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Brief Notices

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Brief Notices

Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History (Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990, 1992)

More people ought to know about a valuable series of studies in Church history coming out of the BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine. Each year, BYU religion faculty members have concentrated their attention on a selected region important to Latter-day Saints. The results are informatively documented, comfortably written and well indexed, and they tell some good stories.

British Isles (1990). This volume looks at LDS origins in America and England, John Lothrop (ancestor of Joseph Smith), social and religious conditions in England in the 1800s, early publications of the Pearl of Great Price and the *Millennial Star*, as well as the main LDS developments in the British Isles in this century. England is an interesting area where the Church has come home, where it has both roots and now branches.

Ohio (1990). These eight discussions relive the move in 1831 from New York to Ohio, revelations and mobbings in Hiram, hymns and publications of W. W. Phelps, the Kirtland Hebrew School, the coming

forth of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Kirtland Temple, mummies, papyri, and the exodus from Kirtland in 1837. Here are birth pains, growing pains, but also window panes.

New York (1992). The largest in this series, this collection offers new material relevant to Palmyra in the 1820s; Asael Smith (the Prophet's grandfather); Orson Pratt's defense of the First Vision examined in light of the surviving accounts of that manifestation; all known visits by Moroni; the name Cumorah; the Church's acquisition of the hill; Joseph Smith's in-law problems; John Gilbert's typesetting of the Book of Mormon; the organization of the Church in 1830; the conversions of Thomas B. Marsh, Brigham Young, and W. W. Phelps; the relations between Joseph's work on the Bible and revelation; and the "miraculous" 1964 New York World's Fair. This volume shows the reader the people, places, and events that were a part of New York's Mormon history, where the Church arose amid the ashes of the "Burned-over District" in western New York. Although the Saints moved to the Intermountain West, New York remained a vital part of LDS history as birthplace of many of the Church's early leaders, port of entry for the majority of LDS immigrants from Europe, and, presently,

home of many important Church historical sites.

—John W. Welch and
Boley T. Thomas

The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992)

Perhaps no portion of the Book of Mormon will better prepare a people for the Second Coming than Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, the record of the years prior to the destructions accompanying Christ's crucifixion and his visit to the Nephites. Commenting upon this portion of the Book of Mormon, President Benson wrote, "In the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. . . . By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet" (*A Witness and a Warning* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 20–21).

Seventh in the Religious Studies Center's series on the Book of Mormon, this is a collection of seventeen essays delivered at its annual symposium in 1992. Topics include the nature of the covenant between God and the inhabitants of the promised land, patterns of apostasy, the doctrine of calling and election in relation to Nephi, doctrines and truths restored in the book of Helaman, ways in which modern

people are repeating some of the same mistakes made by the Nephites, the process of sanctification, Nephite trade networks and the dangers of a class society, wickedness and vengeance, and secret covenant teachings of men and Satan.

—Andrew Teasdale

A Gift of Faith: Elias Hicks Blackburn, Pioneer, Patriarch, and Healer, by Voyle L. Munson and Lillian S. Munson (Basin/Plateau Press, 1991)

This biography, originally produced for Blackburn's descendants, deserves wider attention. In an age when religious healings were not uncommon, Elias Hicks Blackburn (1827–1908) was nevertheless remarkable for the hundreds of healings he mediated through his "gift of faith" and his knack for doctoring. He served not only the people in his own and surrounding counties, but also those who traveled from as far away as Canada and Mexico to general conference partly to meet him and be healed. He often spent entire days administering to people. Many of his healings are recounted in detail.

Blackburn's years of dedication to his church also included a move from Pennsylvania to Nauvoo and from there to Utah; relief work for the Willie and Martin handcart companies; a mission to England; and service as first bishop of Provo, Utah, and, later, bishop to all of Rabbit Valley and patriarch to the Sevier Stake.

Extensively researched and rechecked for accuracy, the book is

written in a straightforward, readable style. Often, the authors have allowed Blackburn to speak for himself through quotations from his diaries. The book is further enriched by several maps, reproductions of key documents, and many photographs by professional photographer Gary B. Peterson and others.

—Doris R. Dant

Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (University of Illinois Press, 1987; paperback, 1992)

When *Sisters in Spirit* first appeared, it was one of only a handful of scholarly works about Mormon women collectively (as opposed to works focusing biographically on an individual's experiences). It also broke ground as the first scholarly book to discuss several cultural issues affecting the self-identity of an American Mormon woman. Those who missed *Sisters in Spirit* in 1987 may want to take advantage of this new printing; its articles are still basic to a discussion of Mormon culture.

Some of the articles seek to clarify the present through the perspective of Mormonism's past. Jill Mulvay Derr traces the rise and the fall and the signs of a rekindling of communal sisterhood. Linda P. Wilcox looks at the changing official views of motherhood and their effects on women's feelings of (in)adequacy. Linda King Newell provides one view of the role of

such spiritual gifts as healing and speaking in tongues in the lives of women from Kirtland days to the present. Carol Cornwall Madsen explores the centrality of temple worship, its power and purpose, in the spiritual lives of "the first generation of Mormon women" (103). She proposes that the meaning of the temple remains unchanged for women.

