



10-1-1996

Brief Notices

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Recommended Citation

Studies, BYU (1996) "Brief Notices," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 36 : Iss. 4 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol36/iss4/14>

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Brief Notices

Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley, by Sheri L. Dew (Deseret Book, 1996)

"I am *sick, sick, sick* of reading about Gordon Hinckley. There is just too much about Gordon Hinckley in this manuscript" (ix). So said the fifteenth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as he reviewed early drafts of his authorized biography with Sheri L. Dew, his biographer. Preferring to not be the centerpiece in his own biography, President Hinckley affirms instead that he's just a common, ordinary man—"You can't get a dollar bill out of fifteen cents!" (ix). However, this book shows that he is anything but ordinary.

In this biography, we read of an intellectually acute and well-schooled person with a delightful sense of humor, a highly respected and selfless Church leader and member of several First Presidencies for more than fifteen years, an articulate speaker, a people-person with a phenomenal memory for names and faces, and a spiritual man of God. Those who watched the profile of President Hinckley and the Church on CBS's *60 Minutes* will more than likely agree with Mike Wallace who said of him, "Generally speaking, he's first rate" (541).

To write this engaging biography, Sheri Dew did extensive research, conducted some thirty interviews with President Hinckley, paid careful attention to his journal, and talked extensively with his wife, Marjorie; other family members; business leaders; and numerous General Authorities (along with other leaders of the Church). The result is a well-written and edifying biography that situates President Hinckley's life effectively in the context of his times.

Particularly interesting are "the years of obscurity," his lengthy and important behind-the-scenes work in Church administration "known to comparatively few" (196) before he was called in 1958 to be an Assistant to the Twelve and assigned to supervise Asia. Under his supervision, the Church in Asia experienced phenomenal growth. An early member in the Land of the Morning Calm, Rhee Ho Nam, who joined the Church in 1954, reports, "Very simply, Elder Hinckley is the father of the Church in Korea" (223).

In addition to numerous anecdotes, stories, and testimonials by and about President Hinckley, the biography is supplemented with sixty-four pages of photographs, extensive notes, a time line, excerpts from major interviews and press conferences, and a thorough index.

In a recent interview, Sheri Dew gave her overall assessment of Gordon Hinckley: "The bottom line is, he is an exceptional man. And then if you combine that with the fact that you believe that the Lord really does direct succession and He's training and preparing this man, you can see the Lord's fingerprints all over him."

—Robert M. Hogge

On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar: Lectures Presented at the Brigham Young University Honors Program Discipline and Discipleship Lecture Series, edited by Henry B. Eyring (Bookcraft, 1995)

Spiritual scholars. Is this asking too much of our Mormon academics? Elder Dallin H. Oaks expresses "the confident expectation that BYU students who qualify for academic honors are also specially interested and qualified in the things of the Spirit" (91). However, it is precisely because academics do not always school their scholarship with spirituality that Paul Cox, dean of General Education and Honors at Brigham Young University, initiated a lecture series entitled "Discipline and Discipleship," which explored the role of religious commitment to studies in various disciplines. What emerges from this lecture series is a multifaceted conversation that shapes a portrait of a spiritual scholar, one who has found ways to consecrate knowledge on the altar of faith (79).

The essence of this book is a timely warning to academics who love knowledge only for itself. But

more importantly, this volume serves as a reassuring guidebook for those who wish to speak "with the bilingual voice of both the intellect and the Spirit" (91).

The conversation opens with Elder Neal A. Maxwell's passionate, yet reasoned, reaffirmation of our power to attain discipleship. He presents the premise that faith and learning are "mutually facilitating" processes (3): "For a disciple of Jesus Christ, academic scholarship is a form of worship . . . another dimension of consecration" (7). Disciple-scholars understand their responsibility to build a community of Saints and know that there is room "for the full intellectual stretching of any serious disciple" as long as that stretching is done in meekness (14).

Describing his own rite of passage, Paul Cox illustrates the development of scholarship in young student-disciples, who "despite all odds . . . should seek learning" (24) in order to "increase [their] ability to serve the Church in many different ways" (37). The need to be open to truth from multiple sources and to evaluate assumptions is approached by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., who quotes Brigham Young: "It matters not what the subject be, if it tends to improve the mind, exalt the feelings, and enlarge the capacity. The truth that is in all the arts and sciences forms a part of our religion" (47).

