formed a publishing partnership with BYU's Religious Studies Center (RSC) to produce our Living Faith book series and other Institute products. This included the transfer of two long-standing production staff members, Don Brugger and Shirley Ricks, to the RSC. These moves allow us to concentrate our efforts on research while also fostering the RSC's continued excellence as a press dedicated to religious scholarship.
- Two administrative employees at the Institute, Dr. Morgan Davis and Dr. Kristian Heal, were reclassified as university faculty, a move that allows each to focus on his own scholarly work.

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- Members of the Institute's Research Technology Group (who develop and maintain the WordCruncher software) were transferred to BYU's Digital Humanities Center to work more closely with colleagues in related fields.
 - We have nearly tripled the number of students at work in the Institute as either office staff, research assistants, public communications interns, or editorial assistants (see list on page 49). We believe that our mobilization of undergraduates in research makes us unique among prominent research institutes. Their work with top scholars in religion ranks among the richest mentoring experiences on campus—we aim to develop their gifts and talents as disciplescholars in their own right.
 - Dr. Brian Hauglid completed his term as director of the Institute's Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies in 2016. Thereafter the Center's leadership was restructured with an administrative committee to direct its activities. That committee includes the university's associate academic vice president for research and graduate studies, the Maxwell Institute executive director, and the chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU. We subsequently welcomed Dr. Hauglid to the Institute as a visiting fellow for a two-year term to conclude in 2019.
 - Dr. Joseph Spencer, a faculty member in BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture and a highly respected scholar of the Book of Mormon, was named editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*.
 - We partnered with the University of Illinois Press to produce the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* beginning with the next volume, number 27. This increases the periodical's academic reach and helps us trim production costs.
 - Our Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI), which includes several book series, was transferred to Brill Publishers in the Netherlands in November 2017. Redirecting production resources allows us to enhance our research program, and Brill is exceptionally well positioned to shepherd METI into an exciting next chapter.
 - Dr. Kristian Heal was named associate director of the Institute. Formerly director of the Institute's Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART), Heal now expends his scholarly and administrative gifts on the Institute at large. (After two decades of notable contributions, CPART was disbanded in September 2017 and its projects were reassigned to individual scholars.)
 - Our Institute controller, Jeremy King, was promoted to the position of Institute administrator. Sandra Shurtleff was hired as a staff assistant to the executive director. They, along with public communications specialist Blair Hodges, form a motivated and efficient Institute staff.



Finding the Right Words: Speaking Faith in Secular Times

RICHARD LYMAN BUSHMAN

Adapted from Bushman's essay in "To Be Learned Is Good": Essays on Faith and Scholarship in Honor of Richard Lyman Bushman (Maxwell Institute, 2017).

It warmed my heart to sense the friendship of so many people at the scholars' colloquium hosted by Brigham Young University's Neal A. Maxwell Institute in 2016. When I was young and had published only one book, I would dream of a funeral where people would talk of my scholarship in the presence of my children. If I was not to be around, I wanted them to know that their father's work was honorable. This symposium fulfilled that dream.

Jerry Bradford—the Maxwell Institute's then-executive director—was the one who thought up the idea of a festschrift. At first I had reservations. Grant Underwood had already organized a celebratory event at the American Historical Association complete with a reception afterward. My eightieth birthday was marked by a two-day symposium at the Springville Art Museum, generously lent us by Vern Swanson. I was beginning to feel overexposed. It was not my intent in living so long to give people additional opportunities to plan another conference on my behalf.

But when Spencer Fluhman, Jed Woodworth, and Kathleen Flake began putting plans together, I saw the possibilities.¹ I have long been interested in how Mormons integrate, exploit, elucidate, get around, or overcome their faith when writing and teaching. Ours is supposedly an encompassing religion. The word *consecration* plays a big part in Mormon worship. What would it mean to consecrate our scholarship? Is there any way we can integrate our personal religious lives and our work as scholars and teachers? Does our belief make any difference at all in our scholarship?

Sometimes I have dreamed that Mormonism could function as Marxism does in providing a set of issues and categories to be explored. What would be the Mormon equivalent of class or hegemony? Do Mormons have a conception of human nature that would play out in history?

None of these lines of thought have gotten me very far. In an essay entitled "Faithful History," I speculated on possible approaches to history derived from the scriptures, but none of them held up. I eventually concluded that we will know what a Mormon historiography will look like only when Mormons write it. I could find no systematic framework for approaching historical issues.²

The best I can come up with is an attitude toward the subjects of my historical inquiries—an impulse to take people on their own terms. At the conference for my eightieth birthday, Stuart Parker proposed that I practice a hermeneutics of generosity as contrasted with a hermeneutics of suspicion.³ I try to think the best of people, to understand the world as they see it. I once told a graduate student, Lauren Winner, in a moment of candor, that my belief in an afterlife affected my attitude toward historical subjects. I had to picture myself at some point talking face-to-face with the people I write about.

When my own deliberations did not take me very far, I was still interested in hearing what others would have to say. I thought it would be particularly delicious to have Mormons reflect on the interplay of their personal religious belief and their scholarship and teaching in the presence of non-Mormon scholars—not in the privacy of the Mormon ghetto but before a sympathetic but skeptical non-Mormon public. That would be a useful exercise for everyone: for Mormons to state their perspectives in a public, academic language, and for non-Mormon scholars to seek understanding of a religious outlook that may be foreign to them. And so the project was launched. Spencer Fluhman sent out the invitations, you accepted, and here we are.

As it turned out, the exercise proved to be rewarding for me. Working up my own comments for the occasion, I began to see my experience in a new light. I discovered that my search for a Mormon attitude toward writing history was entangled with my personal search for faith. The stories I planned to tell about how my attitudes about scholarship were formed actually were stories about working out my personal religious convictions.

I have told many times the story of how I lost my faith in God during my sophomore year at Harvard. By that time, I had decided to declare history and science as my field of concentration. It was a tiny concentration, newly put together by various people at Harvard, among them I. B. Cohen and Thomas Kuhn. At my request, Cohen took me on as a tutee if I would agree to read the things he was reading. Every few weeks we got together for an hour to talk over the readings.

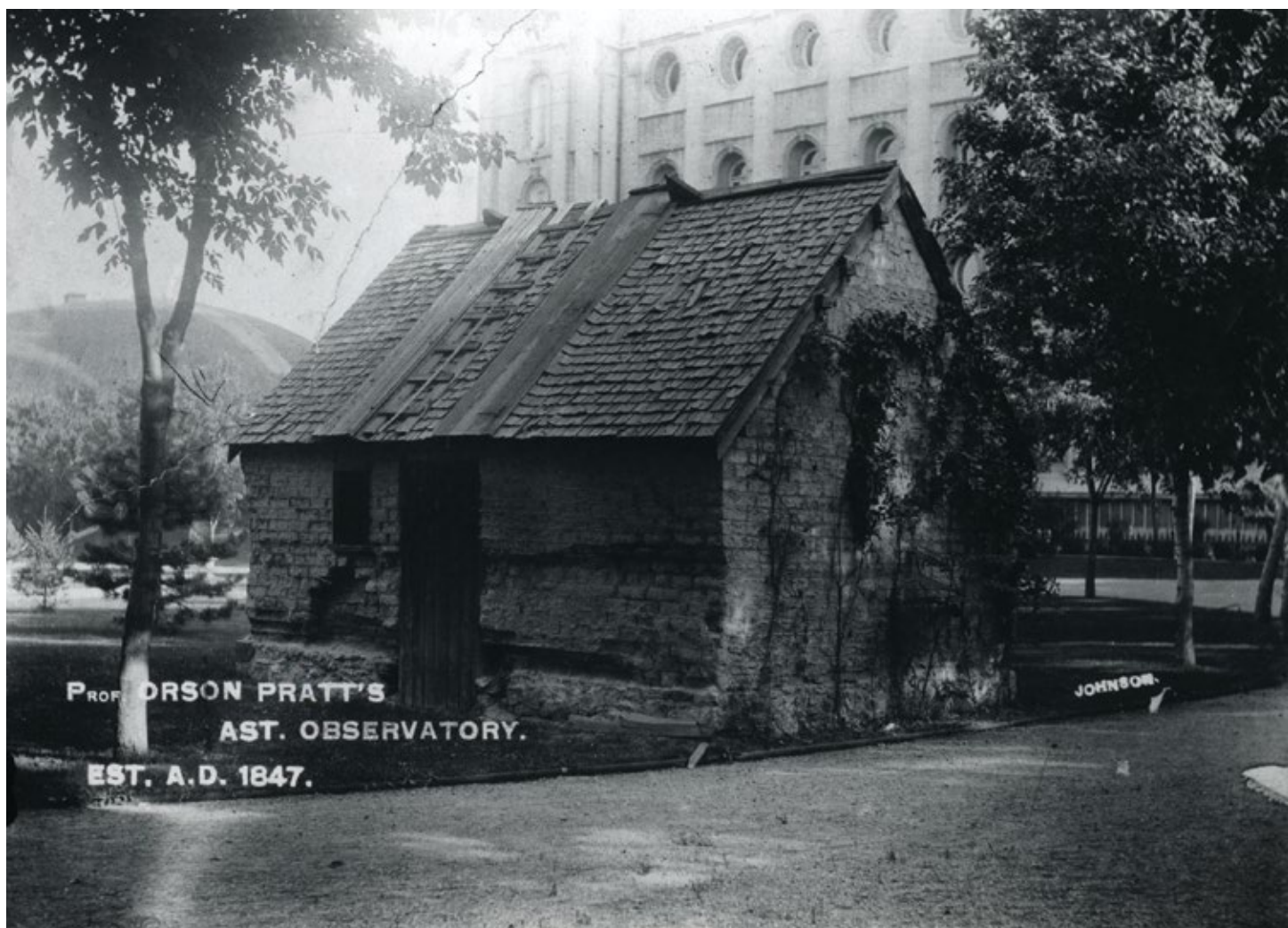
Cohen took a kind of fatherly interest in me and at one point chose to give me some advice. Knowing my background, he observed that people around here, meaning Harvard, thought Mormonism is garbage. It was not a malicious comment; he was simply trying to help me grow up.

I was set back a little, but his observation was not news to me. I had been hearing a lot about logical positivism, then current among undergraduates, and could see the implications for religion. I was in hostile territory, but I certainly was not going to back away from my faith on the advice of a Harvard professor or the positivist Bertrand Russell. Cohen was challenging everything I stood for, my people, my family, my friends back in Portland. I could not give all that up on the basis of one comment.

Looking back now, I realize that I was not just encountering one professor or one philosophy or even the intellectual culture that reigned at Harvard. I was encountering modernism itself with its skepticism about all things religious. I was glimpsing a world where, as Richard Rorty has said, the universe does not speak. Only we speak.⁴ There is no friendly intelligence beyond our own, nothing like spirit or soul, no angels, no gold plates, no divinely inspired prophets, no listener to our prayers. That empty universe was the modernist world I was called upon to confront.

As I have told the story for many years, the pressure of all these influences wore me down. By the end of my sophomore year, I had to admit that I was no longer sure that there was a God. Religious agnosticism seemed like the only viable position given what we know for sure. Before this loss of faith, I had been interviewed for a mission and was to enter the field in June. I carried through on my commitment and left for New England, my assigned mission field. Soon after arriving, I was asked by my mission president if I had a

I thought it would be particularly delicious to have Mormons reflect on the interplay of their personal religious belief and their scholarship and teaching in the presence of non-Mormon scholars.



During my first three months in the mission field I wrestled with my doubts, asked all the difficult questions, and prayed the agnostic's prayer for light.

arrived for the first conference and I was asked to speak, I said that at last I knew that the Book of Mormon was right. End of story.

That is a story Mormons like to hear, faith overcoming doubt and the doubter ending up in the right place. But I have always been troubled by one inconsistency in my own story. If I was such a doubter, why did I go into the mission field where I would be called on to testify of my beliefs virtually every day? At the time, I recognized there was a problem, but there was no anguished debate about going or not. I did not worry about

testimony. I told him no. I did not know there was a God or that any of the things Mormons believe had actually happened.

Then in the usual telling of the story, I go on to relate how during my first three months in the mission field I wrestled with my doubts, asked all the difficult questions, and prayed the agnostic's prayer for light. When the mission president

being hypocritical or misleading people. I was up front about my skepticism, but I did not hesitate to go. How could that be?

Not until a few years ago did I face up to this contradiction and reformulate the story. I have come to believe that in actuality my problem was not faith but finding the words to express my faith. The problem was that when Cohen said that Mormonism was garbage, I did not know how to reply. I knew that the words I had been taught in Sunday School or in my home would sound silly to him. I was left speechless.

Harvard is all about talking. Much of the education takes place at the dinner table where undergraduates yak on endlessly about everything. There was an unwritten rule that you could believe nearly anything, but you had to explain why. You did not need to persuade everyone, but you had to make sense. I needed a way to state my beliefs that would sound reasonable even if they were more than a little weird.

That was what I lacked at the end of my sophomore year. I had no critique of Russell or Nietzsche and no language for Mormonism that made sense over the dinner table. I think I believed all along through that year—why else the mission?—but I was dumb, unable to speak.

Over the years, what can be thought of as a growth in faith can be thought of as an improvement in language. I have learned to speak in a way that can be understood in a secular time. There is nothing particularly clever or overpowering about this speech. It just comes out of a perspective. Soon after I arrived at Claremont, the man soon to be dean of religious studies asked me to lunch. A Catholic himself, we had no sooner sat down than he blurted out his question: “How can you believe in Joseph Smith?” I replied in one sentence: “I find that when I live the Mormon way, I am the kind of man I want to be.” That was anything but a noble defense—there was nothing deep or clever—but the words did the trick.

Often I find the language only after I have muffed an occasion to use it. At the time, I fumble a reply and work out what I should have said only later. My colleague Ken Jackson runs a lunch table for scholars at Columbia’s Herbert H. Lehman Center for American History. Soon after *Rough Stone Rolling* came out, he asked me to lead a discussion.⁵ I made some comments about Joseph Smith, and then Andy Delbanco, the literary historian, asked what my personal relationship to the Book of Mormon was.

It was a logical point of inquiry and one I should have been able to answer in a second, but I froze. I was obviously paralyzed, and Jackson had to come to my rescue by saying a few words about his own religious belief. I froze because Mormons know precisely what they should say when asked this question. They should bear their testimony about the Spirit revealing the truth of the Book of Mormon. The answer is prescribed.

I froze because I knew that such an answer would not work. It would be like a lawyer defending the church in court. When the lawyer was asked why he knew the church was in the right in the case, it would not do to say it was because he knew that this was the true church of God. A testimony of that kind would not work in a courtroom. It would weaken the lawyer’s case rather than strengthen it. I felt the same way at the lunch table. Testimony was not the answer. The “I know” formula would not do.

Later I worked out another answer. I could simply say that I read the Book of Mormon as informed Christians read the Bible. As I read, I know the arguments against the book’s historicity, but I can’t help feeling that the words are true and the events happened. I believe it in the face of many questions.

