

Book Reviews

GRACIA N. JONES. *Emma and Joseph: Their Divine Mission*. (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, Inc., 1999, xiii + 364 pp., illustrations, index, author's note, chapter endnotes, \$19.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Joni Wilson, Education and Editorial Specialist, Temple School, RLDS Church, Independence, Missouri.

Gracia N. Jones is the great-great-granddaughter of Joseph and Emma Smith. Her great-grandfather is Alexander Hale Smith. She is the author of *Priceless Gifts: Celebrating the Holidays with Joseph and Emma Smith* and *Emma's Glory and Sacrifice: A Testimony*.

In the preface, Gracia N. Jones states that she offers "a unique view of the history of the Church. For it is a very personal history, one devoted to the unfolding of the spiritual and temporal experiences with which Joseph and Emma were involved" (xii). This thesis is supported by the author's research: "Much of the information in this book comes from Joseph Smith's history, *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* . . . edited by B. H. Roberts, [and has] served as my chief source" (351).

Using primarily Mormon works and references, Jones tells the usual story of Joseph and Emma Smith and the life they shared. However, the author has not benefited from the many recent works that have appeared on this subject. These would have added depth and breadth to her telling of this saga.

There does not appear to be much new information or added insight in the book, and even the old skeletons are not exposed in this romanticized telling of the story. Jones has given a vivid account of what it must have felt

like to be the Smiths, injecting emotions and thoughts that can only be conjecture. Jones seems fully aware of the challenge of historical research to discover, evaluate information, confront one's personal bias, and then write in context. And yet her style of relating the tale is folksy and warm, giving the reader the impression of a personal relationship with the subjects.

I believe this book has done a fairly good job with the sources that were used and cited in informative endnotes for each chapter. There were times I wanted to know where the information was obtained, but I was left "sourceless." For example, I was particularly struck with the insights shared on various Smith names. Jones indicates that Frederick Granger Smith was called "Little Freddie" by the family and yet gives no source (102). I also found it curious that she indicated, again without a source, that the name of Don Carlos, son of Emma and Joseph, was pronounced "Don Carloss" (219).

There were some details that even when documented were incomplete. For example, on page 349, Jones indicates that David Hyrum Smith died of diabetes, but she does not cite a source of information. And there is no mention of a second infant son that Emma lost in the year 1842; she lost one son in February and another one in December.

There are multiple spelling errors of names in the book. That is perhaps more of an editorial problem, but unique names should have been verified and used the same way throughout the book. On page 311, Sevilla Durfey helps Emma, but on page 329, it is Savilla Durphee. On pages 323, 328, 329, and in the index, John Bernhisle's name is misspelled, but on page 330, it is correct as Bernhisel. (However, endnote 65 is missing from the notes section at the end of the chapter to verify this source.) These may seem like minor details, but attention to items like these can put the whole book and its authenticity into question.

I hoped this book was the beginning of a new look at Emma and her unique role as an independent woman in the founding of the Mormon movement. Her name is first in the title, and she seems to be accorded at least equal status with Joseph there. However, the author states that "Emma's divine mission must be measured in the context of her husband's life and mission" (11). This is even more pronounced when, after Joseph died, the analysis of Emma's journey is not continued.

There is virtually no mention of her many years of family accomplishments after she married Lewis Bidamon. I am puzzled at the lack of comment on Emma's refusal to go to the West with Brigham Young. Jones states that "Emma had already made up her mind she would not be going" after she heard of the deaths and suffering in the Iowa winter camps (320–21), as if the weather were the main reason Emma refused to leave Nauvoo.

In spite of my criticisms (and I probably looked more deeply for some-

thing to criticize since I was asked to review the book), I am appreciative of Gracia Jones's journey of discovery about her relatives and her willingness to share it. Even her personal story of finding the Mormon Church and her desire to uncover the past are interesting. The book was a "labor of love" and brought the author "great inspiration and an incredible witness of the truth regarding the restoration of the gospel" (xi–xii). As such, she has succeeded in crafting a book that will tell the old story from a unique and personal perspective.

RICHARD O. COWAN. *The Latter-day Saint Century*. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999, viii + 339 pp., illustrations, charts, index, \$34.95 hardback).

Reviewed by Brian Q. Cannon, Associate Professor of History, Brigham Young University.

