

Moving On

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For forty years, *BYU Studies* has published scholarly materials by and for the LDS community. As it moves to the twenty-first century, this journal plans to continue to expand the variety of its articles and the size of its reading audience. As *BYU Studies*, together with its sponsoring institution, grows and matures, I hope this channel can provide readers around the world with more information and more well-articulated conclusions and insights, while addressing significant subjects and pressing issues relevant to the work of God on this earth. *BYU Studies* can and should offer the world the best scholarly perspectives on topics of academic interest to Latter-day Saints.

The purpose of *BYU Studies* has been consistently stated on its masthead:

BYU Studies is dedicated to the correlation of revealed and discovered truth and to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious avenues of knowledge. This periodical strives to explore scholarly perspectives on LDS topics. It is committed to seeking truth “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) and recognizes that all knowledge without charity is nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). It proceeds on the premise that faith and reason, revelation and scholarly learning, obedience and creativity are compatible; they are “many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20).

These principles have served well in the past and will continue to give guidance about what is said, how it is said, and why it is said.

Contributions from all fields of learning are invited. This journal operates under a multidisciplinary mandate. While activities at many universities are becoming increasingly professionalized, specialized, politicized, and jargonized, *BYU Studies* strives to foster interdisciplinary efforts across departmental lines and to make the results accessible to a wide reading audience. Knowledge from all fields of scholarship improves our understanding and articulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and, conversely, the gospel sheds light on and gives meaning to every academic pursuit. This multidisciplinary LDS journal seeks to explore “all things . . . that are expedient for you to understand” (D&C 88:78).

BYU Studies strives to publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view and are obviously relevant to subjects of general interest to Latter-day Saints, while conforming to high scholarly standards. *BYU Studies* invites poetry and personal essays dealing with the life of the mind,

reflections on personal and spiritual responses to academic experiences, intellectual choices, values, responsibilities, and methods. Short studies and notes are also welcomed. To assist and encourage those who will want to publish in *BYU Studies*, our standard author guidelines and editorial aims are provided after this article.

Although thousands of books and articles have been published on LDS topics, a multitude of subjects of great interest to Latter-day Saints still wait to be approached rigorously, thoroughly, and explicitly in a scholarly publication. Compared with many other religions, Mormonism is young. *BYU Studies* is a place where scholarly perspectives can contribute to the process of giving those subjects further attention.

Equally important to content is tone and purpose. Scholarship is like any other tool; it can be used either for good or for evil. A hammer can be used to build up or tear down, to help or hinder. A tool can even injure the person using it, if the person does not know how to use it correctly and carefully. Knowledge confers a type of power that inevitably will be exercised either righteously or unrighteously, and indeed the natural tendency is to misuse any power that is given (D&C 121:39).

We could also pay more attention to how we as Latter-day Saints think and how we use language. We, too, are vulnerable to trends, comparable to the recent “politically correct” movement, that tend to advance within Latter-day Saint speech certain language that is “religiously correct.” Many such linguistic pressures are beneficial and promote the progress of civilization and culture, but not all of them are salutary.

Thus I would think that all who venture to speak and write in Church circles must morally confront certain responsibilities that may be said to comprise a sort of academic code of professional conduct. Some important components of such a code would embrace at least the following precepts.

1. Unity. The Lord has clearly stated: “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). This principle stands as a beacon for all who strive “for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph. 4:12–13). In a shifting world that necessarily and fortunately features diversity, individuality, heterodoxy, and change, the goal of unity with God and our fellow beings must be continually cultivated and nourished.¹ The goal of unity does not imply that all scholarly methods or personal views must be the same. As Paul explained, we are “many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20). Indeed, even those members “which seem to be more feeble” turn out to be among the “necessary” (1 Cor. 12:22).

2. Harmony. One of the great strengths of Mormonism, in my opinion, is its ability to harmonize and transcend in a spiritual, intellectual, and practical unity elements of this mortal existence that appear to most people

to be incompatible contradictions. Traditional dichotomies such as mind and body, God and man, study and faith, spirit and matter, time and eternity are not viewed in the gospel of Jesus Christ as competing opposites but as companions on a spectrum of degrees of refinement or as opposites whose existence is unified in higher intents and purposes.² The objective is to embrace both: ancient and modern, word and deed, intellectual and spiritual, research and teaching, reason and revelation, the “ought” and the “is,” community and individuality, male and female, nature and custom, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, rights and duties, subjectivity and objectivity, theory and practice, even mortality and godhood. We can grow beyond issues some have raised over which is greater, the spirit or the intellect, the *liahona* or the iron rod. For Lehi, both symbols were concurrent. For purposes of the spirit, the spirit is greater; and for purposes of the mind, the mind is greater. For Latter-day Saint study and faith, the one is not without the other. As Elder Boyd K. Packer has stated, “Each of us must accommodate the mixture of reason and revelation in our lives. The gospel not only permits but *requires* it.”³ Kierkegaard offered the world an Either/Or; Joseph Smith, a Both/And.