"Faith in Jesus Christ, including what it requires in submission to authority held by His mortal servants, is not a burden to you as a scholar but is your strength," according to Elder Henry B. Eyring (61). Faith and submission help to

keep academic learning in balance. Elder Eyring learned from his father, Henry Eyring, the noted scientist, that the scholar's latest finding is still always "an approximation in the Lord's eyes" (70).

James S. Jardine uses a powerful central metaphor of the altar to encourage scholars to mentally visualize themselves consecrating their scholarly strengths on the altar to God. To avoid the lure of unrighteousness in academic life, Jardine gives six ways to consecrate learning as a "daily devotion" (78).

Elder Oaks stresses the balance between knowing and becoming: "Whereas the world teaches us to know something, the gospel teaches us to become something, and it is far more significant to become than it is to know" (92).

Mormon faith is not antithetical to academic learning. In fact, Church leaders past and present have encouraged and supported intellectual pursuit as long as it is tempered with meekness and consecration. By consecrating our learning, we then "invite the Spirit to . . . expand us and lift us as we gain pure knowledge and truth" (85). A great expectation? Yes, and according to this conversation, a realistic one.

—Deirdre Paulsen

Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars, edited by Susan Easton Black (Deseret Book and FARMS, 1996)

Can a true Saint balance the quest for earthly knowledge on the head

of a spiritual pin, allowing her or him to dance with the angels? Or put another way, can anyone thoroughly acquainted with the learning of the world (done by "the natural man") remain humble enough to be considered a person of faith?

After reading this volume of essays penned by twenty-four esteemed Latter-day Saint scholars from diverse academic interests and institutions, one comes away judging that the answers to both these questions is a resounding "yes." What is more, one understands how correct Noel Reynolds is when he writes in the preface that Mormons, who are constantly in search of both intellectual and spiritual answers to the great questions of life, can find strength and common ground by sharing testimonies concerning the fruits of these searches.

These testimonies are organized into three sections: "Personal Odysseys of Faith," "Study and Faith," and "Faith and the Book of Mormon." The diverse essays offer distinct flavors and often very personal insights gleaned from the writers' several human pursuits, yet they reflect a concerted spiritual goal. As readers bring their own experiences, their own strengths, and their own humility to the insights offered by these authors, they should come to understand the kinship between intellect and spirit and to recognize that the intellectual quest, rather than diminishing faith, can augment and escalate the spiritual quest.

While the book does not reveal the answer to the old question about angels dancing, it brings its readers to the common ground of a

good testimony meeting where “expressions of faith” lead to a spiritually motivating and intellectually stimulating sharing of that which Latter-day Saints hold most precious.

—Patricia Mann Alto

Hearts Knit Together: Talks from the 1995 Women's Conference, edited by Susette Fletcher Green, Dawn Hall Anderson, and Dora Hall Dalton (Deseret Book, 1995)

Another resounding volume in the Women's Conference Series, this compilation was selected from the essays and poems presented at the 1995 Women's Conference sponsored by Brigham Young University and the Relief Society. Women from different backgrounds, occupations, and countries discuss topics common to all such as unity, compassion, patience, acceptance, and change. The words of Virginia H. Pearce establish a recurring theme of this book: we are all “trying to arrange [things] into a predictable pattern as [we adapt] to all sorts of change” (130).

The authors draw the subject of their presentations from their own personal experiences. Pam Kazmaier, having been a hospital nurse for twenty years, relates her difficult decision to leave her nursing career to stay at home with her young children. Bonnie Muirbrook Blair, a homemaker and mother of four, conveys the challenges she faced in the eight years she cared for her aging mother-in-law. And Aileen H. Clyde, former counselor in the General Relief Society presi-

dency, reminds us that as sisters in the gospel “we must cherish one another” (172). In *Hearts Knit Together*, every woman will be able to find a common thread.

The words in this collection strengthen testimonies as, once again, we realize we are not alone—others are experiencing, are enduring, or have overcome similar circumstances. The purpose of the Relief Society is realized as all sisters “look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21). This volume reaffirms the unity we find through the gospel and reminds us that we save souls by meeting human needs.

—NiCole M. Barzee

Utah, the Right Place: The Official Centennial History, by Thomas G. Alexander, 2d ed. (Gibbs Smith, 1996)

Identified as “The Official Centennial History” of Utah, this outstanding volume is well worth reading for anyone interested in Utah or Mormon history. Officially commissioned as a Utah Statehood Centennial Project of the Utah State Historical Society, *Utah, the Right Place* should be welcomed by every student and teacher of Utah history for its remarkable combination of comprehensiveness, conciseness, balance, and literary quality. Not often does a one-volume survey combine all these qualities so effectively.

