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Brief Notice

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Brief Notice

Out of Obscurity: The Church in the Twentieth Century (Deseret Book, 2000)

At century's end, Brigham Young University's College of Religious Education presents "a commemorative volume in remembrance of the century" (ix). *Out of Obscurity: The Church in the Twentieth Century* includes twenty-six papers from the twenty-ninth annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium.

In his keynote address, "May the Kingdom of God Go Forth," Elder Marlin K. Jensen, a President of the Seventy, lauds the Church's devotion to record keeping:

Perhaps no other religion from its earliest beginnings has enjoyed a greater abundance of both primary and secondary sources from which to analyze and reconstruct its past. If, as some of our critics allege, the Prophet Joseph Smith committed a fraud on the world, he certainly made no effort personally, and left no instructions to his followers, to conceal the evidence! (1)

Elder Jensen goes on to highlight the tremendous demographic differences in Church membership and circumstances between 1900 and 2000, while at the same time emphasizing the "constancy amid change" (8) in the Church's basic doctrines, procedures, standards, and care for the poor and needy.

Remarkable in this collection are pieces by individuals who were participants in—or were greatly affected by—historical transitions. Barbara Smith and Shirley Thomas, former members of the Relief Society general presidency, discuss the Church's women's organization in the twentieth century. Similarly, the first mission president in Russia, Gary Browning, contributes "Russia and the Restoration"; Reed Benson draws from first-hand

experience in "Ezra Taft Benson: The Eisenhower Years"; choir member Cynthia Doxey gives us "International Tours of the Tabernacle Choir"; African American BYU religion teacher Juan Henderson presents "A Time for Healing: Official Declaration 2"; Dale LeBaron, "The Church in Africa"; Lloyd Newell, "Richard L. Evans, a Light to the World"; Honam Rhee, "The Korean War and the Gospel."

Other topics include "Early Missions to Ottoman Turkey, Syria, and Palestine," "A Lengthening Stride, 1951 through 1999," "Latter-day Saints in the World Wars," "Theodore Roosevelt and the Latter-day Saints," "The Changing Face of the Quorum of the Seventy," and "David O. McKay, Father of the Church Educational System."

—Bruce A. Van Orden