Searching for the right words may seem like a simple and trivial response to the profound questions about religion coming out of modernism. Saying that living the Mormon way helps me be the kind of man I want to be does not begin to deal with the complexities of the modernist challenge. They may seem like a dodge, but I don’t think the right words are trivial. They are not merely a gambit.

I froze because Mormons know precisely what they should say when asked this question. I froze because I knew that such an answer would not work.

Words are our entry into another culture. They are the way we make ourselves intelligible in a strange land. They not only allow us to connect, to make ourselves understood. They show respect. We are making an effort to communicate in a way that can be understood. If we insist on using standard church language, we are in effect declaring our indifference. We force people to learn our language in order to understand us. We don't go halfway.

Out of this inquiry came questions about the nature of my faith. Was I really doubting during my sophomore year? Or was I only lacking for words? I think that by nature I am a believing person. It is the point of rest in the oscillations of my soul. But does that faith take a workable form until I find the right words? Do I need to speak it before it is real?

Learning how to speak the right words continues down to this very day, to this very moment when we have collected to talk to one another about what we believe.

One thing I know is that I could not have written *Rough Stone Rolling* without decades of practice in speaking my faith among colleagues of all persuasions. *Rough Stone Rolling* is not notable for its research. There are lots of people who know more about Joseph Smith than I do. What distinguishes the book is its tone, its language. It

is written in the vocabulary that I learned at Harvard at the dinner tables and in Cohen's tutorial. That is its primary virtue. The book is autobiographical in the sense that it comes out of a lifelong effort to make myself intelligible to unbelieving listeners. If you look closely at the book, you can see my personal faith and my scholarship intersecting.

Rough Stone Rolling may have been the culmination of a quest, but it is not the end. Learning how to speak the right words continues down to this very day, to this very moment when we have collected to talk to one another about what we believe. After Cohen, a number of others have been my tutors. I learned to talk from them. I offer a few examples of their tutelage in *"To Be Learned Is Good": Essays on Faith and Scholarship in Honor of Richard Lyman Bushman*.

As for my comrades in Mormon studies, I can only take pride in all you have accomplished. When the Mormon History Association was formed a half century ago, there was only a tiny handful of historians with PhDs. Now there are scores and scores in many humanistic and social science fields. Mormon studies and Mormon scholarship are thriving.

We are all over the map in our interests and approaches to the issues raised in this symposium. We pursue our investigations idiosyncratically, as I think we should. But I sense one common theme. I think we all feel some tension between our religious convictions and the secular times in which we live. In one way or another, modernism invades and unsettles our thinking, perhaps our thinking about our fields, perhaps our personal beliefs. What I hope we all realize is that this tension is not to be suppressed or regretted. Unanswerable as some questions are, we need not lament the discomfort they bring. The strain of believing in unbelieving times is not a handicap or a burden. It is a stimulus and a prod. It is precisely out of such strains that creative work issues forth. And we can take satisfaction in knowing that we are in this together.

NOTES

- 1 Fluhman, Woodworth, and Flake edited *"To Be Learned Is Good": Essays on Faith and Scholarship in Honor of Richard Lyman Bushman* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2017).
- 2 Richard L. Bushman, "Faithful History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4 (Spring 1969): 11–25.
- 3 Stuart Parker, "The Hermeneutics of Generosity: A Critical Approach to the Scholarship of Richard Bushman," *Journal of Mormon History* 38 (Summer 2012): 12–27.
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Learning by Study, Even Religious Studies

KATHLEEN FLAKE

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Thank you for that generous introduction, and thanks to the Maxwell Institute and the Maxwell family for this invitation to speak to you tonight. It is an honor to be part of such a great tradition, and I thank all of you for coming tonight.

I am on the religious studies faculty at the University of Virginia. My position is dedicated to including Mormonism among a variety of religions researched and taught about there. When people learn that I am a religious studies professor, they often start asking me questions about the Bible. Conversely, others are shocked to discover that I am personally religious and a practicing Mormon. Even I did not understand this thing called “religious studies” when I became a practitioner nearly twenty-five years ago upon entering the master’s program at the Catholic University of America (CUA). At the time, I was working as an attorney in Washington, DC, and had decided to pursue a long-standing interest in religion that had been sparked by the informal study of my own religion. I was, however, no longer satisfied with those informal methods. Maybe I intuited the truth that I needed to understand more about other religions in order to understand my own. Whatever the reason, and buoyed by the excuse that a graduate degree costs no more than what most lawyers spend to entertain themselves, I began to look for professional training.

A dear friend provided me with an introduction to a member of the CUA religious studies faculty. I contacted him and was invited to campus. I was surprised when he immediately ushered me down the hall to meet the department chair, Sister Mary Collins. Not unlike cartoons I’d seen, she looked at me sternly and impatiently, as if I were a bug on her windshield. I was used to being looked at as an assistant general counsel, and I realized that if I did enter this world, I would be starting over, a novice of sorts in a very different hierarchy. But first I would be tested: “Why do you want to study religion?” she asked impatiently.

I hadn’t expected things to get to that point quite so fast and was not prepared. But into my blank mind and then to my tongue, as if I were speaking in tongues, the words came. “I am interested in how people experience the divine, but I am more interested in how they communicate it. But most of all, I want to understand

how they convey that experience in a manner that can be duplicated by others.” This was, as I would later learn, the essence of what most would call “religion.” And so, with an enthusiasm that surprised me, Sister Mary Collins immediately began handing me admission papers, and when I said I hadn’t yet taken the GRE, she said that was of no consequence—“just take the Miller Analogies Test,” which is a walk in the park for a lawyer. Two months later, I found myself surrounded by nuns, priests, and monks studying two thousand years of Catholic liturgy. I felt as if I were a child in a candy store. It was wonderful, but more to the point, I began to see what she had seen. What mattered to her was whether my interests were intellectual, not devotional; that I was coming to graduate school to understand the human, not the heavenly, condition of things. I wanted to know what churches do, not which church is true. And that is about as good a definition as there is of what my interest has continued to be.

It continues to be very important to me that Mormon studies does not hold itself out as proving the truth claims of Mormonism. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does a very fine job of tackling that question without my help. But, again, the tools of the academy are not capable of undertaking the truth question. They can only probe and attempt to comprehend phenomena that enter the material world—literally in the hard sciences and humanly in the soft, human sciences. So, using a list of phenomena that is popular if not perfect, we study the following kinds of human thought and practice:

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Ritual: forms and orders of ceremonies (private and/or public); often regarded as revealed.

Narrative and mythic texts: stories (often regarded as revealed) that work on several levels. Sometimes narratives fit together into a fairly complete and systematic interpretation of the universe and a human’s place in it.

Experiential and emotional states and experiences: dread, guilt, awe, mystery, devotion, liberation, ecstasy, inner peace, bliss (private).

Social and institutional forms: belief system shared and attitudes practiced by a group; often rules for identifying community membership and participation (public).

Ethical and legal ideals: rules about human behavior; often regarded as revealed.

Doctrinal and philosophical principles: systematic formulation of religious teachings in an intellectually coherent form.

Material objects: ordinary objects or places that symbolize or manifest the sacred or supernatural.¹

Before I say more about how we do this, let me back up and give you a sense of what I want to talk about here. My title comes, as you no doubt recognize, from the eighty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants and its revelatory assertion that the upbuilding of Zion would require the Latter-day Saints to seek out of the best books words of wisdom and, further, “to seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (v. 118). Many principles could be deduced from these words. My emphasis is on what appears to be a very plainly stated command that the faithful should value and obtain secular, not just spiritual, knowledge.

In many ways, this is self-evident. Medicine is the most obvious example. In the West especially, the majority of religious people believe in healing by science and also by faith. It is no less true that law, business administration, communication, and many other forms of worldly wisdom have always been of benefit to religious endeavors. I hope to convince you that the faithful can likewise derive benefit from the best books and words of wisdom found in religious studies as an academic and therefore professionally monitored body of knowledge.



DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Why is it necessary to make this case—a case that other professionals, even historians and musicians and English teachers, do not have to make? It is in no small part because Christians have come to oppose *reason* to *faith* and place the subject of religion in two very separate programs of study. Both are academic, both highly credentialed. But they have different ends in mind and therefore apply different standards. The one is called “religious education,” the other “religious studies.” Questions regarding the virtue and veracity of a particular religion fall under the first category and are pursued in denominationally sponsored institutions, including colleges and divinity schools. Brigham Young University is a good example. It places its study of religion in a school independent of other academic units and entitled simply “Religious Education.” Its nearly seventy faculty are explicitly commissioned to “assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life’ by teaching

the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.”² In sum, religious education at BYU is devoted to sustaining and enriching the faith of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The second and contrasting category is usefully illustrated by the institution where I now teach, the University of Virginia’s Department of Religious Studies. The department is not independent of other academic units and describes itself as a field of study historically and intellectually “rooted in the humanities and liberal arts.” Naturally, then, it is administered within the College of Arts and Sciences and accountable to the University’s Graduate School in the granting of master’s and doctoral degrees. No single tradition dominates. Rather, “Tibetan Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity in the past and present, the religions of South and East Asia, classical and contemporary Islam, the religions of Africa and the African Diaspora—all constitute key areas of inquiry and research, both in themselves and for comparative study.” The department’s relationship to faith claims is respectful but is stated in terms that reiterate its definitive locus in the secular academy: “Recognizing the significance of religious commitments, we endeavor to help students think in critical, thoughtful, imaginative, and responsible ways about their own religious commitments and those of others.”³

Ultimately, religious studies is a form of comparative anthropology. It compares and contrasts religious ideas, symbols, and practices to identify patterns and anomalies that illuminate and thereby help us better understand the nature of religious people, their individual and collective activity, institutions, and ideas. Thus, like all humanities and social sciences, religious studies seeks to understand the human condition, not the reality of the divine nor the truth or goodness of any given activity, institution, or idea. Or, as has been stated elsewhere, “religious studies is about *studying* religion, not *doing* it.”⁴ More to the point, as is true for students of all academic disciplines, students of religious studies “are not students of some subject matter, but students of problems.”⁵ In sum, religious studies scholars cannot tell you which church is true. They can help you understand religiously identified people and their chosen ways of being in the world. In this, one can best see the historical roots of this field in anthropology and philology, though today it has branched out to employ a variety of methods and theories.

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Religious studies’ disinterest in religious veracity can be a great disappointment, even concern, to many. Let me give one example that illustrates the importance of understanding the difference between religious education and religious studies. It comes from a scholar more inclined to religious education who shares his alarm at the growth in religious studies’ attention to Mormonism because, he argues, only faithful Mormons and, ideally, LDS Church leaders can understand and have a right to explain Mormonism. “Would,” he challenges, “a graduate student who has spent 45 hours in a semester-long class on Mormonism really have the hubris to think that he would have anything worthwhile to tell the typical Church member who spends at least 150 hours a year in Church meetings alone (to say nothing of the countless hours outside the Sunday block)?”⁶ In one sense, it’s worse than he imagines. I send my undergraduate students to observe Latter-day Saint meetings as part of my course on Mormonism and American culture. So his challenge gave me pause: what do they learn, and is any of it worthwhile to the faithful?

Almost without exception, my students remark on the LDS Church’s practice of lay leadership.⁷ Trained to observe, not to judge, they make a number of observations that might be of interest, if not of use, to Latter-day Saints. “They seemed to have the hour planned with bishops talking and then members of the church telling stories,” observed one evangelical student. “This stood out to me in the sense that worship didn’t seem to be as much about biblical interpretations,” he reasoned, “at least on this particular Sunday, and it seemed to be more about trying to make a personal connection.” Another student, who had no religious experience, came to the same conclusion, but by analyzing the physical setting. After an extended description, she concluded: “I

found a space that valued simplicity and put the attention on the speakers. In retrospect, this simplicity and people-focused design was on par with the relationship-oriented focus of the LDS Church. It makes sense that a church that places heavy emphasis on family structure and interaction would make the congregants the most important and noticeable aspect of the room. By drawing attention to people rather than religious decorations, there is a tacit understanding that human relationships within the congregation are what bind the church together.” In class we build on such insights to see other effects from this ethic of relationship, especially with respect to the emphasis on personal growth through lay leadership and the charity required of followers to sustain the efforts of novice leaders, teachers, and sermonizers. This is a simple example but one that shows the extent to which a religious studies approach to Mormonism, even when employed at a rudimentary level, can produce genuine insight into Mormonism, useful perhaps even to those who practice the religion.

The concerned religious educator is right, of course: religious studies does not, or at least does not intend to, help students become “built up in their faith and commitment.” Moreover, I agree that the faithful have other valuable ways of understanding what they do when they are “doing” their religion. I would even go so far as to admit the religious educator’s implicit concern that our focus on function, not faith, can be dangerous to those who use our methods to test their faith. They will be, at best, disappointed. At worst, their misplaced faith in the academy can turn into an equal and opposite critical naivete that endangers what religious faith they have.

But these dangers are not inherent in religious studies, but rather arise from its naive use. I venture to say the chief danger lies in a polemical insistence—on either side—that religion must be human *or* divine, when it is susceptible to both explanations. Religion is an appeal to something beyond the material world, and notwithstanding that claim and hope, it is necessarily materially, temporally, and humanly perceived and experienced. When I say “necessarily,” I mean whatever the reality of God, that reality is communicated in a

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particular or human time and conveyed by human mediators. In other words, Joseph Smith left much direct, material evidence of his life and thought, but his God did not. Thus, religious studies lays claim to understanding only the human half of that equation.

So without fussing any further about these tensions between religious education and religious studies, let me conclude with a more complex example of how religious studies attempts to

understand Mormonism. I will use my own, not my students’, research and analysis. My focus will be on the question—or, as mentioned above, the problem—that prompts my analysis, not the methods or theories that inform it. These tools—theories of ritual and symbol, narrative function, gender and power, for example—craft and bear, like scaffolding, the weight of my conclusion. If it is agreeable, you may think it simply common sense. Though that is not quite true, it is true enough, and more is not required here. Like a painting that can be appreciated without knowing the technique or school that produced it, scholarship may be judged by its product, not by its source of manufacture.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND SALVIFIC SIGNIFICANCE OF POWER

The problem I take up this evening is the nature and significance of power in Mormonism. What does that tell us about how religion constructs and maintains the human experience of transcendent empowerment and deploys it in the social field? Let me begin with the observation that any comparison of Mormonism to other Christian religions shows that it has an idiosyncratic view of the glorifying necessity of power and its temporal instantiation. Its founder, Joseph Smith, says as much in the canonized portion of his history. Looking back on his first religious experience, he concludes that he was told not to join any church because they all taught

“doctrines . . . having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”⁸ If one needed other evidence of the significance of power to Mormonism, the “Council in Heaven” narrative provides strong evidence.⁹

As an account of human origins, the story of a premortal council in heaven grounds Mormonism’s cosmogony in a power struggle. It explains existence in terms of an effort to empower humanity and a power struggle over how that is to be done. As a Christian creation narrative, it not only accounts for Christ’s status as the Anointed One but also makes this anointing part of what it means to “follow him.” Ultimately, Smith taught that obtaining the power of God was the reason for which humanity was brought into being. It was God’s “work” and God’s “glory” to endow humanity with the divine creative power, defined as ultimately a capacity to engender higher life or “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹⁰ Several questions naturally arise from these two narratives of the First Vision and the Council in Heaven: What is this power, and how do humans participate in it? These are large questions. My goal is not to definitively answer them here, but rather to demonstrate a religious studies approach to them and how such an approach can benefit, albeit indirectly, those who practice Mormonism.