The book consists of sixteen chapters. The first chapter provides a fine summary of the geological history of Utah; the second, a look at Native Americans, who inhabited the Beehive State as early as 11,000 B.C. Aspects of their lives are discussed in such a way that the reader should never forget their essential role in Utah's history. The third chapter covers the activities and influence of the explorers, entrepreneurs (trappers and traders), and immigrants who preceded the Mormon migration into the area.

Readers interested primarily in LDS Church history will, no doubt, pay closest attention to chapters four through eight, which cover the period from the foundation of the Church to the achievement of Utah statehood in 1896. This was the period in which the affairs of church and state were most closely tied together, making Utah's history highly distinctive.

Half of the book, chapters nine through fifteen, deals with the twentieth century. This section is particularly welcome, for it provides the most comprehensive coverage of this period yet to appear in print.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of *Utah, the Right Place* is the fact that Alexander has admirably fulfilled his goal of writing a history in which the lives of Utahns are seen as "a single piece" (8). He incorporates all of the elements of Utah life into every part of the book: religion, economics, politics, ethnic groups, family life, literature, the arts, architecture, sports and recreation, and the environment.

Each chapter covers a particular chronological period, but Alexander skillfully weaves the myriad pieces into a comprehensive larger picture that will make even those who are generally familiar with Utah history feel that they have a new and more complete understanding of everything that went on in that period. Utah's artists, politicians, musicians, educators, religious leaders (including Mormon, Catholic, Protestant, and non-Christian), and ethnic groups are all there, but as part of a larger picture that both supersedes and includes each of them. In addition, Alexander has done a commendable job of integrating the contributions of women in Utah history.

One of Alexander's persistent themes is the fact that Utah was not isolated from the rest of the nation. Rather, he constantly reminds the reader, its history was always part of the larger scene and always influenced by what was happening outside its borders. Utah also had some influence on the world around it.

Chapter sixteen, "Reflections on Utah's Kingdom, Colony, and Commonwealth," provides an insightful summary of the entire book and makes especially clear another central theme: the evolution of Utah from a Mormon kingdom to a capitalist colony (where outside capital provided the major stimulus to the economy), to a colony of Washington (a period of time in which the state's economy was largely dependent upon defense spending and other forms of federal aid), and then to an American commonwealth when, beginning in the 1980s, Utahns generated their own capital and managed their own large business

enterprises. He concludes with a hint of pride that "Utah's people no longer have to work in an economy in which its major enterprises are owned and operated from outside the state" (459).

Capping, for now (but certainly not concluding), a distinguished professional career of teaching and writing Utah history, *Utah, the Right Place* should be an essential addition to the library of anyone concerned with the Beehive State. Mormons will find Alexander's approach to their history both thorough and refreshing. It will be especially appreciated in light of some modern efforts to diminish, if not eliminate, any discussion of religion in history classes. As Alexander himself observes (taking a cue from one of his early mentors), "studying Utah history without talking about the Mormons would be like discussing the discovery of America without mentioning Columbus" (9). At the same time, Mormon history itself is not the focus of the book. The Mormon majority and their contributions are well served, but so, too, are the contributions of others. Alexander has succeeded in creating a well-integrated, well-balanced history of a state that, in his view, is still "the right place" for all.

—J. B. Allen, book review editor

Great and Peculiar Beauty: A Utah Reader, edited by Thomas Lyon and Terry Tempest Williams (Gibbs Smith, 1995)

Here is a welcome buffet of Utah literature spread out in celebration

of the centennial of Utah's hard-won statehood. Editors Thomas Lyon, of Utah State University, and Terry Tempest Williams, of the University of Utah, serve up nearly 150 personal and imaginative writings and poems by more than 130 Utah writers in a big, splendid anthology destined to be a literary landmark in the cultural history of Utah.

Eschewing familiar and well-worn organizing metaphors, the editors have gathered their selections under a fresh and utile organizing principle that transforms Utah's five topographically distinct terrains, each of which possesses an inherent "great and peculiar beauty" (ii), into five "literary provinces": "The Great Basin," "Urban Terrace," "Mountains," "Colorado Plateau," and "Dixie" (1). Introducing each section in brief, lyrical essays centered in the natural history of the province, the editors present a judicious selection of some familiar but mostly less accessible or virtually unknown works of poetry, fiction, history, personal narratives, interviews (with earlier inhabitants), and accounts of present-day life in the five provinces. All of this gathers to a satisfying cultural, historical, and literary feast.

