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## At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women

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that has long been shrouded in mystery and speculation. At the end of the introduction, the editors state they “hope that this collection of essays both increases public knowledge about the Council of Fifty and spurs further scholarship” (xv). Meant to be a starting point for future discussion, this compilation will be helpful to any reader or scholar interested in learning about the Council of Fifty or wishing to enhance their study of the complete council minutes.

—Alison Palmer

Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, eds., *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2017)

*At the Pulpit* joins other notable recent books on Latter-day Saint women such as *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, *The Witness of Women*, the books in the *Women of Faith* series, and the long-running series of books from the BYU Women’s Conference. Each of these seeks to bring the records of female Saints out of relative obscurity. Editors Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook help move this effort forward in *At the Pulpit*, which presents fifty-four discourses of fifty-one women in full and takes the reader from 1830 up to the present.

Many of the discourses included here were previously hard to find, such as several early talks recorded in journals and minutes. The editors cast their net widely and included a song, a discussion group, and speeches outside of general Relief Society meetings and general conferences. The women featured include a few from places outside the United States, namely, Germany, Russia, South Africa, Mexico, and Kenya. Each of the discourses is introduced by a brief biography and description of the talk’s original setting.

It is inspiring to not only read the women’s words but to also realize and recognize the contributions their words have made in the growth of the restored Church. The messages of these women teach readers to look to God, develop Christlike characteristics, and understand and appreciate the depth of the gospel. In one discourse, Drusilla Hendricks tells of her husband becoming paralyzed in the violent encounters in Missouri and of facing the decision of her son to join the Mormon Battalion (51–54). Francine R. Bennion delves deeply into the theology of suffering and individuals’ role in their relationship with God, leading to wholeness (212–31). And Julie Beck sees priesthood quorums and Relief Society groups as instrumental in creating a kingdom of God on earth (295–307).

The book also reminds Latter-day Saints that Church structure was not always like it is now. For example, in the 1970s and ’80s Elaine A. Cannon advocated for a magazine dedicated to the youth of the Church, for Sunday religious instruction for young sisters in addition to Sunday School, and for a general women’s meeting (204–11).

An index helps users find discourses on topics, making it easy to use the book in talks and lessons. An appendix collects the names of all the women who have spoken in general conferences and leadership meetings associated with general conferences. The list begins with Lucy Mack Smith, who spoke at a general Church session in 1845; the next women to speak in a general session were Louise Y. Robison, Ruth May Fox, and Mary Anderson, who spoke over eighty years later in the October 1929 general conference. The book fills in this gap, featuring at least one discourse from every decade since 1830.

The Church Historian’s Press has published the entire volume free online

at <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit>. The website also offers a handy chronology that places the discourses in the context of women's events in Church history, such as the switch from the *Woman's Exponent* to the *Relief Society Magazine* in 1915.

Giving helpful visibility to the project, in 2018 the Church is running in the *Ensign* and *Liahona* a series of excerpts from *At the Pulpit* and titled the series by that name, directly linking it to the book. The February magazines invite readers to "take a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the book upon which the magazine series is based" and gives a URL (3). The URL leads

to the digital-only article "Meeting the Women behind the Pulpit," which is also listed in the online table of contents of the magazines. This short article tells the stories behind two of the featured speakers in *At the Pulpit*, and Reeder and Holbrook conclude, "We witnessed how God teaches us through the records that our fellow Latter-day Saints left behind. Coming to know the authors of these discourses enriched our own ability to meet life's challenges as we work to do our part in building God's kingdom." May this mission be carried on to future publications featuring the voices of women as they preach and testify about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—Jennifer Hurlbut