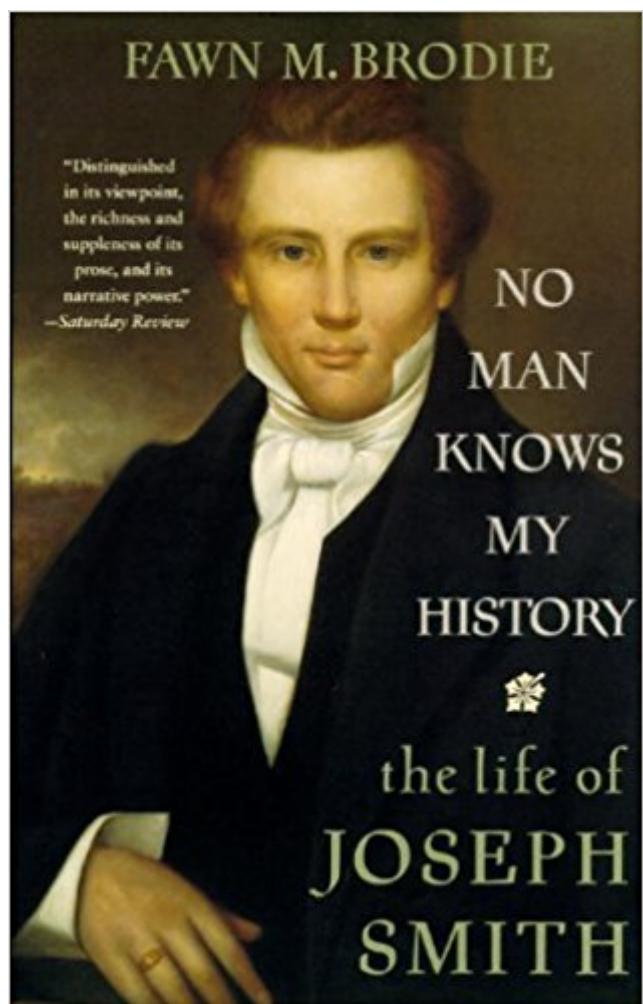


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No Man Knows My History: The Life Of Joseph Smith



Synopsis

The first paperback edition of the classic biography of the founder of the Mormon church, this book attempts to answer the questions that continue to surround Joseph Smith. Was he a genuine prophet, or a gifted fabulist who became enthralled by the products of his imagination and ended up being martyred for them? 24 pages of photos. Map.

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Customer Reviews

The first paperback edition of the classic biography of the founder of the Mormon church, this book attempts to answer the questions that continue to surround Joseph Smith. Was he a genuine prophet, or a gifted fabulist who became enthralled by the products of his imagination and ended up being martyred for them? 24 pages of photos. Map.

Well, I finally finished it. This is one of the books that has received the most flack from LDS members since its writing. I guess it makes sense, written by a member who had left the faith, the niece of a Prophet (David O. McKay) it is an engaging read that formulates a human perspective on Joseph Smith, which some refer to as the "pious fraud" perspective. The sourcing is thorough and the history first-rate and the biography is actually a very readable book. Brodie is good at making the story compelling and the people real. You may ask why I did not give it a 5 stars, well...it is the same reason most readers critique this book. Brodie is just too liberal in her assumptions about what people were thinking based on the historical documents she is analyzing. Here is an example

of her projecting her ideas of people onto them, "he [Joseph] preached because he got an audience. And this was essential to Joseph as was food." This paints an interesting character for the reader, but it sure seems like hyperbole to tell her version tale. Creating a narrative of the past is the art of the historian, but she got a little too creative. There is a reason though that many still think this book is one of the best biographies on Joseph Smith, the history. I believe there is consensus the Richard Bushman's Rough Stone Rolling is better, it is more up to date and he is a great historian as well, but this book was pretty seminal for its time. Many an LDS apologist took pot shots at the book because its picture of the founder of the church was not clean. Much of what Brodie discussed that was troublesome to members at the time have transformed from "anti-Mormon lies" to "difficult history" in the past several decades. Biographies of Joseph Smith have tended to be direct attacks or faith promoting glorifications. No Man Knows my History is balanced with a slant toward criticism, while Rough Stone Rolling is balanced with a slant toward faith. The reason? Well, you have authors that affect the writing. Anyway, I enjoyed this biography on Joseph Smith. Brodie formulates her perspective well with documentation to support it. It is up to the reader to decide what they believe.

An excellent historical review of a highly influential and enigmatic man. A must-read for any student of Mormon history and origin.

It was very informative and provided a historical understanding of the beginning of the church of latter day saints

the author is widely acclaimed as a very good writer and biographer, etc. this book gives a great insight to the beginnings of that church/cult and some of its dubious origins and bootlegged rites and rituals of the free and accepted masons. etc, etc., etc.

This biography was written over 50 years ago but remains in print because it is still the standard. Very balanced. A good read.

For a very long time the only biographies of Joseph Smith or of Mormonism were either hagiographic, or else deeply cynical depictions of the founder as a charlatan. Fawn Brodie changed all that in 1945 with her 'No Man knows my History', which was a first serious attempt by a professional historian to understand the Mormon prophet within his context, and in a manner which

did not depend on accepting his supernatural experiences in the terms in which they have been described by Smith and his followers. Committed Mormons may dispute much of the author's evidence as Hugh Nibley, famously did in 'No Ma'am, That's not History', and people can argue till the cows come home about who is right and who isn't. But the important point is that Brodie's is the work of a historian which presents plausible possible ways of viewing Smith's life and work which is not dictated by the exigencies of Mormon proselytisation. For that reason Fawn Brodie produced what must be regarded as a seminal work. Opening up, as she did, a new and professional dimension to the study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, led first to her excommunication and then to her depiction by the hierarchy as the Anti-Christ. When I first read the book over thirty years ago I must have read the 1945 edition. For the 1970 revision presents some information which is new to me, delving deeply into the Nauvoo period and the clandestine manner in which polygamy was introduced. Brodie writes elegantly and with a capacity to enthrall the reader, at the same time reserving judgment on much that is unclear in a history of the frontier, befogged by lack of primary sources. It is essential material for anyone interested in the history of Mormonism and of the American west.

No Man Knows My History is a fabulous book! Not only was it well organized, but I felt like Brodie wrote in an unbiased tone, presenting an accurate, objective, portrait of a man I thought I knew. I wish the mormon church, in which I grew up, would have been as transparent and forthcoming with historical information as this book was. Never stop learning, and thinking critically! I highly recommend reading this book if you are interested in learning more about Joseph Smith or the beginnings of the mormon church. Fair warning, this book may hurt current active or believing mormons' "testimonies," because of information presented in contrast to the church's confirmation bias anecdote of Joseph. Side effects may include cognitive dissonance, enlightenment, and liberation.

I wanted to compare and contrast this book with Krakauer's "Under The Banner Of Heaven", since it was cited by the latter as a source reference. I'm not sure if this rating is for the book itself, or the purchase experience. The book would get three stars, the purchase experience five stars.

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