

From the Editor

John W. Welch



Hello again, dear reader. I can't thank you enough for your regular interest in this journal, now in its fifty-ninth year of publication. I trust that you will find the contents of this issue to be every bit as valuable and as fascinating as usual. On these pages, solid traditional interests blend productively with latest developments and our most up-to-date needs.

One of the most dramatic changes introduced recently into the everyday vocabulary of members of the Church has been the shift away from perceiving ourselves as teachers and moving toward reconceiving ourselves as ministers. Although true teaching has always been personal and focused on the one, the idea of teaching sometimes can be reduced to just the delivery of information, which can take on a somewhat mechanical character or impersonal tone. The word *minister*, however, carries with it a sense of sensitive, heartfelt service.

All of this got me wondering what ministering might have to do with our intellectual gifts in general and with this issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly* in particular. And I think the answer is, a lot. Without exception, the following pages are written in a ministering mode—of ministers, by ministers, and for those to whom they minister.

Frederick G. Williams recently retired from BYU as a professor of Portuguese literature and history after a lifetime of devoted ministering in both the U.S. and Brazil. He always speaks professionally and personally. As a loving minister, he embraces the abounding beauty of other vibrant cultures. He sensitively surveys the history of Portugal's rise and fall as a world power, whose maritime empire at one time reached

into Africa, Persia, Arabia, India, China, Japan, and South America. The story of how Portugal lost much of its empire to Britain, France, and Holland is a cautionary tale told with dignity and admiration.

Jennifer Champoux tells of Mary and Martha, whose ministering qualities are artistically shared with viewers worldwide in Latter-day Saint works of art. Champoux elegantly analyzes these portrayals, encouraging us to take a deeper look at these women and the different forms ministering can take.

A trustworthy minister stands in awe of the handling of consecrated offerings. David Smith offers a rare insider's view of the history of the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes. An essential part of being a minister is the dutiful discharge of responsibilities, with all due care and obedience. The handling of sacred tithing by this little-known council serves well as a model for councils of ministers at all levels of ecclesiastical administration.

A ministering mind remembers and celebrates noble people. The photographic essay by Richard Holzapfel and Ronald Fox ministers as it keeps alive the spirit of December 1905, when the Latter-day Saints commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth with a granite memorial in Vermont and also with Churchwide rejoicings centered at the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Temple Square. A few people alive at that time could still remember how the Prophet had lovingly ministered to them.

And ministering minds must be mindful. Drawing upon decades of ministering, especially to students on hot archaeological digs and in dusty library stacks, Jeffrey R. Chadwick meticulously combines historical, calendrical, archaeological, and scriptural evidence to construct a model supporting the idea that Lehi departed Jerusalem in 605 B.C., exactly six hundred years prior to the birth of the Savior. Several researchers have tried to explain the discrepancies between Lehi's six-hundred-year prophecy and the often-assumed date of the first year of Zedekiah's reign. Chadwick strives here to reconcile all the available information to show that the plain wording in the Book of Mormon is accurate.

With all of this in mind, may these pages minister to you. These ministering authors do not just talk the talk, or study the studies. They reflect the light and appropriately apply their learning, hoping that you, as ministering readers, will be alert and open to ways in which this new information might be useful in strengthening and encouraging sisters and brothers, neighbors and friends. May this help us to mind our Father's business and to attend to our sacred duties as his witnesses and servants at all times and in all places.