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Book Reviews

EHAT, ANDREW F., and LYNDON W. COOK, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980. 447 pp. \$10.95.

Reviewed by Dean C. Jessee, senior research historian for the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Some of the difficulty in understanding Joseph Smith lies in the fact that much of the writing attributed to him has been filtered through the minds of other people. For example, those who seek Joseph Smith's thought and personality in the pages of his published discourses confront several limitations: (1) Only about one-fifth of the approximately 250 public addresses he is known to have given during his lifetime were recorded in any substantial detail. (2) Since shorthand skills were not adequately developed in the Mormon community during Joseph Smith's lifetime, extant reports of his addresses contain only a portion of what he said. (3) In preparing the reports of Joseph Smith's discourses for publication in the *History of the Church*, editors found it necessary to provide continuity and substance by adding words and sentences of their own where reporting was hasty. (4) Editorial procedures of the time did not distinguish between material supplied by editors and the wording of original reports. (5) Most additional reports of Joseph Smith's speeches, discovered since the writing of his History, have never been published.

In an effort to correct some of these limitations and shorten the distance between Joseph Smith and the modern reader, Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon Cook have published *The Words of Joseph Smith*, a collection of original reports of the Prophet's discourses. As volume six in BYU's prestigious Religious Studies Monograph Series, the book contains reports or references to 173 addresses given by Joseph Smith during his Nauvoo years as reported by about forty of his contemporaries. The volume is attractively printed and organized in an easy-to-read chronological format. The editors have provided extensive historical notes and a comprehensive index to all scriptural references used in the discourses.

Besides the original reports of speeches published in the *History of the Church*, *The Words of Joseph Smith* contains numerous additional reports heretofore unpublished. Since many reminiscences exist containing statements attributed to Joseph Smith, the editors' intent has been to include only contemporaneous reports of the Prophet's words. Their work provides a useful standard by which the reliability of the reminiscences may be evaluated. Furthermore, since the editorial procedures of the 1850s that governed the first publication of the Joseph Smith discourses consisted of combining multiple reports of a speech into a single account, this volume by identifying individual reports permits a study of nineteenth-century editorial methods. Beyond this, the publication by Ehat and Cook of those multiple reports of a given address allows the reader to evaluate the effectiveness of the reporting process in the absence of verbatim reporting skills. Finally, the reader comes away with a healthy respect for those whose sense of history motivated them to write what they heard in a day when institutional record-keeping procedures were not fully developed. One can only hope that a similar volume covering the pre-Nauvoo period of Joseph Smith's life will be forthcoming.

In their statement of editorial procedure, Ehat and Cook state that "every effort has been made to present a faithful copy of the original reports of Joseph Smith's discourses. By retaining original spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing we hoped to preserve the integrity of the documents" (p. xxiii). A glance at the text indicates that the editors were intent upon preserving all characteristics of the original handwritten reports so far as mechanical type would allow. And indeed, in a work produced to correct outmoded editorial procedures and establish a reliable foundation text, accuracy should be of primary concern. A comparison of the editorial work in *The Words of Joseph* with original reports by Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, William Clayton, and Howard Coray shows that while the editors have produced most of the detail of the original sources they have not fully achieved the high standard of accuracy they set for themselves:

1. To begin with, there is no editorial device to indicate material inserted above the line, which may represent later additions in the text of the original. Invariably, these insertions have been silently incorporated into the edited text. Nor is there a device to designate words written over other words. Where such appear in the original, the editors have either made the alteration silently or crossed out the first word and followed it with the alteration.

2. A major difficulty comes from trying to give exact spelling and punctuation where writing style is not precise. This is especially a

problem with the writing of Willard Richards. For example, in the third paragraph on page 211 the words “sha[l]t,” “investigat,” and “Spi[ri]ts” indicate misspellings in the original; but in the same paragraph parts of other words such as the “ne” in “learned,” the “e” in “preached,” and “r” in “world” are no more plainly evident than those bracketed or left out. It is also often difficult to distinguish commas from periods in the documents. In some instances the editors could have given the writer the benefit of the doubt and used commas instead of periods and vice versa to make the text more readable. But even where the Richards punctuation is clearly legible, the original has not always been accurately followed. For example, in the report of 11 June 1843 a single dash is often used where the original shows a double dash or a period followed by a dash. Frequently, from Richards’s hasty note-taking exact spelling and punctuation are possible only in context.

3. The identification of capital and lower case letters is not always consistent. There are instances where letters written the same way are designated as a capital in one place and lower case in another.

