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The First Vision: A Harmonization of 10 Accounts from the Sacred Grove

Kimball Gardner

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and happiness,” this book will provide them with an understanding of contemporary challenges in family life and a broad set of “best practices” that can be understood and applied in strengthening marriage, improving parenting, and enriching family relationships.

—Sean Brotherson

The First Vision: A Harmonization of 10 Accounts from the Sacred Grove by Matthew B. Christensen (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2014)

The First Vision of Joseph Smith is one of the defining moments in the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With it began the Restoration of the gospel and the reopening of the communication between God and his children. Even after the contributions of scholars such as Milton V. Backman, James B. Allen, John W. Welch, and Steven C. Harper, most Latter-day Saints are familiar with only the canonized account of this vision recorded in Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price. However, there are other accounts of it recorded by Joseph Smith as well as other secondary sources.

In this short book that is also filled with beautiful illustrations, Matthew B. Christensen attempts to do something that many agree is long overdue: harmonize ten different accounts of the First Vision into one comprehensive account. He begins his book by providing certain criteria that helped him decide which accounts he should or should not use in this harmony. Basically, he chose to use only those that were recorded during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, resulting in ten accounts. He then goes on to summarize each of them, briefly discussing their origins, authors, and content. After these summaries, he describes his method

of bringing the accounts together into one, and his organizational plan, which is essentially to keep the canonized version as the “core melody,” and to have the other nine accounts as “accompaniment” in the “harmony” (9). He also notes the limitations to such a task, and comments that though he has tried to ensure a fair portrayal of all the accounts, he is aware that there may be some human error evident in the final outcome.

After these introductory sections, Christensen provides the reader with a color key, which assigns a specific color to each of the different accounts so as to aid the reader when going through the harmony. The next pages contain the harmony itself, and it is in these pages that the reader will be able to read the many different accounts of the First Vision as one flowing version. After this harmony, he offers a short conclusion, including a small section with an invitation from Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon with their promise of a personal witness to the truthfulness of their testimonies.

Those interested in a better understanding of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, member of the Church or not, will find this an informative read. It offers a new approach to all of the various accounts of the First Vision and uncovers some of the lesser-known details and thoughts of Joseph before, during, and after the event. As a result, it is more varied than the canonized version and even includes a section where all of Christ’s words from the different accounts are together at one time. Visitors at the new exhibition in Salt Lake City at the Church History Museum entitled “The Heavens Are Open” will also encounter a shorter but similar harmonization in the dramatic presentation of the First Vision there.

While it is helpful to see the various accounts harmonized as one, readers will also benefit from Christensen’s

encouragement that all readers undertake a serious study of all the different accounts separately. *The First Vision* is best seen in this light; it is an aid to help curious readers learn and be uplifted by the unified accounts and to encourage them to seek out more involved research about the accounts. Ultimately, *The First Vision* is intended to strengthen testimony and show that the different accounts are indeed harmonious and accordant.

—Kimball Gardner

Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of the Expound Symposium, 14 May 2011, edited by Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014)

Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference: "The Temple on Mount Zion," 22 September 2012, edited by Matthew B. Brown, William J. Hamblin, and David Rolph Seely (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014)

Ancient Temple Worship and *Temple Insights* are both compilations of works by various authors and published as proceedings of symposia organized by the late Matthew B. Brown, who was an author and historian writing for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship, and the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research. Readers that have ever been mystified by temple symbolism, ancient temples, or modern temple worship will find these books helpful in their pursuit of understanding.

By a thorough analysis of scriptures and historical evidence, *Ancient Temple*

Worship helps readers make connections between ancient worldviews and temple worship. Topics explore the symbolic meaning of measuring tools, hand gestures, the tabernacle, sacred tree iconography, and the Holy of Holies. The book includes broader topics such as the genetics of indigenous populations and how that relates to the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

Temple Insights will enhance readers' understanding and appreciation of current temples, but in doing so, readers are treated to a panorama of temple worship throughout time and place. The book stands as a witness that the pre-exilic Hebrews understood the temple concept to originate with Adam, not Moses, which understanding is reflected in Joseph Smith's teachings. Articles also provide insights on temple worship by exploring temples in the Book of Mormon. *Temple Insights* was dedicated to Matthew B. Brown after his sudden death, which occurred before Brown finished organizing the conference upon which this book is based.

These two books serve as a fitting dedication to Brown's love of and appreciation for the temple, along with its symbolism and worship. Brown's lifelong study and tireless interest in sacred things, which developed into a deep devotion for temple worship, is reflected in the wide-ranging scholarship that the authors undertook in his honor.

Both books enrich previous Latter-day Saint writings on temple symbolism and worship. Readers are brought up to date on how scholars are interacting with such works as *Temple and Cosmos*, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, *Temples in the Ancient World*, *One Eternal Round*, and *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*. On the pages of *Ancient Temple Worship* and *Temple Insights* are found new perspectives about ancient texts and