Most simply stated, the power that Smith sought to convey to his followers was his own, with the possible exception of the seership, by which he produced and redacted scripture.¹¹ Smith intended that the faithful not only “speak in the name of the Lord,” or prophetically, but that they exercise ecclesiastical and temporal leadership as priests and even high priests to the fullest extent imaginable from the biblical account in both Old and New Testaments. Smith’s ultimate vision for this power was existential: By means of eternally progressing through ritually marked degrees or “endowments of power from on high”—not merely

spontaneous, Pentecostal holiness—disciples would become saints whose “incomings and outgoings,” or quotidian acts, would be “in the name of the Lord.”¹² Indeed, as we shall see, Smith taught that this progression was no less than the incremental realization of the biblical promise that, in Christ, the faithful “might be partakers of the divine nature.”¹³ Before further defining this power, let me say a few words about its operation.

It is apparent from Mormonism’s ritual practices of ordination, endowment, and sealing that Smith structured this promised power within three parallel sites of authority: priestly office, council, and kinship. These three organizational structures serve to contain, as well as facilitate, the practical expression of Smith’s restoration of power. The Church’s cultural context can tempt us to see this tripartite division of offices, councils, and kinship in the pattern of early American constitutionalism: a separation of powers with individuals assigned to a role in one site or serving serially in another. This was not the case. Rather, Smith gave the faithful authority in all sites simultaneously. Potentially every person was an officer of the Church and member of councils, as well as being related by kinship rites to sacramentalized families. Consequently, the nature and scope of their authority shifted depending on where they stood at any given moment. A practical effect of this arrangement was to ensure that no individual had ultimate authority in every circumstance, including Smith himself, who was subject to trial by the high council.¹⁴ Thus no person, regardless of the degree of power held, was a law unto himself, but always subject to the authority of others. This stabilized and restrained the operation of priestly power in the Church and continues to do so today.¹⁵

This is another example of something a practicing Mormon may have experienced but may not (and again need not) have understood as ideologically or functionally significant. If the President of the Church comes to your house for family home evening, who has authority to determine the course and conduct of the gathering? As you know, the head of the household, not the Church President, presides. The President’s status shifts as he

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moves, in this case to the home, where unless he is in his own home, he is subject to what I am calling *kinship priesthood*. Such shifting of status has been so naturalized within Mormonism that it seldom, if ever, rises to consciousness. You might be thinking, “What’s the problem with that?” and, again, I would agree with you that one need not understand it in order to *do* Mormonism. It is, however, regrettable not to appreciate Smith’s particular genius for defining and organizing, even capacitating, Mormonism’s particular brand of faith as a power and the means by which he fostered and regulated its expression.¹⁶ Indeed, Smith’s organizational genius is, it seems to me, equal to his scriptural genius. And that’s saying a lot.

NARRATIVE FUNCTION

Let’s turn now to Smith’s scripture-writing capacity, still using Mormonism to think about the “problem,” as Karl Popper uses the term, of how religion “giv[es] meaning and shape to the world, . . . stating what is really real, self-founded” about human exercise of divine power.¹⁷ Today the question of what is real is inextricably bound up with the historical. Appreciation for how stories work—or, more technically, the literary function of narratives—allows for more space between these two terms. As the philosopher Mary Warnock has stated with respect to debates about the historicity of the Bible: they “show a failure to understand the full part that imagination plays not only in religion but in literature, history, and in life itself, lived as it is through time, yet demanding a constant effort to make sense of time, to turn events into stories.”¹⁸ Analogously, it can be said that the nature and function of Smith’s texts can best be understood (by outsiders to the faith) not in terms of historical veracity but as a means to “make sense of time,” specifically biblical time. Or, in terms of narrative theory, Smith’s myth-making may be best understood in terms of its capacity to make “human time,” that combination of *what is already* (our past) with *what is anticipated* (our future) to comprise the reality out of which we act in the present.¹⁹

Both insiders and outsiders can benefit from appreciating that by maintaining the narrative function of the Bible in his own writings, Smith made more than a claim to history. He gave his believing readers a sense of what was experientially real, not merely philosophically true. Wittgenstein’s observation about Christianity is equally true of Mormonism: “Christianity is not,” he said, “based on a historical truth; rather it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to historical narrative, rather: . . . make a quite different place in your life for it.”²⁰ Attention to narrative function furthers Wittgenstein’s point by positing that the believing reader’s commitment is not partial. The reader does not make “a place” for the narrative, but enters—takes his or her life experience—into the narrative as a world of possibility.

Now let’s turn to the stories themselves, specifically Abraham and Sarah’s story as retold in the Book of Abraham. Absent comparison to his contemporaries, it is difficult to appreciate the sophistication of Joseph

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Smith’s narrative content and style. I can only recommend that you see what such comparison yields. My point here is, rather, to discuss this extraordinary text as it relates to divine power and human glorification. Please remember, though, that something besides the power of description is at work in this story. The Book of Abraham does not present its readers with a fact to be assented to, but rather draws them into a malleable reality

by means of the malleable plots that traditionally provided the basis for Jewish and Christian ethos and ethic. Like all that Smith did, it was dedicated to restoring power, an intentional “ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, . . . a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers . . . from the days of Adam even to the present time.”²¹



ABRAHAM AND SARAH AS MODEL "HOLY PROGENITORS"

Among America's early nineteenth-century restorationists, Joseph Smith was distinguished by his attention to the Christian Old Testament. A short three months after publishing the Book of Mormon, he began a charismatic redaction of the King James Version of Genesis. The results show him to be especially interested in its portrayal of the Israelite covenant and the prophet-patriarchs who negotiated its maintenance. When, five years later, a collection of Egyptian papyri came to his attention, it provided the catalyst for an entirely new scripture. Another charismatic translation of a language he did not know, the Book of Abraham, as its title suggests, gave an extended account of the origins of the Abrahamic covenant and its terms. The text not only situated Mormonism within the ideological frame of Abrahamic religions but also articulated, normed, and illustrated his doctrine of deification, or "eternal progression."

The Book of Abraham portrays three moments of divine intervention in Abraham's life that comport with the broad strokes of the biblical account. But it makes of those strokes a very different picture. It begins with Abraham as a seeker after the blessings of his prophet-patriarch fathers. It climaxes with his obtaining the blessings of land, priesthood, and progeny that informs Israel's self-understanding; it concludes with a moment of instruction into divine cosmology that gives purpose to the previous two events.

In the KJV, God surprises Abraham with the promise "I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. . . . I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger . . . for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:2, 8). In this last phrase is the oft-repeated theological key: Israel will have a special relationship to God that constitutes them a "kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6) and, in the eyes of early Christians, a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). By contrast, Smith's account depicts Abram as having sought this promise: "Finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me," says Abraham, the first-person narrator, "I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same" (Abraham 1:2). He is a seeker "for the blessings of the fathers," or the intimate relationship with God possessed by his ancestors, the great biblical patriarchs. Even more specifically, Smith's account has him explain the following: "I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed" (Abraham 1:4–5).

In both accounts, the realization of the desired covenant occurs after Abram has left his father's house. The KJV situates this event in relation to the sacrifice of Isaac: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast

not withheld thy son, thine only son . . . I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed . . . ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:16–18). Smith's version makes no mention of the Akedah and instead situates the promise of the covenant in relation to Terah's attempt to sacrifice his son, Abram, to the gods of Egypt and, therefore, situates the covenant in rela-

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tion not to Abraham's great faith but to a terribly broken father-son relationship remedied by the fatherhood of God. The hieroglyph in the Book of Abraham portrays Abram on the altar and God coming to the rescue with his angels and his words: "Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house . . . ; Abraham, my son, . . . I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father. . . . As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God" (Abraham 1:16–19). In Smith's account, to the same degree that Noah's boat saved the human race physically, Abraham's covenant will save it spiritually. This future unfolds once Abram is safely away from his father's house and seeking to create his own.

In Mamre, God appears to Abram and offers him what is called the “Abrahamic covenant.” In American tradition, the significance of this covenant is largely understood through New Testament theologizing on Gentile or convert adoption to it through baptism. That yearning for Christian inclusion in Abraham’s progeny and its promises is further revealed in mid-twentieth-century awareness of the phrase “rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham.” Smith’s revisionist account of the theophany has God anticipating this yearning. Several verses in the Book of Abraham not only add specificity to the content of Israel’s priestly entitlement but also stipulate that its purpose is the extension of its blessings and its powers to others. “Thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abraham 2:9). Here the KJV promise that “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” is defined as a salvific endeavor, a gospel ministry (Genesis 22:18).

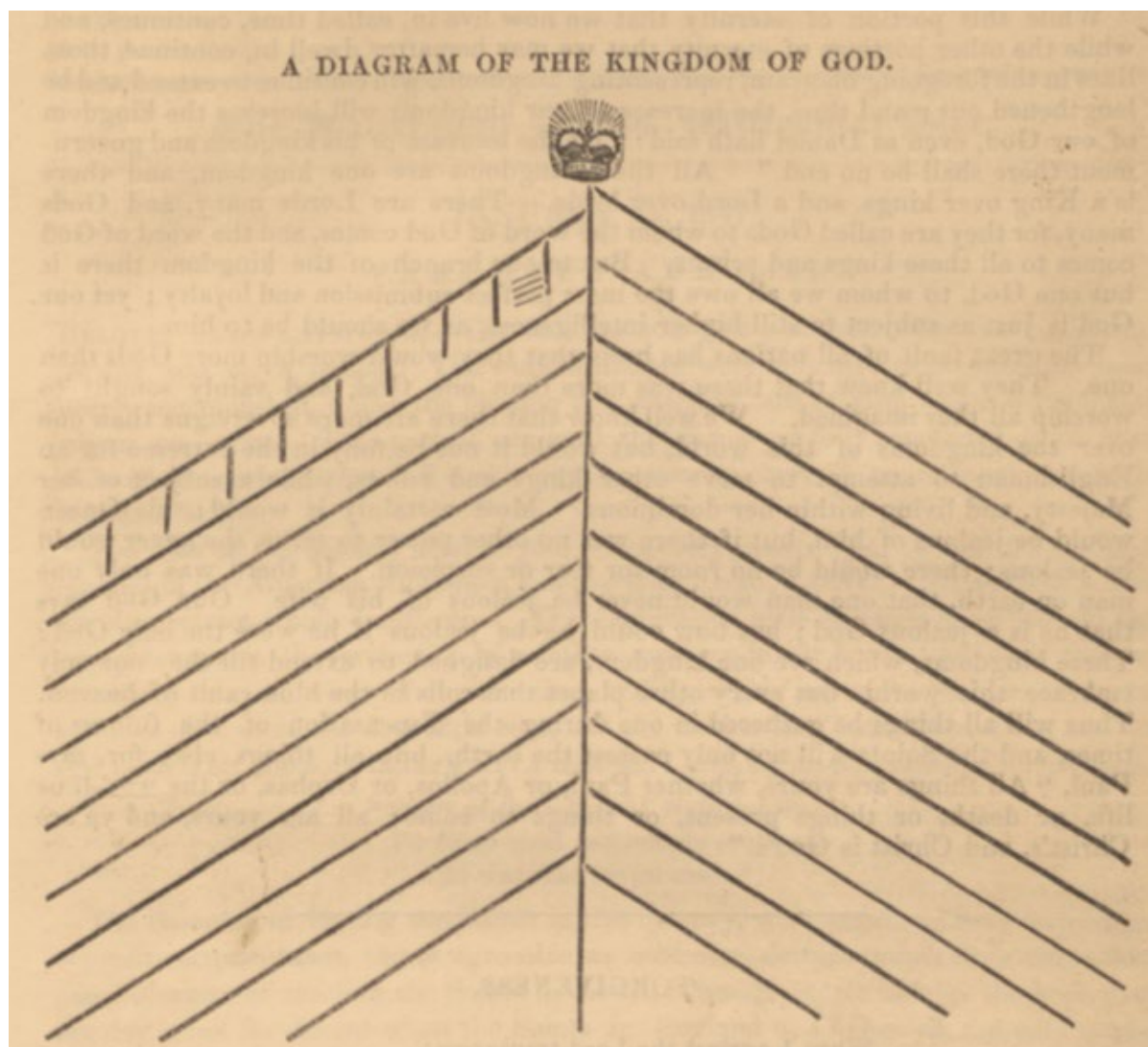
As such, the very purpose of Israel’s election is to make others elect. Abraham’s seed are not merely possessors of, but instruments for disseminating, the capacity to mediate between heaven and earth. Thus the text summarizes: “As many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abraham 2:10). Abram’s patriarchal capacity thus extends beyond biological progeny and participates in what reconstitutes him as “Abraham,” the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:4).

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But “patriarchal” is a bit of a misdirection here. None of this was possible without Sarai—or, we should say, the now-renamed “Sarah,” a mother of nations—having not just physical fertility but some sense of dominion and right, even a capacity to bestow priestly right to her progeny. Here, too, the text adds specificity, but in a manner that adds force to the covenant’s biological dimension of priestly birthright. The concluding description of the covenant recapitulates its terms: “In thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and . . . in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings . . . of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11). This makes explicit what is implicit in the KJV’s simpler statement of the promise: “to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Genesis 17:7). Smith’s redaction emphasizes that Abraham’s covenantal blessings and rights do not come only by relation to God but also and necessarily in relation to Sarai. Without her, however grand these promises were, they were unrealizable. The new Abraham is not without the new Sarah (or, for that matter, Hagar and Ketura) in achieving his sought-for “blessings of the fathers . . . and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace” (Abraham 1:2). What he learned was that none of the gifts were possible outside of marriage.

Ultimately, Smith’s modern textual contribution to the Abraham mythos was to overtly link the great patriarch’s spiritual and literal fatherly capacities to his status as a husband. In contrast to a long Christian history that deemed marriage as being a defense against carnality or, at best, a temporal good for social order, Smith invested in marriage a mutually held reciprocity of priestly power, exemplified in the biblical Abraham. In 1835, the year Smith began to redact the Abraham saga, the Church’s newspaper editorialized, “We may prepare ourselves for a kingdom of glory . . . where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord,” drawing language from 1 Corinthians 11:11.²² For Smith, Abraham and Sarah’s marital priesthood was the means by which glory, or the divine nature, was to be inculcated in the parties and their progeny and, thus, “all the families of the earth . . . blessed, even with the blessings of . . . life eternal” (Abraham 2:11).