3. Honesty. As a primary trait of character, “we believe in being honest” (A of F 13). Accuracy and reliability are of the essence of scholarship. All scholars worth their salt have wrestled long with the questions of what can and cannot, what should and should not, what must or must not be said. They acknowledge and evaluate data both for and against their ideas and theories. They eschew all forms of plagiarism and generously recognize their indebtedness to other scholars. They guard on all sides against the covert influences of unstated assumptions, bias, and esoteric terminology. They describe shades of grey where they exist. They clearly identify their personal opinions as such. They avoid material omissions, for often what is not said can be as misleading as what is said.

4. Thoroughness. “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (A of F 13). BYU Studies welcomes contributions from all disciplines, addressing

all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; 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, . . . that ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you. (D&C 88:78–80)

This is a fulfilling but sobering mandate.

5. Humility. Pride has been identified as the pervading sin of our day.⁴ As scholars, we have more than our share of exposure to this problem. Arrogance, disdain, overconfidence, dogmatism, and many other manifestations

of intellectual and spiritual pride may well be the main occupational hazards of academia. But the perspectives of scholarship and the gospel can also provide the antidote. First is the acknowledgment that all people are at different stages in the eternal journey toward the glory of God, which is intelligence. No person says or understands everything perfectly, and a variety of opinions on a shared scale of progression are expected. Hence, a person's direction is more important than his or her present stance. Second is the humble awareness that scholarship is not an end in itself. Research cannot create faith; it can only set the stage for greater light and knowledge. As B. H. Roberts once wrote, "The clearer and more complete the statement is, the better opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true."⁵

6. Charity. In order for communication to occur, there must be charity, for no statement exists (including this one) that cannot be misconstrued. If fellowship and goodwill does not exist, especially in an academic setting, we will not communicate with one another. Paul's confession comes to mind: "Though I have the gift of *prophecy*, and understand all mysteries, *and all knowledge* . . . and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2, emphasis added). Charity is essential to avoid disputation. Left untempered by love, scholarly debate and critical inquiry will be divisive and unhealthy.⁶ Charity is also necessary to avoid offending even the weakest of the Saints. Jesus said: "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:1–2).⁷ Perhaps this is part of what Jesus meant when he told his disciples: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

Over the years, I have followed *BYU Studies* closely as a reader and writer. As a student at BYU in the 1960s, I enthusiastically supported this publication, to the point of selling subscriptions to students as they finished registering in the old Smith Fieldhouse. I remember wondering if its name wasn't really a sentence, affirmatively asserting that "BYU studies!" As I look back on those years, still today I consider myself very fortunate to have studied at BYU under extraordinary teachers and to have worked with versatile colleagues. Because of this experience, I wonder why, at this time in history, we as a people have learned certain things, have made certain discoveries, have established contacts with engaging people, and have had interesting academic experiences. I do not know the answer, but I suspect that such experience was not intended simply for our amusement.

As much as ever before, especially as *BYU Studies* goes into the next century, I believe that Brigham Young University has a vital mission to fulfill and that *BYU Studies* is an important vehicle to disseminate studious

works that can help accomplish that mission. The gospel gives needed orientation as the world faces a steady stream of new challenges. Brigham Young University is uniquely poised to be an active contributor in these developments, offering insights that emerge from the interaction of faith and scholarship. Joseph Smith fully expected the gospel of Jesus Christ “to revolutionize and civilize the world, and cause wars and contentions to cease” and to cause all people “to become friends.”⁸ *BYU Studies* hopes to fill a helpful supporting role in these eternal purposes.

Since its inception, *BYU Studies* has been in good hands. Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Word of Wisdom, is usually thought of as a physical health code, but in the end it offers not only health but “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge” (Doctrine and Covenants 89:19). Clinton Larson, with a creative genius for sensing meaning, contributed the passion for finding hidden treasures; Charles Tate, for sixteen years, ran and was not weary; and Ed Geary, when faced with hard choices, did not faint. I only hope that *BYU Studies* can continue to walk in wisdom’s paths.

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1. For interesting discussions on these topics, see Howard M. Bahr, “Individuality,” 2:680–82; M. Gerald Bradford, “Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Heresy,” 3:1054–55; and F. Neil Brady, “Unity,” 4:1497–98, all in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992).

2. David L. Paulsen, “Doctrine: Harmonization of Paradox,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:402–3.

3. Boyd K. Packer, “‘I Say unto You, Be One’ (D&C 38:27),” *BYU Devotional Address*, February 12, 1991; italics in original.

4. Ezra Taft Benson, “Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign* 16 (May 1986), 6–7.

5. B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1909), 2:vii.

6. Dallin H. Oaks, *The Lord’s Way* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 138–52.

7. Jesus gave this saying on several occasions. Matthew places it in the context of offending a little child (Matt. 18:6); Mark uses it to caution disciples against restraining anyone who does any good deed in the name of Christ (Mark 9:42); and Luke makes it a general instruction.

8. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 316.