4. Spaces left in original reports, possibly with the intent of later insertions, are not indicated in the edited text.

5. There are a number of errors that more or less affect meaning, errors that reflect lack of familiarity with the original source or inadequate proofreading:

	<i>The Words of Joseph Smith</i>	Original Manuscripts
Page		
185	“ and to the inhabitants that that being ”	“ and to the inhabitants that that being ”
187	“spiritualizing interpretations”	“spiritualized interpretations”
189	“tell them things”	“tell those things”
	“then the little apostates[?]”	“then the little upstarts”
	“crammed down my throat”	“crammed it down my throat”
195	“locked in each others embrace”	“rocked in each others embrace”
	“which they have pursued here”	“where they have possessed here”
196	“what can Earthquakes do”	“what can Earthquakes do ”

198	“sperate” “every”	“encourage”	“seperate” “evry”	“encorage”
	“before they got open while setting up”		“before they got up or while getting up”	
206	“Judas transgression by fell”		“Judas by transgression fell”	
	“hints of those things”		“hints at those things”	
208	“ <u>It is one thing to</u> ”		“ <u>It is one thing to</u> ”	
	“T Take heed both”		“ & Take heed both”	
	“after obtaining this more sure”		“after obtaining the more sure”	
210	“he who will not live it all”		“he who will not have it all”	
211	“should do it by getting together”		“should do it by gathering together”	
	“he began to preach the fulness of the gospel, the [man] was thrust out”		“he began to preach the fulness of the gospel, then was thrust out”	
	“where Peter was [shed] and ano[inte]d”		“where Peter was endowed”	
212	“tithing”		“tything”	

On page 186 “Deacon Homespun” was written by Thomas Bullock in a blank space in the Clayton manuscript, a point not noted by the editors.

Besides the matter of textual accuracy, there are questions involving selection and analysis:

Although the Clayton report of Joseph Smith’s 8 April 1843 speech on pages 182ff. reads more smoothly and was possibly written shortly after the talk was given, it is not the original text. William Clayton left two reports of this discourse. His original is shorter and less coherent than the one published by Ehat and Cook; but the published report, according to the filing notation of the original, was produced by William Clayton by combining his original with Willard Richards’s report of the same talk. In keeping with the objective of presenting unedited original reports, the first Clayton manuscript should appear under 8 April 1843.

The integrity of the 19 July 1840 discourse reported by Martha Jane Coray is questioned and the document placed in an appendix rather than in its chronological setting on the basis that (a) the date “is penned in a darker ink color and may have been an afterthought, not part of the original notes”; and (b) the dating of the discourse is wrong because “reference to government of the United States eventually coming to the ‘verge of crumbling’ and the ‘constitution [approaching] the brink of ruin’ fits more consistently with 1843 than 1840”; and (c) “the idea that the Second Coming would not come for another ‘40 years’ and the notion that Zion comprehends all of North and South America were teachings of the Prophet in 1843 and 1844” (pp. 418–19).

Actually, the ink color of the date is no different than other words that precede and follow it. The characteristics of ink pressure and color are the same throughout the first six and one-half pages of the Coray report at which point an ink change does occur, indicating that the material from that point on was written at a different sitting or with different ink. More puzzling, however, is the suggestion that the concept of the crumbling constitution would fit better into Joseph Smith’s 1843 thinking than that of 1840, considering that the Prophet had just returned from the nation’s capital having failed to obtain redress from the federal government for Missouri grievances. Equally unconvincing is the suggestion that the teaching about Zion comprehending North and South America is an 1843–1844 doctrine rather than an 1840 one. Orson Pratt, writing from Edinburgh, Scotland, to George A. Smith in England in January 1841, referred to information he had received the previous November from his brother Parley in Nauvoo, Illinois, information that appears to have come from Parley’s hearing the same Joseph Smith discourse reported by Mrs. Coray:

“He (J.S.) says Zion is all North & South America!!!!!! The 12 Olive trees are 12 stakes!!!!!! J. Co. Mo. is the centre. The government is fallen & needs redeeming. It is guilty of Blood & cannot stand as it now is but will come so near dessolation [*sic*] as to hang as it were by a single hair!!!!!! – Then the servants goes to the Nations of the earth, & gethers [*sic*] the strength of the Lord’s house! a mighty army!!!!!! – And this is the redemption of Zion – When the saints shall have redeemed that government & reinstated it in all its purity & glory!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! – That America may be an asylum for the remnant of all nations.”

The editorial rules Ehat and Cook set for themselves are very demanding. Since the bulk of textual problems that appear in the book involve accidentals that do not affect meaning, perhaps holding

to such an exacting procedure is not so important when none of the writings being edited are actually Joseph Smith's. An unmodernized text may well be desirable in an edition of an individual's personal writings where the reflection of education and personality are important, but where holograph writings are not involved, it is not as necessary. In either case, the situation requires additional editorial work. However, the conception of publishing the original reports of Joseph Smith's discourses is an excellent one, and Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook deserve commendation for their work toward preserving a reliable foundation text of these early sources.