In 1842, the year he published the Book of Abraham, Smith began to implement the practice of plural marriage, initiated men into the first temple rites, and organized women in a Church council directed by a



revelatory presidency and given salvific and ecclesiastical status. All of this activity was an expression of Smith's investment of sanctifying power in the Nauvoo Temple's new rite of marital sealing that made overt the implicit gendered reciprocity of Abrahamic priesthood. I have written about this elsewhere, and it is its own story.²³ But it must suffice here to summarize the significance of the rite using its earliest extant language, dating to a few months after publication of the Book of Abraham.

The sealing ordinance concluded with the officiator "commanding in the name of the Lord [that] all those powers ["obtained by the Holy Fathers" and possessed by "the Holy Progenitors"] concentrate in you and through to your posterity." With these words, the priestly authority of parents and "Holy Progenitors," or "Priest Hood" birthrights, were bestowed upon—or in the language of the rite, "concentrated in" or "vested in"—the bride and groom. The couple was also promised "immortality and eternal life," the attributes of the divine life. Later rituals would equate "eternal life" with a capacity for the "continuation of lives" and the very status of godliness. You can hear in this the promises to Abraham and Sarah. The 1852 version of the sealing

rite incorporates this blessing and makes clear it is a grant of power, specifically “the blessings of thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, and exaltations, together with the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”²⁴


To have a definition of this power, however, as an endowment of divine capacity to engender spiritual life does not, of itself, tell us what this looks like—how it is to be used beyond the exhortation to “be fruitful and multiply,” which concludes the sealing rite. Here, too, the Abraham narrative is instructive. The cliché is true that a picture is worth a thousand words; it is as true that such pictures compensate for the inadequacy of words—words, for example, that could explain glorification, either in terms of deity or deification. Though Abraham “talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made” (Abraham 3:11), that conversation took place with a particular illustration readily at hand. Indeed, you could say that it dominated the conversation. “And it was in the night time when the Lord spake these words unto me” (Abraham 3:14), we are told. More specifically, as God spoke “his hand was stretched out,” and he said, “Behold I will show you all these” (Abraham 3:12).

In this last vignette, God revealed to Abraham the laws that govern existence by showing him a vision of the heavens and the ordering of heavenly bodies. Because of its placement in the larger text, the vision serves as a lesson in how Abraham’s patriarchal power functions. It is possibly best appreciated by contrasting two images. The first is a chart drafted by Orson Hyde, one of Smith’s contemporaries. When first published in 1847, it was titled “A Diagram of the Kingdom of God.” It offers a view of “the order and unity of the Kingdom of God,” presumably based on Smith’s lectures on patriarchal priesthood.²⁵ (See the figure on page 26.) The chart interprets the operation of divine power in strict hierarchy: vertically arranged in rigidly static hierarchies. Though dated, it is not far from contemporary views of Mormon priesthood authority as a bureaucratic or rationally ordered system of power over others in cascading ranks of authority.

Though dated, it is not far from contemporary views of Mormon priesthood authority as a bureaucratic or rationally ordered system of power over others in cascading ranks of authority.

The second illustration (see page 28) is a contemporary photograph taken by the Hubble Space Telescope.²⁶ It is suggested by Abraham’s account of his nighttime conversation, which allows us to imagine God’s hand sweeping the breadth of the dark night sky and inviting Abraham to note the detail of the various orbs of light and, more particularly, their relationship to one another. As you can tell by contrasting the two images, they present very different views of how power operates. The one portrays a strictly vertical, rigid, and static system that appears to rely on degrees of formal power over power to sustain its order. There is no difference among the participants of the order except in terms of their relative authority. The other is horizontal, fluid, diverse, and complex. Difference is as dominating here as sameness is in the other image. Even if one does not attribute agency to these bodies, connections among them are both diverse and dependent on their constitutive characteristics. Not formal or external law but their natural degrees of light and energy, range of motion, weight and size, and density and mass determine the relative distances among them in fields of gravity.

Possibly, the inclusion of gravity as the organizing principle is the most instructive difference between these two conceptions of how divine power functions among humans. As Smith said in his most directly philosophical reflection on power, “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.”²⁷ Thus, he continued, “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). By these characteristics, others would know the hierarch’s “faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death” (v. 44)—or eternal. Furthermore, if “thy bowels . . . be full of charity towards all,” one was promised “an everlasting



Imagine God's hand sweeping the breadth of the dark night sky and inviting Abraham to note the detail of the various orbs of light and, more particularly, their relationship to one another.



dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (vv. 45, 46). Though among the most poetic of his writings, Smith’s story of Abraham comes, I think, closer to communicating the existential nature of power and its glorifying necessity within Mormon thought and practice. When com-

*When combined with Smith’s
marriagelike sealings as ritual
enthronement to divine power,
Abraham’s vision of the cosmos, like
the one Moses received in Smith’s
redaction of the Bible, both instructed
and capacitated the faithful in the
divine significance of human kinship
as an expression and extension of
God’s saving and exalting capacity
or power as the fullest expression of
human potential.*

bined with Smith’s marriagelike sealings as ritual enthronement to divine power, Abraham’s vision of the cosmos, like the one Moses received in Smith’s redaction of the Bible, both instructed and capacitated the faithful in the divine significance of human kinship as an expression and extension of God’s saving and exalting capacity or power as the fullest expression of human potential.

So it is now time to return to earth, or to the more mundane point of my lecture. Religious studies is not and does not pretend to be the means by which you can know which church to join or how to convince someone to join your church. It does, however, have considerable wisdom about what it is to be a church or, more properly, a religion. For the faithful, the benefit of religious studies will always be tangential to their purpose of obtaining more faith, but that does not make it hostile to faith. Not unlike a doctor in relation to bodily function or a lawyer in relation to public order or

a musical theorist in relation to songs you sing, religious studies is worth the attention of the devout, if they observe its limits and appreciate its possibilities. In other words, there is good to be had in learning by faith and by study, even religious studies.

Kathleen Flake is the Richard L. Bushman Professor of Mormon Studies at the University of Virginia. Author of *The Politics of Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot* and several scholarly essays, she is on the editorial board of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* and the *Mormon Studies Review*. She has held office in the American Academy of Religion and the American Society of Church History.

NOTES

- 1 Lightly adapted from Ninian Smart's "The Seven Dimensions of Religion," <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Suydam/Reln101/Sevendi.htm> (accessed December 20, 2017).
- 2 "Religious Education," <https://religion.byu.edu/departments> (accessed December 20, 2017). "It is anticipated that students will achieve a balanced education, will leave BYU as built up in their faith and commitment to the Lord and his kingdom as they are prepared to engage the world of ideas and work through education or training in their chosen field." "Questions and Policies: Frequently Asked Questions," <https://religion.byu.edu/questions-and-policies> (accessed December 20, 2017).
- 3 "The Department of Religious Studies: Who We Are," <http://religiousstudies.as.virginia.edu/content/who-we-are> (accessed December 20, 2017).
- 4 Ivan Strenski, "The Proper Object of the Study of Religion: Why It Is Better to Know Some of the Questions Than All of the Answers," in *The Future of the Study of Religion: Proceedings of the Congress 2000*, ed. Slavica Jakelic and Lori Pearson (London: Brill, 2004), 199.
- 5 Strenski, "Proper Object of the Study of Religion," 145, quoting Karl R. Popper, "The Nature of Philosophical Problems and Their Roots in Science."
- 6 John Gee, "Whither Mormon Studies?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013), <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/whither-mormon-studies> (accessed December 20, 2017).
- 7 Papers in the author's possession. Student identities remain confidential to respect privacy.
- 8 Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also Matthew 15:8–9: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men." All biblical citations are to the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
- 9 See the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.
- 10 Moses 1:39.
- 11 For a discussion of this dimension of Smith's work, see Kathleen Flake, "Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith's Narrative Canon," *Journal of Religion* 87/4 (October 2007): 497–527.
- 12 See passim Doctrine and Covenants, sections 1, 84, 88, and 107.
- 13 2 Peter 1:4 (NIV "participate in the divine nature").
- 14 For a discussion of the moral dimension, not merely ecclesiastical functioning, of power in Mormonism, see Kathleen Flake, "Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail: A Study in Canonization," *Journal of Religion* 92/4 (October 2012): 515–26.
- 15 For further discussion, see Kathleen Flake, "Ordering Antinomy: An Analysis of Mormonism's Priestly Offices, Councils, and Kinship," *Journal of Religion and American Culture* 26/2 (Summer 2016): 139–83.
- 16 It is worth noting that early Mormons equated faith with power, allowing that even God acted by faith to bring the world into being. See "First Theological Lecture on Faith, circa January–May 1835," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed December 20, 2017, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/first-theological-lecture-on-faith-circa-january-may-1835/2>.
- 17 W. Taylor Stevenson, "Myth and the Crisis of Historical Consciousness," in *Myth and the Crisis of Historical Consciousness*, ed. L. W. Gibbs and W. T. Stevenson (Missoula: University of Montana and Scholars Press, 1975), 5.
- 18 Mary Warnock, "Religious Imagination," in *Religious Imagination*, ed. James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 155–56.
- 19 Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 354.
- 20 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright with Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 32; quoted in Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xxvii.
- 21 D&C 128:18.
- 22 [William W. Phelps,] "Letter No. 8," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 9 (June 1835): 130; cited in Kathleen Flake, "The Development of Early Latter-day Saint Marriage Rites, 1831–1853," *Journal of Mormon History* 41/1 (January 2015): 91.
- 23 See Flake, "Early Latter-day Saint Marriage Rites," 77–103.
- 24 [Orson Pratt,] "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1, no. 2 (February 1853): 31–32.
- 25 Orson Hyde, "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *Millennial Star* 9 (15 January 1847): 23–24, in *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 297.
- 26 Image of spiral galaxy, Messier 101 (M101). See CBS News, "Breathhtaking Hubble Telescope Images," <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/hubble-space-telescope-25-year-anniversary/> (accessed December 20, 2017).
- 27 Codified in D&C 121:36, 41, and 44–46. For further discussion of conceptions of power in the Liberty Jail letter, see Kathleen Flake, "Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail: A Study in Canonization," *Journal of Religion* 92/4 (October 2012): 515–26.

2016–2017 Institute Scholars

PHILIP BARLOW

NEAL A. MAXWELL FELLOW

It has been a fulfilling pleasure to serve as a Neal A. Maxwell Fellow during the calendar year 2017. I am delighted to come to work each day, believing as I do that each day's labor contributes to the mission of the Institute and the University. My aspiration to serve as a disciple-scholar—an enterprise to which I have dedicated a considerable portion of my adult life—is amply and crucially supported and stimulated by the time afforded by my fellowship and by the emergent atmosphere at the Institute. This encouraging ambience is brought into being by the minds, spirits, faith, and efforts of my colleagues there, as well as by the sense of community and vision enabled by the Institute's leadership.

My efforts have centered on the following projects:

- I launched a large, several-year project concerning the war in heaven. This is a research and writing project with two prongs—first, the history of the idea of warring deities and rebellious angels across cultures and history and, second, a retelling of the story and a probing of the issues in mythic narrative form.



“Working with Dr. Philip Barlow has taught me to value not just careful scholarship but people. I continue to be impressed by Dr. Barlow’s example of charity and generosity for those around him, and especially for the Mormon community which he studies and serves through his renowned scholarship.”

—STEPHEN BETTS, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

- I completed an essay first presented at the Institute-sponsored scholars' colloquium for Richard Bushman. Titled "'We Gain Knowledge No Faster Than We Are Saved': The Epistemic Dimensions of Virtue," the essay was published in December 2017.
- Building on work I have written and thought about for some years, I made progress on a book chapter destined for inclusion in the *Oxford Handbook of Mormonism and the Bible*. This chapter treats the distinctive Mormon conception and use of the Bible in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It newly attends to the biblical engagement of Latter-day Saint women and international Saints, as well as interpretations expressed through visual and musical art.



"Working as Dr. Philip Barlow's research assistant has taught me to search for meaning in the world around me. We're currently researching the fascinating concept of the 'war in heaven' as it has evolved throughout religious and mythological history. I feel blessed to work closely with Dr. Barlow, and I'm grateful for his Christlike and caring example."

—RYDER SEAMONS, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

- I recruited twenty-two authors for inclusion in a new incarnation of *A Thoughtful Faith: Essays on Belief by Mormon Scholars*, whose new subtitle will become "Essays on Belief for the 21st Century." These new authors will pair respectively with the twenty-two contributors of the first edition. The Maxwell Institute plans to publish the resulting volume.
- With Terry L. Givens I codirected the six-week Summer Seminar on Mormon Culture, cosponsored by the Institute, during which we mentored and supervised twelve talented younger scholars from around the United States and abroad in their research and public presentation of aspects of the topic "Mormonism Engages the World."
- I brought colleague Ravi Gupta to campus from Utah State University and to the Institute for comparative exploration of what scholar-discipleship looks like in the Hindu tradition.
- I accepted appointment to the Executive Committee of the Advisory Board of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.
- In addition, I took seriously the opportunity to mentor students (currently two research assistants: undergraduate Ryder Seamons and graduate student Stephen Betts) and to consult with, encourage, and learn from colleagues on staff at the Institute and those visiting for a semester or year as fellows.

D. MORGAN DAVIS

RESEARCH FELLOW



It has been a significant year of change for me at the Maxwell Institute—a watershed year, in fact. In collaboration with trusted colleagues here, including Spencer Fluhman and Kristian Heal, and in concert with our institutional shift in mission toward emphasizing scholarly activity at the Institute rather than publication and production work, I initiated a dialogue with representatives from Brill, the renowned academic publisher in Leiden, to explore the possibility of their taking over major responsibility for the editing and production of the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, which celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its first publication this year. With support from BYU administration and after an extensive process of negotiation and communication with Brill and with stakeholders among the various series in the METI family, we signed an agreement in November transferring custodianship of the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative to Brill.

Meanwhile, my reclassification from an administrative to faculty employee was approved by BYU, thanks once again to the unstinting support of Spencer Fluhman and the administrative team he coordinates with. The process of transforming myself back into a scholar of religion after having spent twenty years doing primarily editorial work—albeit in an allied subject area—has begun, and I find it exhilarating. A paper I recently read at the inaugural Book of Mormon Studies Conference in Logan, Utah, won an award, giving me cause to hope that the direction I have begun to work in—comparative scripture and comparative theology—is indeed a good fit for my academic training, temperament, and profile as a faculty member at the Maxwell Institute.

Motivated by BYU president Kevin J. Worthen's emphasis on "Inspiring Learning" and student mentoring, I have begun to work with two bright and motivated student research assistants pursuing a number of lines of inquiry for my writing projects. I am excited about the possibilities of working toward a future for Mormons and people of other faiths in which our respective traditions inform and enrich one another in constructive ways that still preserve what is essential, unique, and indeed sacrosanct within each.

Finally, I was pleased to be named as coeditor with Tona Hangen of the Living Faith series, my brainchild of three years ago, which has flourished under the erstwhile editorship of Blair Hodges, who has stepped into a more demanding role with communications at the Institute. Blair set a very strong precedent within Living Faith, and we intend to continue in like manner, now with the advice and support of the newly constituted Maxwell Institute publications committee and imprint board.

