**Brief Notices**

*Clothed with Charity: Talks from the 1996 Women’s Conference,* edited by Dawn Hall Anderson, Susette Fletcher Green, and Dlora Hall Dalton (Deseret Book, 1997)

These essays also explore ways in which we might improve our experiences. Several essays discuss the benefits of journal writing. In this context, Carol Clark Ottesen quotes the poet Rilke: “If your daily life seems poor, do not blame it; blame yourself . . . [for you] must call forth its riches” (54). Life is improved by realizations reached through learning about or from other people. Mary Kirk declares that God will provide opportunities to learn from the people around us or from God himself—indeed, God will “pour out his holiness upon us at the rate that we open our eyes and perceive, open our ears and understand, and open our hearts and invite him in. And then we’ll become like him” (117).

And to keep a proper perspective on life, Louise Durham proclaims the benefits of laughter: “As far as I’m concerned, humor is serious business. It is both a salve to heal wounds and an astringent that occasionally stings in the right places. . . . Laughing often clears vision and can put things back into focus” (72).

Several other contributors show that trials in life—including childbirth, loss, or loneliness—are part of the learning process. This volume of essays and poems provides
encouragement, shares understanding, and promotes hope.

—Claire Foley

Women of the Mormon Battalion, by Carl V. Larson and Shirley N. Maynes (Watkins Printing, 1995)

This small book describes the precious experiences of more than thirty women who traveled with the Mormon Battalion. Most were wives who, refusing to be left behind, enlisted along with their husbands as soldiers in the Mexican War. The women served as nurses, laundresses, and companions to their husbands during the long march. Only four women accompanied the battalion all the way to California; the rest became part of the battalion sick detachment and spent the winter at Fort Pueblo, Colorado. All the women suffered the hardships of the march—shortage of food, water, clothing, and the comforts they had left behind. At least two who marched to California, Melissa Burton Cory and Lydia Edmunds Hunter, were pregnant.

Colonel Thomas L. Kane, present at the enlistment of the battalion at Council Bluffs, Iowa, observed that the Mormon women had been bred to other lives. . . . Before their flight, they had sold their watches and trinkets as the most available resource for raising ready money; and . . . [even though they] were without earrings, finger rings, chains, or broaches . . . they lacked nothing most becoming the attire of decorous maidens. They neatly darned white stockings, and clean, bright petticoats, the artistically clear-starched collar and chemisette, the something faded, only because too well-washed, lawn or gingham gown, that fit modestly to the waist of the pretty wearer—these, if any of them spoke of poverty, spoke of a poverty that had known its better days. (28)

Even though this 130-page book lacks personal journals written by the women, the statements recorded by their biographers give the reader a picture of what the women of the Mormon Battalion experienced during their trek across the deserts of the southwestern United States during the fall and winter of 1846-47, as well as additional details of these women's lives as they joined their husbands in colonizing the Great Basin and parts of California.

—Clark V. Johnson

The Balm of Gilead: Women's Stories of Finding Peace (Deseret Book, 1997)

The 1996 Women's Conference Committee extended a call for essays on a theme taken from an address by Relief Society General President Elaine Jack entitled "Relief Society: A Balm in Gilead." The balm of Gilead was a salve used in ancient times to heal and soothe wounds. The healing properties of the balm seemed an appropriate metaphor "through which women could share perspectives on their
own life experiences" (1) and define their paths to peace.

Essays poured in. This volume presents thirty of these essays, each having its own individual style and focus, yet uniting with the others in expressing the struggle to reap the benefits of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to find peace in a world of adversity. Whether she struggles with physical, mental, or spiritual aspects of her life, every woman can find hope in these stories, which bear testimony of the love and mercy of God, the truthfulness of his plan and the promises of salvation and happiness.

One essayist describes her balm of Gilead as "the sweetness of Christ and the gospel of service that has come into my life. It has helped to heal my heart and will continue to do so as long as I turn my eyes to him" (88). Another essay suggests that the balm of Gilead "is produced from the yield of the Tree of Life. ... Balm has been abundantly available for me as the need has been manifested throughout my life. It has been supplied at times by my own effort, but often it comes through another's compassion" (10-11). Through her struggles, another writer has realized peace and purpose in pain: "We will not be judged on what problems we have but how we handle them. And I've learned that every problem, if we look hard enough, has a silver lining" (97).

These essays encourage the joy-yielding traits of faith, hope, and charity. They promote learning and growth from experience and trials, and they testify of the purpose of life, and the love of the Savior.

—Claire Foley

A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography, edited by Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne (Research Press, 1996)

A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography, a massive compilation recently published by FARMS, is an essential source of information for Book of Mormon scholars. The 650-page volume describes more than 6,300 pieces about the Book of Mormon, including books and monographs, articles, theses, dissertations, pamphlets and reports, book reviews, newspaper articles, plays, and poetry.

The bibliography lists all published Book of Mormon sources that could be found, drawing items from the Mormon collections of sixteen major libraries in the United States and England. To facilitate access, the book includes a diskette with the same bibliographic information in electronic form. This extensive information will provide students of the scriptures with a comprehensive overview of scholarly research on the Book of Mormon, as well as bring attention to areas that need further study.

FARMS has also published a shorter version—A Guide to Publications
**on the Book of Mormon.** This convenient volume contains over 3,200 items, omitting less-substantive or outdated materials and anti-Mormon literature.

Accessing information in these volumes is quick and painless. Annotations and the index are closely interrelated through the use of key words. This time-saving aspect of the book adds to its value as a research tool.

Among FARMS’s most important achievements in recent years, these bibliographies allow researchers and students of the scriptures to access many years of Book of Mormon research by LDS scholars and others, providing a complete perspective. No one who is serious about research and writing on the Book of Mormon should fail to consult one of these volumes.

—David Allred

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**Religions of the World: A Latter-day Saint View,** by Spencer J. Palmer, Roger R. Keller, Dong Sull Choi, and James A. Toronto (Brigham Young University, 1997)

In early 1997, President Hinckley announced that Church membership outside the United States had surpassed that within the country. Now, more than ever before, Latter-day Saints are interacting regularly with peoples of other faiths and cultures. In keeping with this international outreach, this popular text, used throughout the Church for the study of world religions, has been revised and expanded. Two additional authors, several new chapters, a number of new illustrations, and much updated material add fresh perspectives to the former edition’s tried-and-true approach. The result portrays the vivid spectrum of truth as it extends across cultures and religious systems. The book presents a wealth of vital information for leaders, missionaries, and members seeking greater understanding of the peoples of the world and the beliefs that motivate them.