Lyon and Williams have measured each selection against four criteria: every reading "should illuminate its region; it should have literary value; it should suggest ideas or dimensions of feeling that transcend time; and it should tell a story" (2). Their unstated fifth criterion is, of course, that every reading reflect the editors' own world views as professing naturalists, writers, scholars, and sympathetic

cultural commentators who are at a personal, religious, and academic remove from Utah's mainstream LDS majority. This distancing, together with the topographical overlay, enables a fresh look at the breadth of Utah's scenic and human landscape, 1776–1996. Such distancing, however, also affects the spirit of this collection, and some readers will find the book goes awry in failing to capture the dynamic spiritual and religious power of the Mormon faith, a shortfall which can be explained more by editorial predilection and selectivity than by the fact that barely half of the book's selections were written by Latter-day Saints, in a state where Mormons still comprise more than 72 percent of the population.

While the editors bemoan the unfortunate necessity of omitting drama, science fiction, children's or young adult literature from the collection—some of which are among Utah's strongest genres—other unacknowledged and unexplained editorial omissions further alter the tone and lessen the representative nature of the book. Missing are LDS hymns, poetic touchstones of Mormon theology and Utah history; LDS sermons, represented here only by Orson Hyde, not Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, or others to be found in the *Journal of Discourses* (arguably the most important collection of Utah literature); or LDS journals, too sparsely represented (although Mary Goble Pay is there), with their invaluable glimpses into applied Mormonism. Beyond many appreciated inclusions in the book

are equally important exclusions of contemporary Utah writers whose presence would help balance the offering and brighten the mosaic: Samuel Woolley Taylor, Hugh Nibley, Eileen Gibbons Kump, Marilyn Miller Brown, Louise Plummer, anthologized poets Arthur Henry King and John Sterling Harris, Gerald N. Lund (Utah's all-time, best-selling author), and Utah's best-known, prize-winning author, Orson Scott Card. There are other oversights as well: sundry typos; misspellings of at least a half-dozen authors' names; an introduction which repeatedly refers the reader to a nonexistent "Volume 2," apparently reflecting an earlier, abandoned format; and a clutch of quirky, inconsistent, and imbalanced endnotes.

In lamenting such omissions and errors, however, let me not be guilty of my own distortive skewings. In fact, *Great and Peculiar Beauty: A Utah Reader* is a cultural landmark in the 150-year history of Utah arts and letters, a literary hymning of the "great and peculiar beauty" of this good place and its good people.

—Richard H. Cracroft

Searching for God in America,
by Hugh Hewitt (Word Publishing,
1996)

Through interviews, writings, hymns, and brief histories of individuals who have shaped Americans' religious lives, this book showcases many "spiritualities" from such figures as Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Smith Jr., Samuel

Clements, William James, Black Elk, Dalai Lama, George S. Patton, and Albert Einstein.

Hewitt first presents transcriptions of a series of interviews he conducted for PBS with Chuck Colson (who tells the story of his psychological rebirth and his committed love in service to prisoners), Harold Kushner (who suggests that we must substitute service for an absent God, that freedom includes random tragedy, and that functional truth is higher than factual truth), Roberta Hestenes (who proclaims a Presbyterian social gospel in the third world as well personal peace gained from the Word and Spirit), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (in whose philosophy the secular fades, the Truth remains, and, in the alternative “science” of Islam, Sufism, world forms allow the true “hidden” to appear), and Cecil Murray (an African Methodist Episcopal pastor in Watts, who believes that social salvation is the only real salvation and presents a “Marshall Plan” for American cities).

His sixth interview is with Neal Maxwell, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, who teaches us that “recognizing the Spirit” is learned behavior, that the ultimate challenge is loving our enemies, that secularism is our major social problem, and that freedom costs security. He also bears a Latter-day Saint testimony about meekness. The final interviews are with Thomas Keating (a Benedictine mystic and monastic who believes that meditative prayer effects social change, teaches that the “false self” hungers for security, control, affection, and esteem, and affirms that

freedom requires God’s absence), and Dalai Lama (whose Tibetan Buddhism teaches interrelatedness, reincarnation, the risk of violence creating violence, and the virtue of compassion, which is analogous to Christian love).

