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A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration

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A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration, edited by David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2011).

The subject for the 2010 Brigham Young University Church History Symposium was the organization and administration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Since most topics in Mormon history also relate to administrative history, there was a great response to the call for papers. BYU faculty members David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr have compiled twenty-seven of the symposium addresses in this substantial volume, which also includes a foreword by Elder Marlin K. Jensen, an introduction by the editors, and a source essay by Whittaker that directs readers to further studies of the topics contained in the book.

The book is divided into four sections. “The Revelatory Foundation: Revelations and Organization” discusses organizational principles from the early days of the Church, including the Book of Mormon’s influence on Church administration and the succession crisis of 1844. “Gathering, Organizing, and Strengthening the Saints” focuses on Church innovations primarily from the second half of the nineteenth century, such as the Gathering (first to Nauvoo and then to Salt Lake City) and the organization

of the Primary in 1878. “Building on the Firm Foundation” features articles that generally cover events from the past century, including discussions of changes to auxiliary organizations and an article about Spencer W. Kimball written by his son Edward L. Kimball. “Administering Missions” has three papers about the organization of missionary work: one about German mission leadership during World War II, one about the role of Seventies in Church administration, and one about the organization of missions.

While *A Firm Foundation* as a whole will appeal mainly to Church scholars and those interested in organizational theory, each of its individual articles offers an important synthesis of information for those who are interested in a particular topic. For example, a musician researching the history of the hymnbook would be interested in Michael Hicks’s article “How to Make (and Unmake) a Mormon Hymnbook,” and a newly called Young Women president might be intrigued by Janet Peterson’s article “Young Women of Zion: An Organizational History.” The book is broad enough that there is something of interest for everyone, from a young man or young woman wondering how mission calls are determined to a groundskeeper interested in the Church’s history of beautification.

—R. Mark Melville