Two articles focus on scriptural definitions of women. Melodie Moench Charles notes the diverse valuations of women as depicted in the scriptures and presents her opinion as to which valuations have been selected by modern Mormon culture. Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, citing several LDS authorities, liberates Eve from the stigma of the subjugation and curses sometimes read into the Garden of Eden story; in the process she suggests that modern woman reappraise herself.

The nine articles in *Sisters in Spirit* offer significant, though not definitive, accounts. As Grethe Ballif Peterson comments, "These working definitions [of priesthood] are limited. They come from only eight women, though they echo concerns heard from hundreds of women in dozens of settings. They are still in process and very directly related to individual experiences" (268).

In her conclusion, Linda P. Wilcox also notes the workings of diversity: "The widening 'theology' [concerning Heavenly Mother] which is developing is more of a 'folk,' or at least speculative, theology than a systematic development by theologians or a set of definitive pronouncements from ecclesiastical leaders. For the moment, Mother in

Heaven can be almost whatever an individual Mormon envisions her to be" (74).

These articles have stimulated research and discussion, both of which have been further fueled by the diversity of Mormon women themselves.

—Doris R. Dant

Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons, by Lawrence Foster (Syracuse University Press, 1991)

"Gentiles rush in where Saints fear to tread" might be a good summary for Lawrence Foster's *Women, Family, and Utopia*. Drawing on his research published in *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) and previously published articles, Foster looks at women in the Shaker, Oneida, and Mormon communities. Despite Foster's efforts to provide a continuing thread to tie the theories together, the book still reads like disconnected essays.

The information is not all a rehash, though. Foster "updates" the chapters by including modern feminist jargon and trying to imagine how women of today would view the positions of their sisters in the past. With respect to the Mormons, he believes that the Church gave women liberating opportunities in the nineteenth century but is repressive today, and he attempts to analyze data according to that hypothesis. Foster, however, fails to

recognize that Mormon women in the past were not as emancipated as he supposes, and he oversimplifies the complex queries female Latter-day Saints deal with today.

Yet he is willing to ask the hard questions about women in the Mormon Church, past and present, that some "inside" scholars might shy away from. Foster at least gives us a point from which to begin a discussion.

—Jessie Embry

Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, annotated by Richard Galbraith (Deseret Book, 1993)

Before buying this hefty volume, take a good look. When I first saw this book's cover, I was thrilled: here (I thought) is a new book discussing Joseph Smith's teachings about various scriptural topics. Instead I was surprised to find a verbatim reprinting of the familiar 1976 edition of Joseph Fielding Smith's 1938 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, augmented with three brief additions, one alteration, and thousands of scripture reference footnotes.

Those footnotes were generated by computer searching, a procedure that hits a few real gems but also tons of unsifted scree. Some footnotes lead the reader to specific quotes, but others are based on single words or loose verbal or conceptual similarities. I would have appreciated some indication of which word or phrase is tied to each scripture reference, how the less-obvious scriptures are pertinent to the text, or when one might believe

that Joseph Smith had these particular scriptures in mind as he spoke.

While this book will serve well to encourage more meticulous study of the teachings of Joseph Smith in light of his unparalleled scriptural fluency, the volume missed a good opportunity to utilize some of the recent textual research on the words of Joseph Smith.

Nevertheless, the title has an undeniable lure to it. It will undoubtedly sell like hotcakes.

—John W. Welch

Temple and Cosmos, by Hugh W. Nibley, vol. 12 in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992)

If the temple is to be seen as the cosmic mountain, then think of this book as a mountaineering guide. A good guide knows the terrain, the routes of ascent, the weather, the equipment, and everything necessary to lead a party successfully to the summit. More than that, a good guide loves to climb.

Temple and Cosmos puts the temple on the map and marks all the main features of its idealized topography and eternal coordinates. It discusses temple gear, clothing, compasses, symbols, holy ground, and the rules of the trail as one makes the step-by-step journey upward into the presence of the Lord. It expands the enjoyment of each vista that opens beneath the rising trekker, and it exults in the view from the top. It reminisces with others like Adam, Moses, Benjamin, apostles of Jesus, and the Prophet

Joseph, who have left their names in the registry at the cairn on the lofty summit. The book contains sixteen chapters, essays, talks, articles, notes, and comments, together with copious illustrations.

No guide is perfect, but every page of this book reflects the wisdom of an old man of the mountains—one whose deep love of the peak and whose constant attention to its details have produced remarkable insights and the impelling desire to share them with others. I can't think of a better guide to do some climbing with. And after all, you wouldn't want to climb Mt. Everest without an expert along.

—John W. Welch