The interviewer’s two questions for all his selected participants were, How did you come to your faith? and Why do you think there is so much innocent suffering in the world? They answered with sincerity and verve.

Elder Maxwell’s touchingly personal interview displayed how the articulate Apostle developed faith and courage at a young age by meekly facing embarrassing acne problems in his teens. He discloses his feelings of inadequacy about giving apostolic blessings to the sick, when many are healed and many not, and about his responsibility to witness to all the world: “It is overwhelming. One cannot be in an Islamic country and not be conscious of the tremendous challenge it is to bear a witness of Jesus’ name in a nation where there may be hostility towards Jesus, per se.”

Regarding agnostic divine children, Elder Maxwell states, “They don’t know who they are, but I do: and I must learn to love them, even if . . . they are critical of me, because they are my brothers and sisters.” Regarding government and social ills: “I’d rather have ten commandments than ten thousand federal regulations. . . . And unless we rebuild marriages and families, we are really straightening deck chairs on the Titanic.” Regarding the hardest thing of all: “The act of

loving one's enemies and submissiveness are the greatest and the crowning things in discipleship. It shouldn't surprise us that they don't come early in one's discipleship. Instead they come near the end of the trail when we are less caught up with ego, so I don't think we should expect to arrive there quickly."

The book next presents historical writings with many riveting testimonies. Hymns end the compilation as beautiful witnesses to less effable spirituality. This beautiful book of saintly testimonies should be read by anyone feeling cynical or alone.

—Charles Randall Paul

The Morning Breaks: Stories of Conversion and Faith in the Former Soviet Union, by Howard L. Biddulph (Deseret Book, 1996)

Written by the president of the Ukraine Kiev Mission 1991-94, this book is more than a collection of inspiring accounts of spiritual conversion to Christ and his restored gospel and more than an engrossing account of the opening of nations previously closed to the preaching of the gospel. This volume raises hymns of praise, rejoicing, and awe at the workings of the Lord in the lives of individuals and families living in Ukraine and Belarus. The title of the book is taken from Parley P. Pratt's famous hymn of the restoration:

The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!

The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world.

Relating a remarkable if minute part of the unfolding story of God's hand at work among peoples once imprisoned in oppressive regimes, *The Morning Breaks* includes first-person accounts of individuals' spiritual struggles to find answers to fundamental questions of life, of their God-led discovery of the truth, and of the opening of their hearts to receive the blessings of light and hope and salvation through Jesus Christ. The testimonies borne by these people, whose lives and minds and souls have been so miraculously unshackled and transformed through spiritual conversion and activity in the Church, should touch many hearts.

Coming from a part of the world that not long ago seemed unreachable, *The Morning Breaks* is told by a man who was prepared in many ways from his youth for a mission that he and we could hardly have imagined.

—Robert W. Blair

Etruscan Italy: Etruscan Influences on the Civilizations of Italy from Antiquity to the Modern Era, edited by John F. Hall (Museum of Art, Brigham Young University, 1996)

The first book to be published by Brigham Young University's Museum of Art is a result of that museum's inaugural exhibit, *The Etruscans: Legacy of a Lost Civilization*. John Hall has brought together fourteen essays presented by international scholars at the