The Institute's new culture is one of friendship, welcome, collaboration, and mutual support. It has been the most intellectually stimulating year of my life to be here, interacting in substantive ways with so many great minds and so many great ideas. The list of scholars who have resided here or paid significant visits is a dream come true. And it will only continue in the coming year. I am grateful, beyond my power to express, for the Maxwell Institute and the great influence for good it is and can continue to be within the intellectual life of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the world of religious scholarship at large.

LUKE DRAKE

SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE

My interest in joining the Maxwell Institute as a scholar in residence (June 1–July 28, 2017) was motivated originally by my involvement in the translation of the works of Narsai, a fifth-century Christian theologian whose work is important to our understanding of the history and development of early Christianity. The project is being coordinated by several leading scholars in the field, including the Institute’s Kristian Heal. The opportunity to spend several weeks in Provo in order to engage with such scholars as I worked through my translation of Narsai’s *Memra 53* (“The Wheat and the Tares”) seemed simply too valuable to be missed.



During my time at the Institute, I was able to produce much more than I had anticipated, on account of the Institute’s vibrant and generous intellectual culture. During my time as a scholar in residence, I achieved these results:

- I produced a translation of the majority of Narsai’s *Memra 53* (to be finalized by 2019). More importantly, I had several important and illuminating exchanges with Kristian Heal and other visiting Syriacists who were influential to my own understanding of Narsai’s idiosyncrasies, the Syriac language more broadly, and future research projects in Syriac studies.
- For an upcoming volume edited by Professor Lincoln Blumell of BYU, I completed and submitted a chapter on the early second-century Christianity.
- I produced a draft of a chapter on Mormon readings of the general Epistles for an upcoming Oxford volume edited by Taylor Petrey, Cory Crawford, and Eric Eliason. Portions of this draft were presented at an Institute brown bag lunch, and the ensuing discussion was valuable to the final version of the chapter (submitted a few weeks after my time at the Institute concluded).
- I commenced the planning process (fundraising, call for papers, logistics, etc.) for the annual meeting of the Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism Network, an international conference dedicated to the study and translation of early Christian Coptic literature. The meeting was successfully executed in October (<https://nhgn2017.wordpress.com/>).

I cannot adequately stress the degree to which the Institute facilitated these several endeavors. The workspace, technological resources, and library were supremely valuable to what was an important summer for my career trajectory.

More importantly, however, were the professional and personal exchanges that the Institute consistently facilitated during my stay. Many of these were scheduled events (brown bags, invited lectures, end-of-week reviews, etc.), part of a system that, in my opinion, should act as a model for all productive organizations—one that fosters creativity, collegiality, exchange, and accountability. Many more exchanges, however, were impromptu interactions I had with others at the Institute, which took the form of everything from chats in the hallway to extended dialogues in offices or over lunch. Such exchanges had not only professional implications (shaping questions of method, theory, etc.) but personal ones as well.

In my experience, doctoral research can be intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually isolating, and as such, one of the real privileges of working at the Maxwell Institute was the continual opportunity to engage with a fluid and diverse set of disciple-scholars at various points of the academic spectrum. Participating in and learning from such a community of scholars is a privilege that I hope many more doctoral students are able to experience in the future.

JOHN GEE

WILLIAM (BILL) GAY RESEARCH CHAIR



This has been a busy year for the William (Bill) Gay Research Chair.

From January to August 2017, I was in Heidelberg on sabbatical at the Institut für Ägyptologie of the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. It was informative to see how a research institute at another university works. I was able to get a lot of work on my project done. Toward the end of my time there, I learned of three unpublished sources pertaining to my project that I did not have time to consult. It would be not responsible scholarship to publish my current material without consulting that unpublished material and assessing its potential impact on my project. Further progress on publication will await opportunities to access that material.

In February I had an article come out: “Hypocephali as Astronomical Documents,” *Aegyptus et Pannonia V*, ed. Hedvig Györy and Adam Szabo (Budapest, 2016), 59–71.

In April I participated in the 2017 season of the BYU Egypt Excavations.

On June 6–9 I presented a paper at the Second Vatican Coffin Conference at the Vatican Museum: “Greco-Roman Coffins from Thebes.” This paper was a by-product of my research in Heidelberg and will be published.

My participation in the above conference further resulted in a collaboration with Aidan Dodson of the University of Bristol. It concerns a shared point of interest and is the direct result of my sabbatical research project. The results of our joint work have been accepted for publication.

On June 30 I presented a paper at the Fourth International Symposium on Coptic Culture: Advocacy, Activism, and Freedom: Historical Perspectives in Stevenage, United Kingdom. The paper is titled “Historicity of Coptic Martyrdoms and Its Implications.”

On July 14–16 I attended the 49th Ständige Ägyptologische Konferenz at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen.

In August another article of mine appeared: “Jesus’s Courtroom in John,” in *“To Seek the Law of the Lord”: Essays in Honor of John W. Welch*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2017).

On September 7 I presented a paper at the 13th International Conference of Demotic Studies in Leipzig, Germany: “Miscellanies from the Archive of the Theban Choachytes.” This paper was also a by-product of research done during my sabbatical in Heidelberg.

Following the conference, I was able to do more research pertaining to my sabbatical project at the Papyrussammlung in Berlin.

On October 2 my book *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017) was published.

On October 9 I appeared on the *Mormon News Report* podcast, talking about the Book of Abraham.

On October 29 I was a guest on the *Religion Today* program on KSL Radio, talking about the Book of Abraham.

On November 4 I was invited by the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities to present a paper at their annual symposium: *Aegyptus: Egypt under Roman Rule*. My paper is titled “Götterdämmerung: Egyptian Religion in Roman Egypt.”

At the *Aegyptus* symposium, I was also elected to another term on the Board of Trustees for the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, an international Egyptological society.

On November 12 I was a guest on *Mormon Miscellaneous* on K-Talk Radio, discussing the Book of Abraham.

On November 18 I presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Boston, Massachusetts: “The Canaanite Gods El and Yah in Egypt.” I have been asked to submit this paper for publication, and two colleagues, James K. Hoffmeier and Bezalel Porten, have asked for a preliminary copy so they can incorporate it into their own work.

On November 26 I was invited back as a guest on *Mormon Miscellaneous* on K-Talk Radio to further discuss the Book of Abraham.

In November the book *Pearl of Great Price Reference Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), which includes six of my articles, was published.

On December 4–6 I presented a paper at the Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies in Oxford, England: “Religious Tolerance versus Religious Freedom: The Case of Persian Period Elephantine.”

Though I have no research assistants, throughout the year, I have mentored former students, some of whom are no longer at BYU. This has included reading and critiquing papers (one of which has been subsequently published), as well as advising on navigating the waters of academia. At conferences I have been solicited for advice by a number of different graduate students at other universities.

I have also been mentoring junior faculty, including two at BYU and one at BYU–Hawaii.

I have peer-reviewed a number of different journals and have reviewed books for multiple publishers.

During the year, I have submitted at least four articles to venues such as *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur*, *Göttinger Miszellen*, and *Journal for the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. This is apart from the publications of papers given at conferences, dig reports, and other publication requests.

TERRYL L. GIVENS

NEAL A. MAXWELL FELLOW

The challenge that confronts The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at this critical juncture is how to establish public credibility when speaking of things Mormon; how to speak the language of scholarship from a position of faith; how to be, in Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s language, disciple-scholars.

The whole enterprise is grounded on one all-important assumption: that the most rigorous and exacting scholarship, the most responsible narrating of Mormon history, and the most honest examinations of Latter-day Saint doctrine and theology are faith-building. They elicit respect on the part of a non-Mormon audience and greater conviction on the part of Latter-day Saints. That is my own operating principle as a practicing scholar of Mormonism. And it is the principle that animates the current incarnation of the Maxwell Institute.

During the summer of 2017, virtually every office in the Institute building was occupied by a resident or visiting scholar. The energy and shared sense of purpose and shared faith was palpable. The Institute again cosponsored the Summer Seminar on Mormon Culture, which I taught with Phil Barlow. Our emphatic and explicit premise is that discipleship and scholarship are mutually reinforcing; our faith commitments guide and condition the best questions we can be asking; Mormon theology is inexhaustibly rich and compelling, and the deeper one digs, the more it outshines its historical counterparts.

The Institute sponsors weekly brown bag lunches, where works in progress are presented to all comers. Before my tenure as a Neal A. Maxwell Fellow, I was invited to participate in two external reviews of the Institute’s work and mission. In both prior reviews, the Institute was moribund, activity minimal, and interface with the larger community nonexistent. By contrast, these brown lunches attracted groups with as many as forty and fifty people composed of faculty, students, and visitors, with compelling presentations and vigorous discussion.



Maxwell Institute scholars met weekly for Monday morning breakfasts and Friday reporting lunches. After one particular scintillating hour of animated exchanges, a visiting fellow commented to me in the hallway, “This is what I always thought a research institute could be.”

A steady stream of guest speakers alternated with those in residence. I had several lunches for the purpose of sharing notes and ideas and drafts with scholars from distant institutions—from North Carolina to Idaho—who were exploiting a precious opportunity to, for one magnificent summer, step out of the isolation of their home institutions and rub shoulders with a community of real disciple-scholars.

I personally benefited immensely from the collegial exchanges, the resources, and the environment of the Maxwell Institute as a visiting fellow, making substantial progress on two books currently under way. The synergy created the most exciting and fruitful academic environment I have ever experienced in thirty years in the profession. I am aware of at least two prestigious, internationally recognized (non-Latter-day Saint) scholars who have expressed deep interest in being guests of the Maxwell Institute. This is the kind of reputation and allure that has been engendered in the few short years of Spencer Fluhman’s directorship, working in conjunction with a first-rate staff and colleagues.

DEIDRE NICOLE GREEN

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

I am elated to be a part of the Maxwell Institute’s scholarly community. I continue to find the Institute to be a place of rigorous and challenging conversations that prove rewarding not only for my research and writing but also for my religious life and practice. Mentoring my student research assistants, either individually or in small groups, has been an especially rich experience. Additionally, there is a special camaraderie and spiritedness that pervades the Institute, which makes it a welcoming place for those who work here, as well as for those in other departments and outside the university—I couldn’t be more grateful to be here. My work has benefited greatly from the Institute’s nurturing environment.

In 2017 I published the lead article in the April issue of the *Journal of Religion*. The article is titled “A Self That Is Not One: Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, and Saiving on the Sin of Selflessness.”¹ During April I also delivered a Scholar Lecture called “Saving Self-Sacrifice,” and at that venue copies of my book *Works of Love in a World of Violence: Feminism, Kierkegaard, and the Limits of Self-Sacrifice* were sold. I completed four other publication projects that are scheduled to appear in 2018.²

Later that month I traveled to Kigali, Rwanda, to complete an oral history project on religious women’s experiences of genocide, forgiveness, and reconciliation. During the trip, my research team collaborated with scholars at the University of Rwanda to host a one-day conference on genocidal rape, including its implications



“The research I’ve been doing with Dr. Deidre Green about feminist biblical criticism in Mormon theology matters to me because the experiences of women—particularly with the scriptures—matter. This project is bringing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings to light, legitimizing them as doers of theological work and introducing me to the rich though seldom-acknowledged history of the power of the female voice in Mormonism. It has been incredible.”

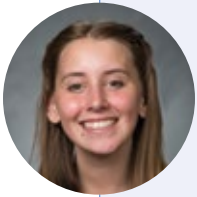
—BRITTA ADAMS, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

and treatment. The minister of health of Rwanda participated in the conference, which featured speakers from Rwanda, the United States, and South Africa.

In June I participated in the Mormon Theology Seminar in Williamsburg, Virginia. It culminated in a one-day symposium of papers focused on Mosiah chapter 15 in the Book of Mormon. The final version of my paper, “Prolepsis in the Past Tense: The Always-Already Atonement of Abinadite Prophecy,” will be published as part of a collection.

At the end of the seminar, I traveled to the Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College, where I was a summer fellow and worked on several chapters of my second book. It was wonderful to have my student research assistant, Robert Tensmeyer, participate in the Young Scholars Program there under the direction of Dr. Gordon Marino. I have been affiliated with the library for six years, and this is the first time I know of when a BYU student has participated in that program. He loved the experience and hopes to return this summer; if he can find funding, he will take a course on Danish for reading Kierkegaard.

In August I returned to Rwanda to collect one hundred interviews from Rwandan women for a new project, funded in part by an International Collaboration Grant from the American Academy of Religion. During this project, my team and I cohosted an international conference on domestic violence and intimate-partner violence at the University of Rwanda with sixty attendees. As with the April conference, the schedule included breakout sessions to talk about policies and structural changes that could be implemented to better serve Rwandans on these issues.



“Working with Dr. Green in LDS feminist biblical criticism has been both edifying and inspiring. I’ve been uplifted not only by Deidre, who teaches me by example and stretches my capacities for the better each time we meet, but also by the women we study—their courage, faith, and intelligence. I’ve grown not only academically and intellectually but also spiritually. I’m grateful the Maxwell Institute provides opportunities to engage in faith-related topics in an academic setting.”

—SAVANNAH CLAWSON, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

I am currently working on multiple publications. One is for the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook on Mormonism and the Bible*. I am writing the entry on feminist biblical criticism. Three young women who are currently BYU students are helping to research the topic. I have been mentoring them in how to research *Woman’s Exponent* and other Latter-day Saint sources. I am also training them in how to skillfully read and analyze these texts. All three clearly enjoy their work and talk about how empowering and inspiring the research experience has been for them. I’m also authoring the entry on feminism and gender for *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, forthcoming from Wiley-Blackwell.

As 2017 concludes, I am in Orvieto, Italy, participating in a certificate program through Harvard University in Global Mental Health with an emphasis on refugee trauma. I am part of a cohort of sixty-two professionals from around the world, creating great networks for furthering projects in Africa. I am also writing an article on African women’s narratives, which I plan to submit for review by 2018.

NOTES

- 1 *Journal of Religion* 97/2 (April 2017): 151–80.
- 2 “Radical Forgiveness,” in *Love and Justice* (Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming 2018); “Love in the Time of Negativity: A Response to Andrew Hass,” in *The Power and Meaning of Negativity* (Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming); “Enveloping Grace,” in *Perspectives on Mormon Theology: Grace* (Greg Kofford Books, forthcoming); and “Kierkegaard on the Cross,” in *The Kierkegaardian Mind* (Routledge, forthcoming).
- 3 See mi.byu.edu/taylor-pausing-at-the-cross-of-jesus.
- 4 *Studia Patristica*, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven, Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, forthcoming).

CARL GRIFFIN

RESEARCH FELLOW



As seen throughout this annual report, much has happened at the Maxwell Institute in the past eighteen months. Both the quantity and quality of our lectures, events, and publications are impressive by any standard, but especially so for such a small unit as we are. Participating scholars have given abundantly of their time and expertise in support of the Institute and its mission. Our administrative and editorial staff have brought to their tasks terrific talent, energy, and dedication. I especially appreciate the labor and resources they and many others dedicated to our recent conference, “The Living Reformation,” commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. I co-organized that conference.¹ Hearing from a constellation of such distinguished scholars was a rare opportunity for the university and local community. An interfaith dinner and concert of Reformation music crowned the day perfectly. Providing these opportunities for learning, dialogue, and fellowship is important and basic to what we do.

