Today’s scholars of Joseph Smith’s First Vision stand on the shoulders of giants. The saying is at least as old as Bernard of Chartres, who reportedly said that medieval professors like himself “see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature.”\(^1\) Isaac Newton later used the same metaphor to acknowledge, “If I have seen further it is by standing on ye sholders of Giants.”\(^2\) This volume reproduces some of the seminal articles that analyze Joseph Smith’s First Vision written by the giants who have studied it for half a century. It is a monument to their contributions, composed of their work.

The past of First Vision scholarship is indispensable to the present. Those of us who study the First Vision today depend very much on the works of the scholars that are reprinted in this volume. Moreover, much of the source material on which their
articles are based and on which we depend, they discovered and published. We are beginning to explore further because we can see from their shoulders. This volume contains much of their mentoring.

It also serves as a mechanism for ongoing mentoring. It began with a realization that the work of the scholars republished hereafter, though well known to the students of these venerable mentors, is little known to the “rising generations” (D&C 69:8). This volume preserves and recommunicates that work, if only to the promising young historian Samuel Alonzo Dodge, who interviewed eminent First Vision scholars, gathered their seminal articles, and arranged them for publication here with a contextual introduction he composed. Brigham Young University invests its resources in mentoring the rising generations, including by funding and publishing this project. Those funds were generously supplemented by my mentor, Susan Easton Black, and her late husband Harvey Black. Sam and I gratefully dedicate this volume to them. With a profound sense of indebtedness of the scholars whose work is republished on the following pages, we offer this volume as a monument to the work of my mentors and as a mechanism for continuing to communicate their important work to the rising generations.

Notes