In this revised and updated version of *The Church in the Twentieth Century* (1985), Richard O. Cowan, Professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, surveys the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints over the past century. Beautifully illustrated with fascinating photographs on well over half of its pages, this is an informative and inspiring institutional history designed for a broad audience. Although this is not a revisionist study that focuses heavily upon interpretive debates in Mormon historiography, it is nevertheless built upon a foundation of careful scholarship, as the author's endnotes demonstrate.

As Cowan notes, historians writing about the Church in the modern era face certain obstacles in their research: "more reflective personal sources," such as diaries or letters of recent Church leaders, are "not as readily available" as newspapers and Church magazines (vii). Consequently, Cowan's book leans heavily upon official publications, such as the *Ensign*, *Church News*, and general conference reports as well as published biographies of the prophets. In his treatment of some eras—particularly the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s—Cowan has incorporated information from committee files and First Presidency letter books housed in the Church Archives to enrich his narrative. But such sources are now difficult for historians to obtain, and Cowan was apparently unable to consult such sources in his research regarding many key developments. The author also chose not to supplement official records with ongoing coverage of developments appearing in independent newspa-

pers and magazines, such as the *Salt Lake Tribune* or *Sunstone*. Consequently, this history reflects the institutional imprimatur of the official public records that were consulted, possessing the strengths and the liabilities of those records. As an institutional rather than a social history, the book also focuses largely upon leaders, organizations, and policies rather than upon the experiences of lay members.

Entirely new chapters on the administrations of Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley distinguish this book from its predecessor. These chapters discuss the lives of each prophet and their teachings and focus upon key institutional developments during their administrations. The new chapters are sprinkled with engaging anecdotes, particularly regarding the prophets' early lives and calls to the apostleship.

The book's remaining chapters reprint most of the information found in the previous edition, but there are some significant changes, too. The new edition contains far more illustrations and fewer block quotations. Lengthy statements found in the former edition, such as one by Dean L. Larson regarding the challenges of training Church leaders in distant lands and one by Joseph L. Wirthlin regarding the responsibilities of the Presiding Bishopric, have been omitted entirely, and many other block quotations have been consolidated or paraphrased. The changes made in the book's discussion of Emeritus General Authorities are representative of the most common type of editorial revisions that have been made. For example, whereas the 1985 edition contained a twelve-line quotation from the First Presidency's announcement regarding Emeritus status, the new edition paraphrases much of the quotation and directly retains only ten words from the announcement. However, it adds new information regarding the Church-related responsibilities that some Emeritus members have received and the gradual evolution of the practice of bestowing Emeritus status upon all Seventies when they reach age seventy. Generally, such changes add to the readability and clarity of the work, although some important information is occasionally lost in the process of paraphrasing. Gone, for instance, from the book's discussion of the Equal Rights Amendment is mention that a minority rejected the Church's stance on the proposed amendment, although a quotation from the *Ensign* implies that not all members agreed with the Church's position. The new edition does not consistently shy away from controversial elements and matters of conflict, though. For instance, *The Latter-day Saint Century* mentions "violent demonstrations against BYU athletic teams" because of the Church's policies regarding blacks and the priesthood, whereas the 1985 edition says nothing of the matter (193).

Other features also distinguish the recent version from the 1985 publication. The new edition follows a clearer chronological progression—some

passages have been removed from topical chapters and placed within their appropriate chronological context. Insights from recent scholarship, such as Thomas Alexander's *Mormonism in Transition*, have also been incorporated within the new edition. Some topics that have received new or heightened attention include the exodus of Church members from the Mexican colonies in 1912, background on the publication of James E. Talmage's *The House of the Lord*, the Church's removal of "Lectures on Faith" from the Doctrine and Covenants, the First Presidency's editorial campaign against Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936, and visits of the brethren to the Saints overseas during the 1930s. In the postwar era, topics such as the Church's involvement in the construction of a stake center doubling as investment property in New York City's Lincoln Center and Spencer W. Kimball's sermons as an Apostle have been added.

Readers who desire an accurate overview of the Church's development in the twentieth century, those who are looking for a useful, well-organized and richly indexed reference tool or those desiring a beautifully illustrated, decorative book that can be displayed in their homes and browsed at a leisurely pace will all find much to admire in this volume. The book will likely whet serious readers' appetites for more detailed, scholarly monographs regarding smaller chunks of the century. Few such works have appeared to this point in time, particularly for the last decades of the century. Perhaps Cowan's work will help to inspire such studies by demonstrating the importance and the richness of the Church's recent history.