

SHORT NOTICE

George Washington and the Mormons. By John J. Stewart. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967. Pp. 108. \$1.25.

John Stewart has written a little book the purpose of which is, apparently, to show that George Washington was "one of the wise men whom God raised up" as an instrument in His hands "to make possible the restoration of the Gospel and Church of Jesus Christ." The quotation is from the dust jacket; the author is not quite as specific. There is, however, ample evidence in the book itself, somewhat more scattered, to indicate that the dust jacket statement is essentially the author's view. Stewart begins with a chapter on the views of Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church regarding the Constitution of the United States, devotes the major portion of the book to a brief sketch of Washington as a person and an account of his public career, and concludes with several very brief chapters devoted to Washington's relevance for and relationship to the Mormons.

The first chapter is unexceptional. It, like the rest of the book, relies heavily on quotations (at times the book seems like little more than a string of quotations held together by an occasional sentence of the author's) which will be very familiar to most readers of *Dialogue*. He does, there and elsewhere, make a point of the importance of "freedom" to the spread of the gospel and the prosperousness of the Church, but since he never makes very clear what elements compose his concept of freedom — other than freedom of religion — the point will raise questions only in the minds of those who read something into the words which the author may imply, but never explicitly delineates.

The picture of Washington drawn here is one which stresses the virtues, ignores the frailties, and in general makes of Washington something of the demigod with which we are already too familiar. The account of his public career is more realistic, stressing as it does the difficulties Washington had in leading the Revolutionary army, although more than one reader will question the author's assertion that it was "the sheer personality of Washington that was the decisive element in the three crucial events of early America — the Revolutionary War, the Constitutional Convention, and the first national administration." Important as Washington may have been in these events, it is doubtful that he was really the "decisive element." Certainly Stewart does not substantiate the assertion. Again, he gives us long excerpts from Washington's letters and from other such sources. Thus, he shows us how Washington reacted to events; he does not demonstrate very clearly the extent to which he controlled them or even what his contributions at key points may have been. The section is also somewhat unbalanced, since the author spends a disproportionate amount of space on the period of the Revolution and rather neglects the presidential years.

If the title is accepted at face value, the major contribution of the book should be to show the nature and extent of Washington's relationship to those matters cited at the beginning of this review — to relate Washington to the

Mormons. Here the book does very little. We are told that Washington was religious, a man of high morality and great integrity, a believer in America's potential greatness, a strong supporter of the Constitution, and very much on the side of religious freedom. We are also told that these are things which Washington and Joseph Smith had in common, and that they are the great truths of the Book of Mormon. In short, Washington was like Joseph Smith, since they both had many of the same personal traits and shared many ideas, and those ideas may be found in Mormonism. How one proceeds from that assertion to the conclusion that Washington helped make possible the restoration is never made clear. And the problem is compounded by the fact that most of those ideas are so general as to make the link rather tenuous at best. Stewart does spend a chapter on the common view of Washington and Joseph Smith regarding the emancipation of slaves, which is the closest he comes to citing anything distinctive, but even this point will hardly bear the burden placed upon it. In short, the author fails to show, in any clear and effective way, just what Washington had to do with the restoration of the gospel and the establishment of the Mormon Church. The problem may well be that there is no such case to be made. Either one accepts it as an automatic tenet of his faith, or one does not. The historical record, even with a good deal of judicious selection, some questionable suggestions (see, for example, p. 31), and a little twisting (consider the rather curious treatment of the Articles of Confederation, pp. 59-60), will not provide the proof.

Van L. Perkins
Riverside, California

Register of L.D.S. Church Records. By Laureen Jaussi and Gloria Chaston. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1968. Pp. 400. \$3.95.

Register of L.D.S. Church Records is a very useful, handy, and worthwhile addition to the available genealogical research tools. It lists all the important Church records that have been microfilmed, with call numbers, introduction, and a brief explanation for each record. The book also provides information on L.D.S. records that have not been microfilmed but must be searched at the Genealogical Society. This register will make it easier to become familiar with Church records that contain genealogical information.

Included among the more than 11,500 serial numbers in the book are family group sheets that have been microfilmed, Church census and membership records — listed both alphabetically and geographically — emigration-immigration indexes, temple records, and Salt Lake County vital statistics since 1848. Anyone doing research in L.D.S. records could save time and trouble at the Genealogical Society by referring to this book for the appropriate serial numbers.

Eve Nielson