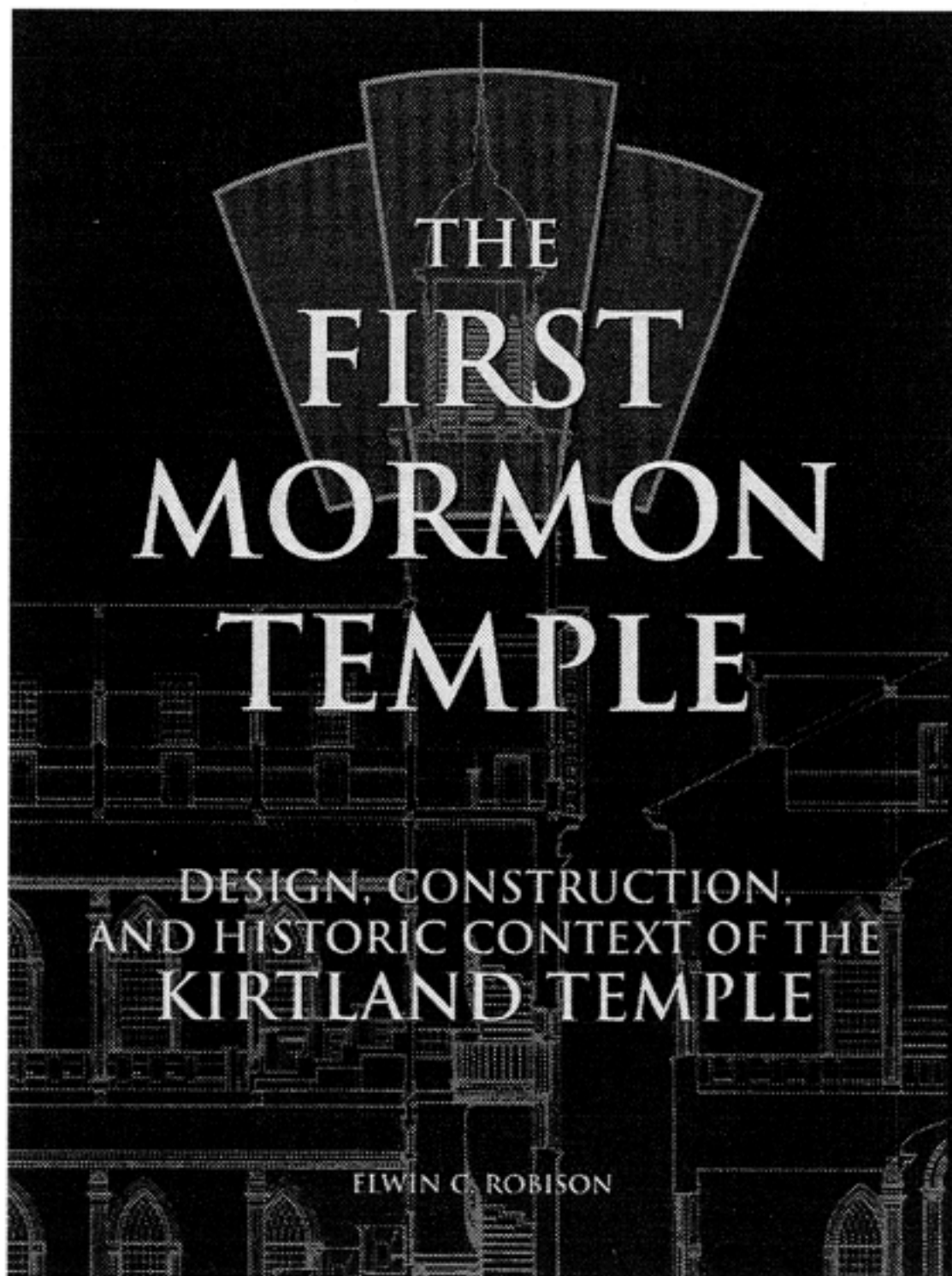
symposium that Hall organized in conjunction with the exhibition. The essays include historical, archaeological, literary, and art history topics in the pre-Roman-Etruscan, the Roman-Etruscan, and the post-Roman eras.

The handsome volume is an effort worthy of the quality of the exhibit that gave it birth. From its beautifully designed dust jacket through the numerous dramatic and richly colored illustrations, *Etruscan Italy*, is itself a work of art.

—Nancy R. Lund

Unfortunate Emigrants: Narratives of the Donner Party, edited by Kristin Johnson (Utah State University Press, 1996)

In a year of commemorating pioneering in Utah, readers might also be interested in a volume that documents the heartrending experience of the Donner party, who crossed Utah on their way to California. *Unfortunate Emigrants: Narratives of the Donner Party* is a selection of early accounts, some hard-to-find, of those ill-fated 1846 pioneers who were trapped in the snows of the Sierra Nevada and of the efforts made to rescue them.



The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple, by Elwin C. Robison (Brigham Young University Press, 1997)

When the Saints dug the foundation trench for their first temple, only 150 members lived in Kirtland. Despite a serious lack of manpower, proper equipment, and funds, they doggedly persisted in building and adorning “a house to the Lord.” Both their struggles and their aspirations are recorded in the temple’s structure and architecture. In the 1830s, the Kirtland Temple was the site of numerous spiritual manifestations.

“After years of study and research, Elwin C. Robison has produced a pivotal work. . . . The book is an absolute gold mine of useful historical and architectural information.” —Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

“An exceptional volume that plumbs the desired depths in a highly professional manner.” —Larry C. Porter