But these many events and publications represent just the most public part of our activities. Within the Institute’s walls we are engaging as a research community not just in research but in earnest conversation about our scholarship and our institutional mission, working together to enact the highest ideals of disciple-scholarship. This is transforming my own work and the work of many others.

For many years my research has centered on Cyrillona, an early Christian homilist and poet and one of the earliest surviving authors of the Syriac Christian tradition. Late last year I sent to press two books on this author: *Cyrillona: A Critical Study and Commentary* (Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 46; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016) and *The Works of Cyrillona* (Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 48; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016). More recently I have submitted articles to the *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* and to a forthcoming handbook on Mormonism and the Bible from Oxford University Press. I am currently working on an edition, translation, and study of an early Syriac homily on the symbolism of the grain of wheat, together with other short- and long-term projects.

One long-term project is on Pentecost.² In August 2016 I delivered a paper titled “Cyrillona and an Anonymous Homily on Pentecost” at the quadrennial Symposium Syriacum in Rome. This has now been revised and submitted for publication in the forthcoming *Acti XII Symposium Syriacum* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute). I am also translating a homily on Pentecost by the important Syriac author Narsai, who was the subject of a conference hosted by the Institute in June 2017. Such work on Pentecost and related projects—which are strongly oriented to textual scholarship—has been a natural part of my affiliation with the Institute’s Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART).

CPART’s work has now concluded. I am proud of its many contributions to the study of ancient religious texts and grateful for my long season with it. At the same time, repositioning my own work within our diverse and growing community of disciple-scholars is happily pointing me in new directions. The Maxwell Institute has always supported a broad range of religious scholarship for diverse constituencies, both Mormon and non-Mormon. My work on Cyrillona has been for non-Mormons, as much of my academic work will continue to be. But I have also begun work on a topic of historical theology that holds much inherent interest, I believe, for the broader fellowship of disciple-scholars. It’s not quite a book project yet . . . but watch this space!

NOTES

¹ See mi.byu.edu/luther500 for comprehensive coverage of the conference.

² See mi.byu.edu/cloven-toungues-pentecost-homily.

BRIAN M. HAUGLID

VISITING FELLOW

Major changes in my career occurred during 2017. On September 1 I began a two-year visiting fellow term at the Maxwell Institute, which ends in September 2019. This is essentially a transfer from BYU's Religious Education department to the Maxwell Institute, where I previously served as director of the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies. The Institute has been the perfect place to produce scholarship for both Latter-day Saints and the broader academy.

At present I am focusing on two major projects: (1) a Joseph Smith Papers volume, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 4: The Book of Abraham and Related Manuscripts*, coedited with Robin Scott Jensen (Church Historian's Press, fall 2018); and (2) a volume on the Pearl of Great Price, coauthored with Terryl Givens (Oxford University Press, 2018/19). Since September 2017, I have written several chapters for this book. I am currently working on a facsimile chapter. We hope to have the manuscript completed by the end of 2017.

In August I submitted a paper for the *Oxford Handbook on Mormonism and the Bible* titled "The Bible through the Lens of the Pearl of Great Price."

In October I submitted a paper titled "Joseph Smith's Abraham/Egyptian Translation Project" for the edited volume *Creating Scripture: Joseph Smith Translation Projects and the Making of Mormonism* (University of Utah Press, 2018/19).

Terryl Givens and Eric Eliason invited me to contribute a piece to their forthcoming Oxford University Press volume, *Open Topics in Latter-day Saint Thought*. The title I have been assigned is "The Relationship between the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith's Papyri, and the Ancient World." I plan on submitting the chapter in January 2018.

Finally, an essay of mine titled "Ascendancy and Legitimation of the Pearl of Great Price" is scheduled to appear in *The Expanded Canon: Perspectives on Mormonism and Sacred Texts* (Kofford Books) in 2018.

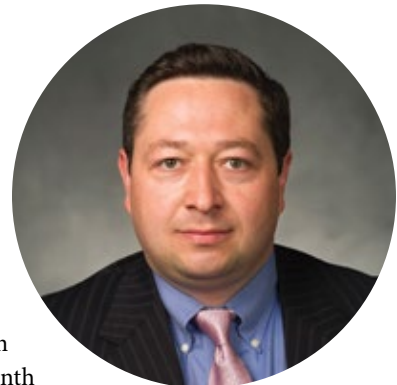


KRISTIAN S. HEAL

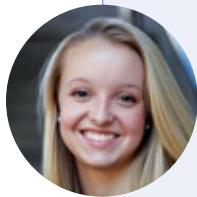
RESEARCH FELLOW, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship is a magnificent place to be a scholar. I am constantly inspired by the work of my colleagues and the many visitors we have hosted since Spencer Fluhrman was appointed executive director in 2016. My research focuses on the Syriac literature produced by the ancient Christians who lived in Mesopotamia (modern southeastern Turkey, northern Syria, and Iraq) between the fourth and seventh centuries. My current research interests cluster around manuscript studies, the Bible and literature inspired by the Bible, and sermons and preaching.

In March 2017 I delivered an invited paper at the symposium "Traces and Echoes: Scribal Culture, Texts, and Orality in Late Antiquity," sponsored by Duke University's Center for Late Ancient Studies. My paper explored the manuscript culture of the library of Deir al-Surian, a Syriac monastery in Egypt that had one of the most important collections of Syriac manuscripts in the ancient world. Part of that paper developed into



“Catalogues and the Poetics of Syriac Manuscript Cultures,” which was published this year in *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*.



“The work I did with Dr. Kristian Heal was a wonderful experience for me and increased my fervor for academia. I learned not only vital research skills but also how to collaborate on a research project from its initial brainstorming and throughout its evolution. I was enthralled with Helen B. Harris’s story and eager to share it with the academic community.”

—KATHERINE ALBISTON, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

In June I hosted an international group of scholars at a workshop dedicated to the life and thought of the fifth-century Syriac author Narsai. During this two-day workshop, we heard cutting-edge research on this fascinating author, who was, among other things, the head and principal scriptural interpreter of the Christian school in ancient Edessa and Nisibis. My co-organizers (Aaron Butts and Bob Kitchen) and I are preparing the papers for publication in 2018 or 2019. It will be the most significant collection of studies ever published on this author. We organized the workshop in conjunction with an international project that we are coordinating to translate the complete works of Narsai (to be published by the Catholic University of America Press). Two other BYU scholars are contributing to that project, as are two Latter-day Saint graduate students (both BYU alumni).



“Working with Dr. Heal has taught me the value of good travel writing and the impact it can have many years after its publication. It has also taught me the importance and value of good research as well as how to perform the necessary research to become a published scholar.”

—ARYANNA HYDE, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

My main research project is focused on a cluster of Syriac texts written between the fourth and sixth centuries that retell the story of the Old Testament patriarch Joseph. I presented part of this research at the inaugural Maxwell Institute Seminar in September. That paper explores the tradition of the redemption of Potiphar’s wife in the Syriac sources. Another paper on the Syriac Joseph materials appeared this year in a collection called *The Embroidered Bible: Studies in Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Honour of Michael E. Stone*. I cowrote this paper with Jack Manis when he was an undergraduate at BYU working as my research assistant.

It is an exciting challenge to involve students in humanities research projects. More often than not, years of preparation are required to write the kind of specialist work that my colleagues and I publish. However, it has been my privilege to work with some exceptionally bright BYU undergraduates, and together we have found creative ways to advance various research projects. During the 2016–2017 academic year, I worked with Joelle Lieberman on the application of contemporary literary critical approaches to ancient Syriac literature. Joelle was then a senior studying comparative literature and proved to be a very interesting conversation partner as we read Syriac texts in translation together and analyzed their literary features. I also worked with Katherine Albiston and Aryanna Hyde, who were awarded our Swensen Mentorship to work with me on a project to study the travels of Rendell and Helen Harris to the Middle East in 1888–1889. This prominent Quaker couple

traveled in search of manuscripts and to help with Quaker missions in the region. We focused our research on editing the companion journal they left of their travels and writing an article on the experiences and writings of Helen Harris. Katherine and Aryanna produced excellent work, and I am currently finalizing our joint article for submission to an academic journal.

I have served for the last thirteen years as director of the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART). Although CPART closed in 2017, I am continuing to work personally on its two major research projects: the Vatican Syriac manuscripts project and the Syriac Corpus project. In April 2017 I was invited to serve a three-year term as the Maxwell Institute's associate director. My primary role is to help the executive director coordinate academic programs (visiting scholars, seminars, lectures, and so forth). This is a wonderful opportunity, and I am so grateful to work with and provide administrative support for a brilliant group of resident and visiting fellows and scholars.

NOTE

- 1 Kristian S. Heal and John R. Manis, "New Sources for the Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem," in *The Embroidered Bible: Studies in Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Honour of Michael E. Stone*, ed. Lorenzo DiTommaso, Matthias Henze, and William Adler, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 522–32.

JANIECE JOHNSON

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

Although I have been at the Maxwell Institute for only a couple of months (beginning in fall 2017), I greatly appreciate the environment here. I have been welcomed and have felt valued. In my short time I have already witnessed many great examples of scholarship and discipleship, and it inspires me to be better and work harder.

It is stimulating to be in such a supportive environment with various opportunities for meaningful discussion—both personally and academically. I function and research better when I am not completely sequestered, when I have opportunities for fruitful exchange. The Maxwell Institute has offered me that kind of space and support. There are so many great opportunities to learn about what other scholars here are working on that sometimes I have to remind myself to stay focused on the work in front of me!



"I love working at the Maxwell Institute. Researching with Dr. Janiece Johnson has taught me so much about early Church history and how to conduct research. The skills I've learned here will be valuable to me as I pursue my own academic projects at the graduate level."

—AUDREY SAXTON, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

It is difficult to underscore the significance of the shift from my last academic position to my current situation at the Maxwell Institute, but I have had more meaningful and insightful interactions in the last two months than I had in the past three years of my former position combined. The Institute's focus on both mind and heart is exactly what a disciple-scholar would hope to experience.

The Institute has provided me with three research assistants to help with my current research on the Book of Mormon. I am greatly enjoying my interactions with them and have benefited from the great work they are accomplishing. We have had many opportunities to discuss the potential implications of what we are learning as we examine historical context and significance, and this has led to useful suggestions to consider in our search. I enjoy the opportunity to mentor them, and they seem to still be amazed that they are being paid to read. Their help is enabling me to work through a much larger scope of sources than I could review on my own. We are all inspired by this opportunity to further immerse ourselves in the Book of Mormon text and become more familiar with other people's experiences with the divine.

Most of my efforts have focused on writing an article: "A People of the Books: Toward an Understanding of Early Mormon Converts and the New Word of the Lord." It has received an initial review, and I am preparing to submit it for publication in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. In this introductory article, I am staking out my initial argument and laying the foundation for a larger book project on how the earliest Latter-day Saints understood and used the Book of Mormon.

MICHAEL HUBBARD MACKAY

VISITING FELLOW

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity I was given to be a visiting fellow at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute. I undertook two projects during the summer of 2017.

The first pertained to research on materialism and Mormonism, which included research time at the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. I discovered several letters at both places discussing Orson Pratt's public statements about materialism. In addition to this archival work, I read deeply on theory about materialism and religion, going through the work of religion scholar Manuel A. Vasquez, which led me to the new materialism of Jane Bennett and others. This research will inform a handful of projects, including work on Mormon materialism in the Book of Mormon.

The second project involved revising my current book manuscript by further developing my research on Latter-day Saint priesthood restoration in the broader antebellum American religious culture. I now have a contract for the manuscript thanks in large part to the time and resources the Institute offered me this summer. I am going through the manuscript's final edits before it is published by the University of Illinois Press.

The Maxwell Institute's research environment is ideal for spurring ideas and developing research. It fosters a perfect balance for scholars and Saints to produce high-quality publications. Spencer Fluhman, Terry Givens, and Phil Barlow exemplify what this kind of environment can produce, even as they themselves shape that environment. They nurtured me and several other junior scholars in indispensable ways. Barlow in particular was measured, realistic, and compassionate; always willing to develop ideas; but, most importantly, always turning scholars inward to embrace our own humanness academically and spiritually. My time at the Institute was one of the greatest experiences I have had in the academy since earning my PhD in 2009. I extend my thanks to the Institute's scholars and staff, BYU's administration, and those who help support and fund the work of the Maxwell Institute.



DAVID D. PECK

VISITING FELLOW

I write with gratitude to the Maxwell Institute for extending the opportunity to be a visiting scholar during the summer of 2017 and to report on my experience.

As a historian teaching at BYU–Idaho, I am positioned to work with undergraduate Latter-day Saint students and with colleagues representing a variety of subject areas in the field of history. While there are numerous prospects for developing undergraduate curriculum and honing pedagogical skills at BYU–Idaho, there are very few opportunities to interact with colleagues with whom I share deep interests in subject matter or methodology, though I do have a few colleagues who share broad interests in scholarship and issues related to Mormonism and who indeed are scholars of high caliber in their respective fields. Being a visiting scholar at the Maxwell Institute provided significant options otherwise unavailable to me: interaction with its faculty (Morgan Davis, Kristian Heal, Carl Griffin, Spencer Fluhman, and others), with other BYU faculty interested in the Institute’s work (Fred Axelgard, Miranda Wilcox, and others), with visiting scholars whom I deeply respect from universities elsewhere (Philip Barlow and Terryl Givens in particular), and with other visiting scholars and associated fellows (Brian Hauglid and Catherine Taylor). I value my new Institute-related collegial connections and intend to continue building on the fellowship of this past summer.

In addition to making collegial connections, I was able to work in a high-quality research library, searching the catalogs and stacks rather than requesting materials through interlibrary loan programs at BYU–Idaho. I spent a significant amount of time in the Harold B. Lee Library checking out materials connected with my research needs. The Institute also provided a part-time research assistant, Jessica Mitton, who completed several of my often-unusual research requests in a timely fashion. Jeremy King and his team were always on top of my office and campus needs.

Blair Hodges arranged a podcast interview with Dr. Bruce Lawrence of Duke University regarding his recent biography of the Qur’an in English. Not only did I find the conversation stimulating and engaging, but I was able to advance my own research interests at the same time. I have sent the podcast to several Sufi contacts in India, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United States, leading to new conversations bearing directly on my research. Although I am a podcast neophyte, the experience was professionally rewarding thanks to Blair’s preparation, professionalism, and guidance. I recommend the podcast experience to all interested Institute scholars and guest lecturers.

My current project has been over five years in development, in light of my ongoing heavy teaching load at BYU–Idaho. I needed time away and the company of scholars who understood my research and goals and could help me identify and address weaknesses—I have a solid grasp of Sufism but little experience in Mormon studies.

