

## Book Reviews

DEAN C. JESSEE, ed. *The Papers of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1989, 1992. Volume 1: *Autobiographical and Historical Writings*. xlix; 557 pp. \$19.95. Volume 2: *Journal, 1832-1842*. xxv; 642 pp. \$21.95. In volume 1: general introduction. In both volumes: guide to editorial procedures, Joseph Smith chronology, Joseph Smith's family, maps, biographical register, bibliography, index.

Reviewed by Richard Dilworth Rust, Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and General Editor of the thirty-volume *Complete Works of Washington Irving*.

The image of Joseph Smith found in *The Papers of Joseph Smith (PJS)* reminds me of the only photographic image we have of Emily Dickinson, a daguerreotype made in 1848. Just as Dickinson's poetry was posthumously "improved" by Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd in *Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1890, 1891), so the rather plain picture of Emily Dickinson was retouched to give her a blush and curls. Some may prefer the touched-up poetry and picture, but I prefer the authentic versions (including *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson: A Facsimile Edition* [1981]). Similarly, I prefer the unpolished image of Joseph Smith that emerges from *PJS*, a carefully produced and ongoing collection of the Prophet's papers.

Volume 1 contains these autobiographical and historical writings dating to Joseph Smith's lifetime: a transcription of the earliest extant attempt by the Prophet to write a history of his life (1832)—which Jessee notes is Joseph's "only autobiographical work containing his own handwriting" (1:1); Joseph Smith's letter to Oliver Cowdery published in the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (1834); manuscript History of the Church (1834-36); journal extract published in the *Times and Seasons* (1839); 1839 manuscript draft

of *History of the Church*; finished manuscript version of *History* (1839); Orson Pratt's 1840 account of early Church history, containing the first publication of Joseph Smith's 1820 vision; Orson Hyde's *Ein Ruf aus der Wüste* (A Cry from the Wilderness), the first foreign-language printing (1842) of Joseph Smith's first vision; Joseph Smith's "Church History," published in *Times and Seasons* (1842); a Pittsburgh *Gazette* interview with Joseph Smith (1843), containing a distinctive account of the 1820 vision; Daniel Rupp's section on "Latter Day Saints" in his *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (1844), giving in Joseph Smith's words the origin, history, and beliefs of the Church; and a transcription from Alexander Neibaur's journal (1844), including an account of the First Vision.

Volume 2 contains six segments of Joseph Smith's Journal: Ohio Journal, 1832-1834; Ohio Journal, 1835-1836; Missouri Journal, 1838, March to September; Missouri Journal, 1838, September to October; Illinois Journal, 1839; Illinois Journal, 1841-1842.

According to the general introduction, forthcoming volumes of *The Papers of Joseph Smith* will continue the Illinois Journal and will also print transcriptions of three copybooks containing correspondence, revelations, and other documents; several hundred items of loose correspondence, revelations, financial records, discourses, and other writings; manuscripts pertaining to the Book of Mormon, the books of Abraham and Moses, and the Prophet's translation of the Bible; and the manuscript of the documentary history of the Church, begun by Joseph Smith but completed after his death. In other words, the editor hopes eventually to publish the papers of Joseph Smith in their entirety. This comprehensive edition will form a firm documentary foundation for future biographies and other writings about Joseph Smith and the history of Mormonism to 1844.

*PJS* is a historian's history. If one wanted an engrossing narrative, one might turn to the historical fictions of Gerald Lund. For interpretative accounts which provide extensive contexts for events in Church history, a general audience can profit from books such as *The Mormon Experience* by Leonard J. Arrington,<sup>1</sup> *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* by James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard,<sup>2</sup>



*Joseph Smith and the Restoration* by Ivan J. Barrett,<sup>3</sup> and *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* by Richard L. Bushman.<sup>4</sup> For extensive and official Church history laid out chronologically and with helpful notes, one turns to the multivolume *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.<sup>5</sup> But for an experience of consulting reliable substitutes for the original manuscript journals and the like, one will want to read and cite the *PJS*. The scrupulous accuracy of the transcriptions of the seven facsimile manuscript pages reproduced in the two volumes causes me to presume the rest of the transcriptions are as carefully presented. (I found only one punctuation error.) The texts are supplemented by helpful notes; extensive and up-to-date citations—which point directions for further study; beautifully clear maps; and a biographical register with significant information, where available, on the persons mentioned in the body of the volume. Only one who has been digging for information about people living in the first half of the nineteenth century can fully appreciate Dean Jessee's remarkable accomplishment in his detailed notes and biographical registers.

Most of the writing in these volumes was produced by scribes (for example, James Mulholland, George W. Robinson, and Willard Richards). Of the 1,587 manuscript pages comprising the Joseph Smith journal, only 31 contain holograph writing; another 250 were evidently dictated to scribes. There are thus varying degrees of closeness to the Prophet in these pages.

