

Editorial

Brigham Young University Studies: Its Purpose, Its Freedom, Its Scope

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Editor

In this our initial editorial it is our desire to present the motivation behind the publication of *BYU Studies* and to set before our readers the policies under which our editorship will be carried out.

The Purpose of *BYU Studies*

The purpose of *BYU Studies* is to be a voice for the community of LDS scholars, as has been its purpose since its inception back in 1959. Those who look closely will see that this issue is the first number for the eighth volume; thus *BYU Studies* is not a new journal. But we hope it is a reactivated, a revitalized journal that will provoke intellectual and spiritual growth in its readers and contributors.

When *BYU Studies* first began publication in 1959, the motivating thought was that it should not be a general, not even a Mormon-studies journal in the usual sense of those terms, but that it should really be a voice for the Latter-day Saint scholar writing articles about how he correlated his scientific, literary, sociological, or psychological research and his religious convictions. Such articles could find little if any opportunity for publication in any of the then existing journals. In the early issues of *BYU Studies*, we can read several such articles; but for numerous reasons, partly editorial and partly administrative, the journal failed to grow to meet its challenge, to fulfill the need of the LDS scholarly community to give them a voice wherein they might express their thinking and findings. With the coming issues of *BYU Studies*, we again dedicate its pages to the pursuit of truth, no matter where

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it may be found, and to the rooting out of error, no matter what its source. This specific charge was given to the Brigham Young University faculty in particular and to the whole community of LDS scholars in general by President Hugh B. Brown at the Preschool Faculty Conference in Provo in 1961.¹

Let's talk more specifically of this challenge. The intellectuals in the Church have long been critical of those members who seem to embrace the gospel on a purely emotional level, who feel with the heart but do little with the head. On their part, the heart feelers have long felt out of sorts with and suspicious of the intellectuals who can't let anything lie, who are forever bringing up new ideas to challenge them to think, to understand, but who often close their own hearts and emotions to the gospel because they cannot explain or do not trust them intellectually. Too often it has been easy for each group to write off the other and each go its own way. BUT NEITHER GROUP BRINGS A FULNESS OF TRUTH TO ITS MEMBERS! The full quest for truth, as President Brown said in 1947 in the introduction to a series of radio addresses on building a rational faith, must "involve the heart as well as the head, something which can be felt as well as thought. *Emotion is not enough, cold intellect will not suffice, but rational faith fired by spiritual insight . . .*"² (Italics added) will lead us to truth. How much or how little each man is able to find in his search will remain his individual challenge. The purpose of *BYU Studies* is to give a voice to those who are striving in find truth, who are endeavoring to synthesize the spiritual and intellectual in their search, who are seeking "learning by study and also by faith." (D&C 88:118)

The Freedom of *BYU Studies*

Whatever the blend of the heart and the head, the synthesis of the spiritual and the intellectual in each man's search, he must be free to search and to express his thoughts and findings, being completely honest with himself and his Creator. Such was the heart of President Brown's challenge to the

¹Hugh B. Brown, Address to BYU Faculty, September 11, 1961, published in "Preschool Conference Addresses" (Provo, Utah: *Brigham Young University Bulletin*, LVIII, No. 38).

²———, "Introduction," *Rational Faith* found in *Radio Addresses*, Vol. 3 in the BYU Library.

faculty in that 1961 address. We were so impressed with what he said that we quote a paragraph:

We [the members of the Board of Education of the Church] would like you to know we are interested in academic research. You must go out on the research front and continue to explore the vast unknown. You should be in the forefront of learning in all fields, for revelation does not come only through the prophet of God nor only directly from heaven in visions or dreams. Revelation may come in the laboratory, out of the test tube, out of the thinking mind and the inquiring soul, out of search and research and prayer and inspiration. You must be unafraid to contend for what you are thinking, unafraid to dissent if you are informed and honest. We must combat error with truth in this divided and imperiled world and do it with the unfaltering faith that God is still in His heaven even though all is not well with the world.³

We say let this charge from one of the great leaders of the Church be our creed, to search with all our hearts and minds in the faith that the source of all knowledge might reveal truths to us in our laboratories, our studies, or our secret places of prayer. Then let us write up our thoughts, our findings, our inspirations, and share them with our fellow searchers within the community of LDS scholars through the pages of *BYU Studies*. Each author must remember that in what he has to say he speaks for himself and not for the Church, not for Brigham Young University, nor even for the Editorial Board of *BYU Studies*. We lay no claim to being official spokesmen for the Church, and readers who refuse to accept this fact will misread our purpose and our desires. This disclaimer of speaking for the Church will be printed on the inside of the front cover of each issue of our journal, for we do not purport to be an official organ through which Church policy is set and made known. Any opinions expressed in any articles published in *BYU Studies* will necessarily be those of their authors.

In light of President Brown's admonition to study, to think, to dissent in honesty, we feel that we must challenge the often-voiced claim that there is no real academic freedom or freedom from censorship within the Church and that to get at the real truth we must go outside the control of the Church where we

³———, Address to BYU Faculty, p. 4.

may "freely" say what we think and believe. This basic assumption says that in its estimation the Church as a whole and its leadership in general are either so immature or so weak in their positions that they cannot or will not tolerate freedom of inquiry and expression which will look at all things with the critical eye of scholarship. There is also an interesting assumption that to be valuable, scholarship must be critical, analytical. This is not the whole fact. We challenge the claim that any group or any journal however honest and pure its motives can better serve the Church outside its support and control than can *BYU Studies* which is supported by the Church and freely places itself under its control. We challenge the assumption that scholarship must always be analytical and critical to be valid. As scholarly effort, critical synthesis is just as valid as critical analysis, but it is much more difficult to achieve. This, then, is the real challenge that *BYU Studies* wholeheartedly accepts. We hope in our coming issues to prove to the world that we do have academic freedom and freedom of expression within the Church, that the place to help build the kingdom is from within not from without, and that the Church can give voice to constructive criticism without the threat of dire consequences for such expression.

The Scope of *BYU Studies*

Though our primary interest in the pages of *BYU Studies* is toward articles dealing with Latter-day Saint thought, history, theology, and related subjects, we have been commanded and admonished to search out the truth in all things, to learn

of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and kingdoms—That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. (D&C 88:79-80. See also 93:53)

The scope of *BYU Studies* is this fuller search for truth, for knowledge in all fields of learning. It is this concept of its scope that will place articles like "The Origin, Structure, and

Evolution of the Stars," "The New Morality: Research Bases for Decision in Today's World," and "Eternal Progression and the Foreknowledge of God" side by side with no apparent need for explanation. We desire to search all fields of knowledge in our quest for truth.

Such is the challenge of *BYU Studies* to its editor, its Editorial Board, and its contributors and readers. Remembering Jacob's observations in 2 Nephi 9:28 that when worldly wisdom sets aside the counsel of God such wisdom becomes profitless foolishness, we wish you challenging reading and spiritual and intellectual growth, for "to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God." (verse 29)



An Interview

GLEN E. ROBERTSON*

Like a Mormon Buddha
Behind a broad expanse of desk
Eyes narrowed, reflective,
Fingertips meeting exactly,
Taking your measure slowly,
So very slowly, minutes ticking,
Swinging metro-gnome-like
In swivel chair from side to side;
Ponderous body in ponderous chair,
Verifying your mind,
Calculating your soul.

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