Kristian Heal arranged an opportunity for me to present a broad draft of my research and writing concepts at an Institute brown bag luncheon in August 2017. I was rethinking my project’s scope. I felt that the draft overview I presented was probably premature and no doubt rough, but the attendees had obviously taken the time to review, offering meaningful comments. I have sifted through the comments of that luncheon and been able to refine my research and draft a developing chapter for a monograph with the working title *Of Saints and Sufis: Mormon Meditations on the Cosmic Drama of Salvation*.

I am very grateful for the chance to be taken seriously as a scholar, to interact with fine colleagues whom I respect, to make use of office and library opportunities, and to receive a stipend that made this all financially possible. How refreshing it was to be in a new place with new voices and wide perspectives. I had long felt quite



alone in my work given its unusual subject and approach. My summer fellowship experience at the Institute provided confidence that those of us who may feel alone navigating the frontiers of Mormon studies can forge ahead. As Rumi said, “I have lived on the lip of insanity, seeking answers, knocking on a door.” My feeling of scholarly sanity improved this summer in the collective company of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute. I sincerely hope that such visiting scholar opportunities will continue long into the future.

CATHERINE GINES TAYLOR

VISITING FELLOW

Upon my appointment to the Maxwell Institute as a visiting fellow in December 2016, I had several goals in mind regarding publishing, presentation, and academic collaboration. My aim was to use my time wisely, to actively contribute to the discourse of faith and academic inquiry, and to engage with the unique scholars and resources available to me in the furtherance of my academic career.

Just as I was appointed, I published a peer-reviewed article in the Institute’s *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*. The article—“The Matrilineal Cord of Rahab in the Via Latina Catacomb”—was the culmination of a project presented earlier at the City University of New York and Fordham University.¹ This paper was well received at the Byzantine Studies Conference, after which I reworked it for publication.

In December 2016 I traveled to London and Oxford, England, and began research in the British Library and the Ashmolean Museum on the syncretic nature of myth, memory, and religious practice in late antiquity. This research bore on my study of iconographic representations on early Christian sarcophagi as preliminary work for a chapter in a three-volume reference work to be published by T&T Clark Bloomsbury.² The publisher has further contracted with me to publish an expanded monograph on a topic related to sarcophagi that I proposed in my 2018 postdoctoral fellowship applications.

In March 2017, as a co-organizer of the Late Ancient Religions Study Group, I took the lead in organizing and raising funds for a visit from Professor Georgia Frank. Dr. Frank gave two lectures to the Brigham Young University community: “To Hell and Back: Christ’s Underworld Journey in Ancient Christian Legend” and “Feeling Christian: Re-educating the Emotions in Late Antiquity.” I also organized multiple social functions, including lunches with other BYU scholars and students. Dr. Frank’s successful visit was a wonderful opportunity for interdisciplinary networking on campus, as well as for outreach to our friends at the University of Utah.

To commemorate Good Friday, I wrote a blog post for the Maxwell Institute, “Pausing at the Cross of Jesus.”³ It was the most widely shared guest post of 2017 on the Institute’s social media outlets. I also participated in the Institute’s brown bag lunch series, presenting preliminary research on the symbolism of the apocryphal image of Susanna conflated with Woman Wisdom and early Christian deceased believers.

During my stay at the Institute, I’ve completed several additional publications. My article “Educated Susanna: Female *Orans*, Sarcophagi, and the Typology of Woman Wisdom in Late Antique Art and Iconography” was first presented at the Oxford Patristics Conference in 2015.⁴ The proceedings are just now being finalized, and my proofs have been corrected and submitted.

My book manuscript, *Allotting the Scarlet and the Purple: Late Antique Images of the Virgin Annunciate Spinning* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming), required the acquisition of forty-seven image and copyright permissions from several institutions. My research assistant, Rachel Huntsman, provided by the Maxwell Institute, was an invaluable help in organizing these materials during winter semester early in 2017 and the early days





*“While working with Dr. Catherine Taylor on her forthcoming publication, *Allotting the Scarlet and the Purple: Late Antique Images of the Virgin Annunciate Spinning*, I learned how to correspond with museums and I learned so much about the editing and publishing processes. But one of the most valuable things I’ve gained from this experience is that I feel more prepared for my future career, growing more confident in my researching skills and seeing that it’s possible to enter the world of publishing and academia.”*

—RACHEL HUNTSMAN, RESEARCH ASSISTANT

of fall semester 2017. She helped coordinate the image files and edited the bibliography. A research stipend generously provided by the Institute was essential to acquiring these materials. As of October 2017, my book is in production with the press. Mentoring my research assistant through this process has helped her develop new ways of critical thinking, reading, and primary-source investigation that she has also utilized in her own projects. Our female students desperately need female faculty to model excellence and faithful discipleship in academic venues like Brigham Young University, and the Maxwell Institute is a prime setting for this growth to occur.

I spent the summer of 2017 in deep research and writing for Lincoln Blumell’s forthcoming volume, *New Testament History, Culture, and Society*. My chapter focuses on the scriptural and archetypal models of women in the New Testament. My primary aim is to use a feminist theoretical approach to ask critical questions about lesser-known New Testament women—both named and unnamed—to help a Latter-day Saint audience understand these women as multidimensional subjects. Challenging limiting biases and conceptual contexts for women is crucial as we examine the narratives of power and the spectrum of righteous behavior modeled in the early Christian church.

My teaching load at BYU from January 2017 to the present includes Tech 202, History of Creativity; iHum 201, Interdisciplinary Humanities Survey; and ARTHC 300, Art History Theories and Methodologies.

Finally, in November 2017 I delivered a Maxwell Institute Lecture at BYU. My talk was entitled “The Lady at the Gate: Women as Holy Gatekeepers in Early Christian Iconography.”

Currently, I am gathering bibliographic sources and reading literature on lay Christianity in the West. I am slated to deliver a paper at the 2018 International Medieval Congress in Leeds, England. I will address the practice of lament and iconographic themes as strategies for memory by late ancient Christian women. Both to this end and for broader reasons, my reading focus is on theologians like Caesarius of Arles and the Christianizing dynamics of late Roman Arles. This research supports my further postdoctoral applications submitted for 2018 that will hopefully alleviate some of my teaching responsibilities and allow me to research and write full-time. I am interested to continue investigating the role of early Christian women in the rituals of memorial, the guises and archetypes of the divine feminine, and the iconography that accompanied the care of the dead.

I would like to thank all of the scholars at the Maxwell Institute. They have been essential conversation partners, editors, and brilliant colleagues. I feel that my experience has been one of those rare things where scholarship, devotion, sociality, inquiry, and unity have combined in holy time and space. Truly, it is the people here who have systematically broken down barriers for women, and for me in particular—a female Latter-day Saint scholar engaged in religious scholarship.

NOTES

- 1 *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 8 (2016): 182–214.
- 2 See “Sarcophagi,” in *The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries*, ed. Helen Bond, Chris Keith, and Jens Schröter (London: T&T Clark, forthcoming).
- 3 See mi.byu.edu/taylor-pausing-at-the-cross-of-jesus.
- 4 *Studia Patristica*, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven, Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, forthcoming).



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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Academic Programs & Events

CONFERENCES & COLLOQUIA

MORMONISM IN THE ACADEMY: TEACHING, SCHOLARSHIP, AND FAITH—A SCHOLARS' COLLOQUIUM IN HONOR OF RICHARD LYMAN BUSHMAN, JUNE 2016, PROVO, UTAH (MI.BYU.EDU/BUSHMAN)

PARTICIPANTS

Philip L. Barlow, *Utah State University*
Brian D. Birch, *Utah Valley University*
Matthew Bowman, *Henderson State University*
Richard D. Brown, *University of Connecticut*
Claudia L. Bushman, *New York City*
Richard Lyman Bushman, *Columbia University (emeritus)*
Kathleen Flake, *University of Virginia*
J. Spencer Fluhman, *Brigham Young University*
Terry L. Givens, *University of Richmond*
Robert A. Goldberg, *University of Utah*
Deidre Nicole Green, *Claremont Graduate University*
Matthew J. Grow, *LDS Church History Department*
David D. Hall, *Harvard University (emeritus)*
Jared Hickman, *Johns Hopkins University*
Kate Holbrook, *LDS Church History Department*
David Holland, *Harvard Divinity School*
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Armand L. Mauss, *Washington State University (emeritus)*
Adam S. Miller, *Collin College*
Mauro Properzi, *Brigham Young University*
Jana Riess, *Religion News Service*
Ann Taves, *University of California–Santa Barbara*
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FAITH AND BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP WORKSHOP, AUGUST 2016, PROVO, UTAH

PARTICIPANTS

Philip L. Barlow, *Utah State University*

Peter Enns, *Eastern University*

D. Jill Kirby, *Edgewood College*

James L. Kugel, *Bar Ilan University*

Candida R. Moss, *University of Notre Dame*

David Rolph Seely, *Brigham Young University*



**NARSAI: RETHINKING HIS WORK AND HIS WORLD, JUNE 2017, PROVO, UTAH
(CPART.MI.BYU.EDU/HOME/NARSAI-WORKSHOP)**

PARTICIPANTS

Daniel Becerra, *Duke University*
Adam Becker, *New York University*
Jeremy Brown, *The Catholic University of America*
Aaron M. Butts, *The Catholic University of America*
Jeff Childers, *Abilene Christian University*
Philip Forness, *Goethe University, Frankfurt*
Kelli Gibson, *Abilene Christian University*
Kristian S. Heal, *Brigham Young University*
Robert Kitchen, *Knox-Metropolitan United Church*
Craig Morrison, *The Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, Italy*
Ellen Muehlberger, *University of Michigan*
Ute Possek, *Harvard Divinity School*
Eva Rodrigo, *Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso*
Erin Walsh, *Duke University*
James E. Walters, *Rochester College*



**THE LIVING REFORMATION: 500 YEARS OF MARTIN LUTHER, SEPTEMBER 2017,
PROVO, UTAH (MI.BYU.EDU/LUTHER500)**

PARTICIPANTS

Carlos Eire, *Yale University*
Brad Gregory, *University of Notre Dame*
Craig Harline, *Brigham Young University*
Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Washington University in St. Louis*
Jennifer Powell McNutt, *Wheaton College*
Roger E. Olson, *Baylor University*
Michelle C. Sanchez, *Harvard Divinity School*
Grant Wacker, *Duke Divinity School*

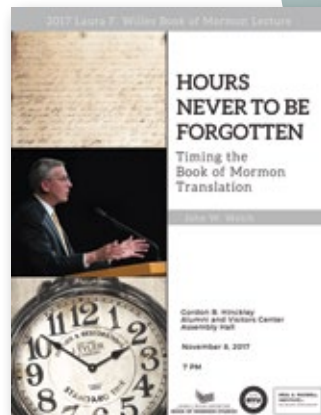
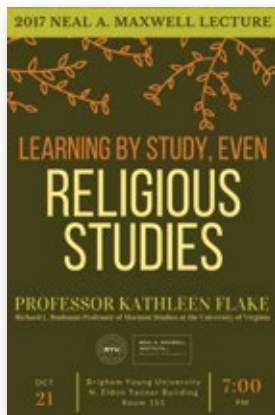
COSPONSORS

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BYU Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding
BYU Richard L. Evans Office of Religious Outreach

LECTURES & WORKSHOPS

ANNUAL AND BIENNIAL LECTURES

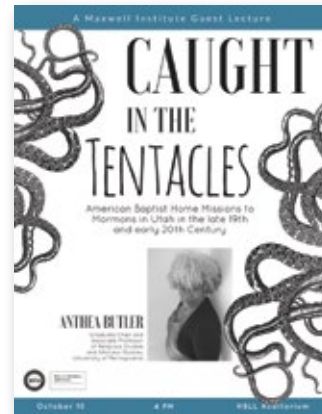
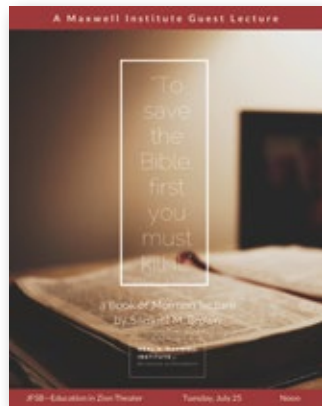
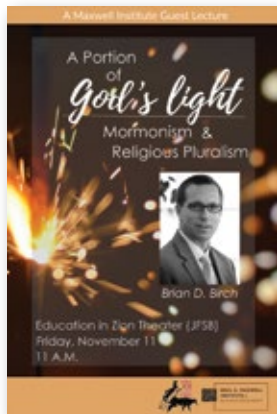
- 2016 Neal A. Maxwell Lecture: David F. Holland (Harvard Divinity School), “Latter-day Saints and the Problem of Pain,” *October 2016*
- 2017 Neal A. Maxwell Lecture: Kathleen Flake (University of Virginia), “Learning by Study, Even Religious Studies,” *October 2017*
- 2017 Laura F. Willes Book of Mormon Lecture: John W. Welch (Brigham Young University), “‘Hours Never to Be Forgotten’: Timing the Book of Mormon Translation,” *November 2017*



MAXWELL INSTITUTE SCHOLAR LECTURES

- Deidre Nicole Green, “Saving Self-Sacrifice,” *April 2017*
- Catherine Taylor, “The Lady at the Gate: Women as Holy Gatekeepers in Early Christian Iconography,” *November 2017*





MAXWELL INSTITUTE GUEST LECTURES

- Thomas Simpson (Phillips Exeter Academy), “American Universities and the Birth of Modern Mormonism,” *September 2016*
- Brian D. Birch (Utah Valley University), “A Portion of God’s Light: Mormonism and Religious Pluralism,” *November 2016*
- Georgia Frank (Colgate University), “Feeling Christian: Re-educating the Emotions in Late Antiquity,” *March 2017*
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (Harvard University), “‘Huddling Together’: Rethinking the Position of Women in Early Mormonism,” *March 2017, cosponsored with BYU Women’s Studies Program*
- Janan Graham-Russell (Harvard Divinity School), “A Discussion on Womanist Theology and Mormonism,” *July 2017*
- Adam Powell (Durham University), “Crisis Converted: Opposition, Salvation, and Elasticity in Early Mormonism,” *July 2017*
- Samuel M. Brown (University of Utah), “To Save the Bible, First You Must Kill It: A Book of Mormon Lecture,” *July 2017*
- Max Perry Mueller (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), “Race and the Making of the Mormon People,” *September 2017*
- Ravi Gupta (Utah State University), “Who Owns Religion? A Hindu Perspective on Being a Disciple-Scholar,” *October 2017*
- Anthea Butler (University of Pennsylvania), “Caught in the Tentacles: American Baptist Home Missions to Mormons in Utah in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century,” *October 2017*

WORKSHOPS

- “From Dissertation to Book to Press: An Introduction to Academic Publishing,” with Dawn Durante (University of Illinois Press), *September 2016, Provo, Utah*
- Maxwell Institute Monthly Seminar, *September–December 2017*