The transcriptions are presented in a form that the editors of the Mark Twain papers call "plain text." Deletions are struck through; Joseph Smith's holograph is indicated by bold type; editorial insertions are enclosed in brackets; deciphered shorthand is enclosed in braces ({}), and so forth. I could wish, though, for some consistency in documentary editing. Editors of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, cited by Jessee as an example of the type of modern editorial enterprise of which *PJS* is a part, use angle brackets (<>) to mark material deleted in the manuscript but restored in their text. Angle brackets in recent volumes of *The Papers of James Madison*, another comprehensive editorial project, mark characters and words restored by conjecture. The editor of *PJS* has chosen to use angle brackets to indicate insertions that are part of the original text. Since I have



been used to seeing these brackets as indicators of deleted material, I have difficulty thinking of them as marking insertions.

With the editor's help, the texts are relatively easy to read despite their idiosyncrasies of punctuation and orthography. We know Judge King stayed all night when we read, "The Judge stayed all knight," and we know that "Liberty Jaol" is a jail (or gaol). What the texts provide, in varying degrees, is an immediacy and closer access to the Prophet. This is especially true of portions of the 1832 history of Joseph Smith in his own handwriting (1:3-9). Although they are not replacements for the manuscripts, the transcriptions are presented so that one can read and quote from them as though they were the originals (with manuscript pages marked in brackets).

In this respect, I am puzzled by one of the editor's citations in the general introduction. While his footnote (misnumbered) is to Joseph Smith, History, 1832 (the first segment of volume 1), the quotation does not accord with what one finds in the transcription. Jessee uses the following to illustrate Joseph Smith's "attitude of wonder, admiration, and awe for the physical universe":

I looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their majesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast[s] of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength of beauty whose power and intelligence in governing the things which are so exceeding great and marvelous even in the likeness of him who created them and when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed, well hath the wise man said, it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God. (1:xxx)

Yet the text presumably quoted from is unpunctuated and has these spellings by Joseph Smith: "magesty," "intiligence," "exceding," and "marvilous" (1:6). The silent correction of Joseph Smith's writing undermines the editor's position that "an individual's personality is a reflection of the totality of his being, including his handwritten prose. Hence, in formulating rules for the present edition, I have emphasized preserving the integrity of the original sources" (1:xxxvii).

I have several impressions after reading these two volumes. The first is a more immediate sense of the personality of Joseph Smith (although Jessee's earlier volume, *The Personal Writings of Joseph*



*Smith*,<sup>6</sup> gets one even closer to him). The Prophet's energy appears in statements like this from an August 1842 letter to Emma: "Let Lorain [Lorin Walker] and brother [William] Clayton come along and bring all the writings and papers, books and histories, for we shall want a scribe in order that we may pour upon the world the truth like the Lava of Mount Vesuvius" (2:431). His love and sensitivity are apparent in his tributes to friends and family, such as: "Alvin my oldest brother, I remember well the pangs of sorrow that swelled my youthful bosom and almost burst my tender heart, when he died. He was the oldest, and the noblest of my fathers family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men" (2:440).

As with *History of the Church*, which contains much of the same matter as *PJS*, one finds in *PJS* Joseph Smith's generosity of soul, good humor, courage, and perseverance in the face of extreme adversity, love of learning, expansiveness of thought, devotion to family and friends, forgiveness of repentant persons, joy in living, and deep religious feelings and understanding.

As I have moved frequently from the texts to the biographical registers in these volumes, I have been struck by how many of the Latter-day Saint men mentioned in the histories left the Church. I also have noticed how many of the enemies of Joseph Smith and the Church were, post-1844, governmental officials, lawyers, and judges.

Volume 1 is especially interesting to me in presenting multiple versions of the heavenly manifestations that began the history of the Church. The materials are arranged chronologically by publication or composition date, though, so one might want to turn to the extensive index for assistance in comparing or conflating these accounts of specific occurrences.

Dean Jessee has been studying these papers for more than two decades<sup>7</sup> and is now bringing them forth for others to use as well. Jessee's earlier compilation and edition of *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* has met with much praise. His two volumes of *PJS* deserve a continuation of that praise.

A final word should be said about the appearance and readability of these first volumes of *PJS*. Designed by Kent Ware, they are handsome. The Trump Mediaeval font is open, attractive, and very readable. (By contrast, the Jefferson and Madison editions have

perhaps twice as many words to the page in less attractive fonts.) The binding is equally attractive. I look forward some day to seeing the complete edition lined up on a shelf, making available to the casual reader as well as to the historian Joseph Smith's papers in completeness and accuracy.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *BYU Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 275-94; "Joseph Smith's 19 July 1840 Discourse," *BYU Studies* 19 (Spring 1979): 390-407; "The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript," *BYU Studies* 10 (Winter 1970): 259-78; "Priceless Words and Fallible Memories: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Effort to Preserve His Discourses," *BYU Studies* 31 (Spring 1991): 19-40; and "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 (Spring 1971): 439-73.