OTHER EVENTS COSPONSORED BY THE MAXWELL INSTITUTE

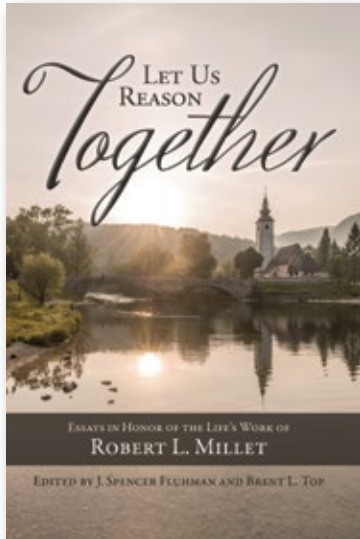
- Mormon History Association conference, *June 2016, Snowbird, Utah*
- Mormon Theology Seminar, *June 2016, Berkeley, California*
- FairMormon conference, *August 2016, Provo, Utah*
- Mormon Scholars in the Humanities conference, *May 2017, Boston, Massachusetts*
- Mormon Theology Seminar, *June 2017, Williamsburg, Virginia*
- Mormon History Association conference, *June 2017, St. Louis, Missouri*
- Summer Seminar on Mormon Culture, *June–July 2017, Provo, Utah*
- FairMormon conference, *August 2017, Provo, Utah*
- Book of Mormon Central's Chiasmus Jubilee, *August 2017, Provo, Utah*
- British & European Association of Mormon Scholars, *September 2017, Lancashire, England*



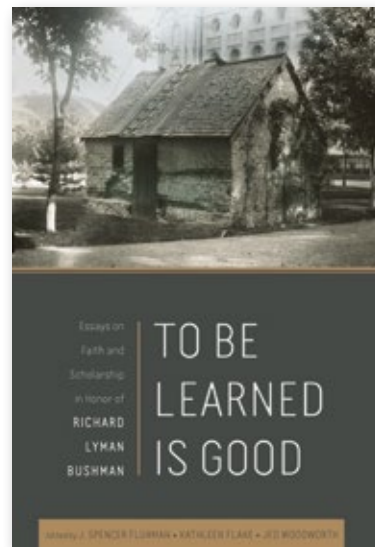


2016–2017 Publications

BOOKS

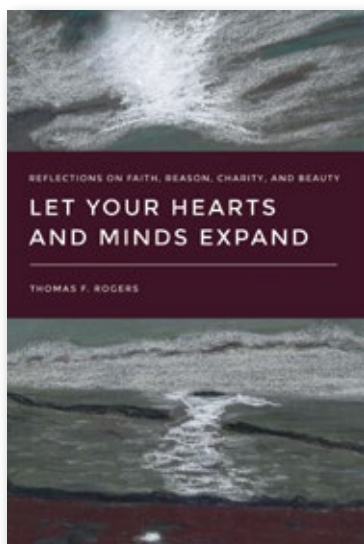


J. Spencer Fluhrman and Brent L. Top, eds., *Let Us Reason Together: Essays in Honor of the Life's Work of Robert L. Millet* (with BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, January 2016)



J. Spencer Fluhrman, Kathleen Flake, and Jed Woodworth, eds., *“To Be Learned Is Good”: Essays on Faith and Scholarship in Honor of Richard Lyman Bushman* (December 2017)

LIVING FAITH SERIES



Thomas F. Rogers, *Let Your Hearts and Minds Expand: Essays on Faith, Reason, Charity, and Beauty* (May 2016)



Ashley Mae Hoiland, *One Hundred Birds Taught Me to Fly* (November 2016)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MORMON THEOLOGY SEMINAR



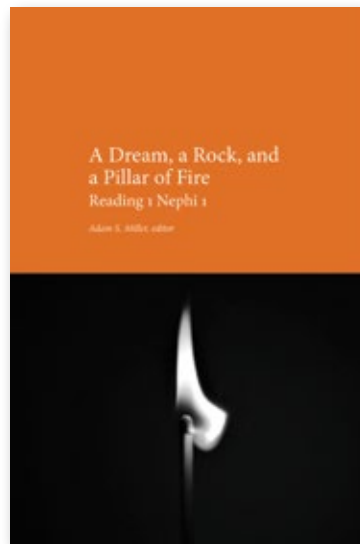
Julie M. Smith, ed., *Apocalypse: Reading Revelation 21-22* (July 2016)



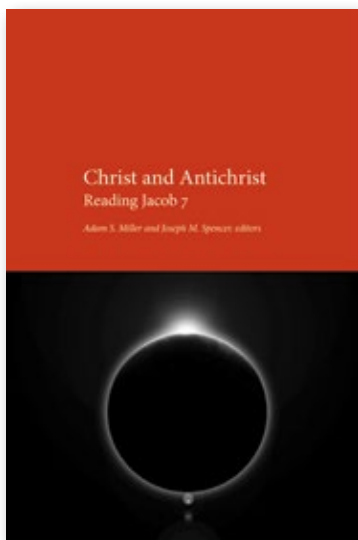
Jeremiah John and Joseph M. Spencer, eds., *Embracing the Law: Reading Doctrine and Covenants 42* (May 2017)



Adam S. Miller, ed., *Fleeing the Garden: Reading Genesis 1-2* (November 2017)

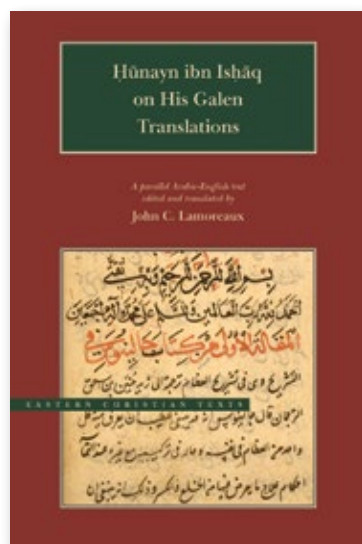


Adam S. Miller, ed., *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1* (December 2017)

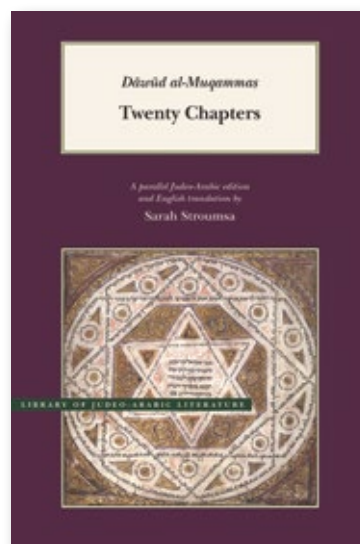


Adam S. Miller and Joseph M. Spencer, eds., *Christ and Antichrist: Reading Jacob 7* (December 2017)

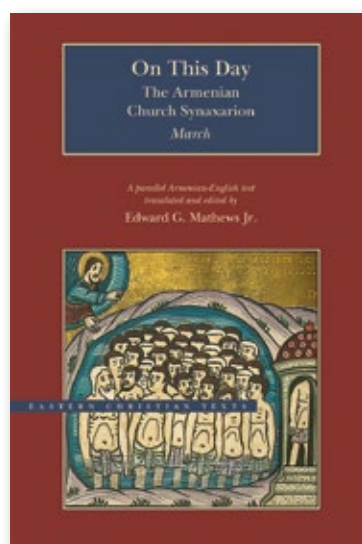
MIDDLE EASTERN TEXTS INITIATIVE (METI)



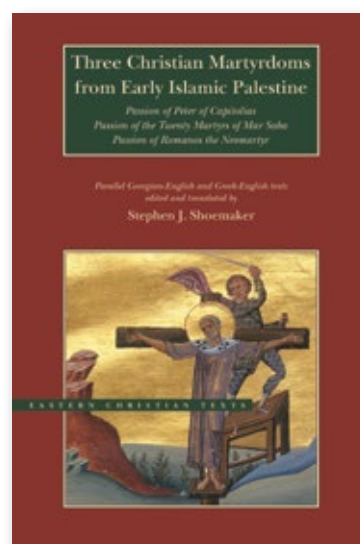
John C. Lamoreaux, ed., *Hunayn ibn Ishaq on His Galen Translations* (September 2016)



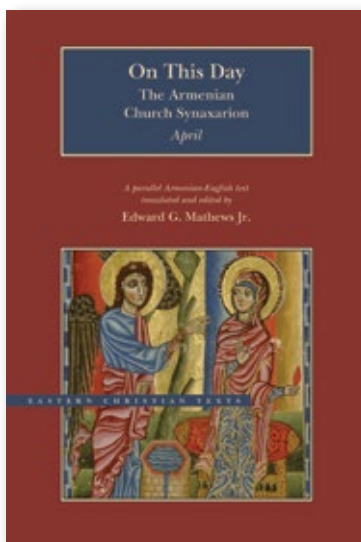
Dāwūd al-Muqammas, *Twenty Chapters*, edited by Sarah Stroumsa (February 2017)



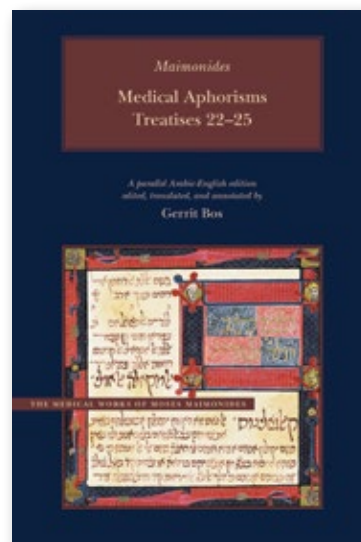
Edward G. Mathews Jr., ed., *On This Day: The Armenian Church Synaxarion—March* (February 2017)



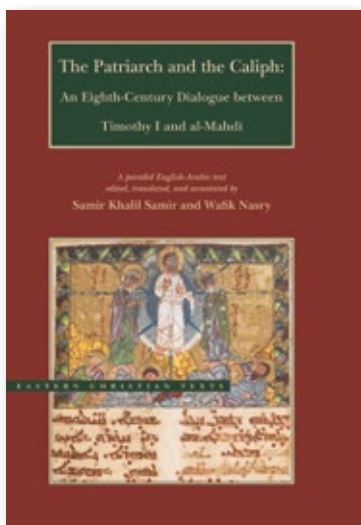
Stephen J. Shoemaker, ed., *Three Christian Martyrdoms from Early Islamic Palestine* (February 2017)



Edward G. Mathews Jr., ed., *On This Day: The Armenian Church Synaxarion—April* (June 2017)



Moses Maimonides, *Medical Aphorisms: Treatises 22–25*, edited by Gerrit Bos (September 2017)



Samir Khalil Samir and Wafik Nasry, eds., *The Patriarch and the Caliph: An Eighth-Century Dialogue between Timothy I and al-Mahdī* (September 2017)

PERIODICALS



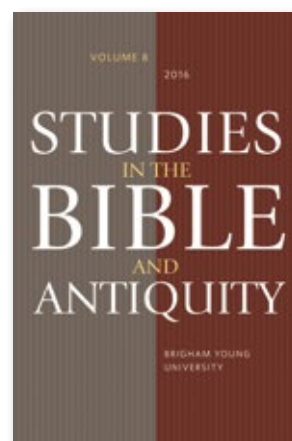
JOURNAL OF BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES, VOLUMES 25–26 (APRIL 2016; APRIL 2017)

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MORMON STUDIES REVIEW, VOLUMES 4–5 (NOVEMBER 2016; NOVEMBER 2017)

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STUDIES IN THE BIBLE AND ANTIQUITY, VOLUME 8 (DECEMBER 2016)

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Front cover. Wilson Ong, *Neal A. Maxwell*, 1990. Oil on canvas, 28 x 22 in. Church History Museum collection, Salt Lake City.

Page 1. Squaw Peak, Provo, Utah. Courtesy of BYU Photo.

Page 5. J. Spencer Fluhman.

Page 6. John W. Welch (left) receives an award of appreciation from J. Spencer Fluhman, acting on behalf of the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies, November 2017. Courtesy of BYU Photo. Background photo of Y Mountain courtesy of BYU Photo.

Page 10. Richard Lyman Bushman. Photo courtesy of Clarissa Bushman.

Page 12. Orson Pratt's scientific observatory, constructed just south of the Salt Lake Temple around 1869. Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Page 15. Brigham Young statue, Abraham O. Smoot Administration Building, BYU campus.

Page 18. Kathleen Flake delivers the 2017 Neal A. Maxwell Lecture, October 2017. Photo by Blair Hodges.

Page 21. Path along South Campus Stream, BYU campus. Courtesy of BYU Photo.

Page 26. Orson Hyde's diagram showing the "order and unity of the Kingdom of God," published in *Millennial Star* 9 (15 January 1847).

Pages 28–29. Hubble Space Telescope image of spiral galaxy Messier 101. NASA/ESA.

Page 48. BYU entrance sign with the charge "Enter to learn, go forth to serve." Courtesy of BYU Photo.

Page 49. Institute scholar Deidre Green meets with research assistants Savannah Clawson, Britta Adams, and Niquelle Cassador in the Maxwell Institute Library. Photo by Blair Hodges.

Page 51. **Top:** Maxwell Institute scholars Morgan Davis and Kristian Heal at a Maxwell Institute Guest Lecture, October 2017. Courtesy of BYU Photo. **Bottom:** Philip Barlow, 2017 Neal A. Maxwell Fellow, speaks at the annual Maxwell Lecture, October 2017. Photo by Blair Hodges.

Page 52. **Top:** Participants in the Institute's 2017 conference "Narsai: Rethinking His Work and His World." Left to Right: Kelli Gibson, Ute Possekel, Erin Walsh, Eva Rodrigo, Aaron Butts, Robert Kitchen, Ellen Muehlberger, Kristian Heal, Philip Forness, Craig Morrison, James Walters, Kevin Ball, Jeremy Brown. Photo by Jeremy King. **Bottom:** Brad S. Gregory (University of Notre Dame) addresses attendees and presenters during "The Living Reformation: 500 Years of Martin Luther," a conference held in September 2017. Photo by Blair Hodges.

Page 53. John W. Welch presents the 2017 Laura F. Willes Book of Mormon Lecture, "'Hours Never to Be Forgotten': Timing the Book of Mormon Translation," November 2017. Courtesy of BYU Photo.

Page 55. **Top:** Anthea Butler delivers her Maxwell Institute Guest Lecture, "Caught in the Tentacles," October 2017. Courtesy of BYU Photo. **Bottom:** Participants in the 2017 Summer Seminar on Mormon Culture, held at Brigham Young University, July–August 2017. Left to right: Philip Barlow, Joe Sorensen, Aubrie Mema, Randy Powell, Norma Calabrese, Liz Brocious, Ben Spackman, Amber Taylor, Adam Brasich, Richelle Wilson, Gavin Feller, Jessica Nelson, Terryl L. Givens. Photo by Blair Hodges.

Page 56. Y Mountain in spring. Courtesy of BYU Photo.

Pages 64–65. Aerial view of BYU campus. Courtesy of BYU Photo.



*"For a disciple of Jesus Christ,
academic scholarship is
a form of worship."*

—ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL

