

Changes in Joseph Smith's History

for I hit him on the nose

something he needs

drank a glass of beer at Moessers

Joseph said, "Brother Markham . . . get the doctor
a pipe and some tobacco to settle his stomach,"
and Markham went out for them. When he had
got the pipe and tobacco . . .

remedies desired

medicine

reproved
and pronounced a curse on the merchants

Moroni
His name was Nephi

negroes
rebellious niggers in the slave states

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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Utah Lighthouse Ministry

1358 S. West Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
www.utlm.org

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

47 E. SOUTH TEMPLE STREET

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

April 11, 1961

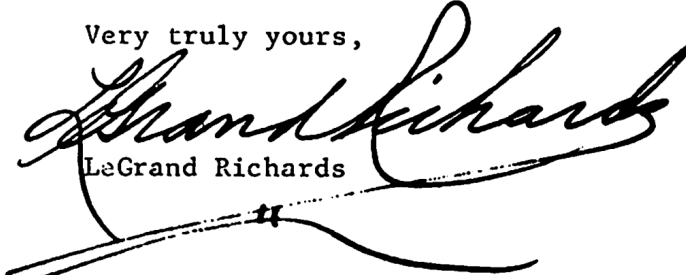
Mrs. Jerald Tanner
319 North Fifth West
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Mrs. Tanner:

I am returning herewith the \$10 enclosed in your letter of April 7.

I have no interest, whatever, in doing anything to furnish you information you ask for in your letter for the purpose for which you desire the same.

Very truly yours,


LeGrand Richards

LR:rs

Enc. \$10 cash

A photograph of a letter written by the Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards. Mr. Richards refused to give us any help in obtaining access to vital manuscripts suppressed by the Mormon Church.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Changes in Volume 1	10
Changes in Volume 2	22
Changes in Volume 3	38
Changes in Volume 4	48
Changes in Volume 5	57
Changes in Volume 6	72

Introduction

Francis W. Kirkham, in his book *A New Witness for Christ in America*, vol. 1, page 17, makes the following statement:

The first published consecutive account of the origin of the Church began in the October, 1834, issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*. It consists of eight letters written by Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps. This account is very important as Oliver Cowdery claims in a letter published in the October, 1834, issue, but dated September 7, 1834, that Joseph Smith assisted him in the writing of the letters.

Although this history was reprinted several times, it has now become a source of embarrassment to the Mormon Church leaders, because it does not mention Joseph Smith's first vision (that is the vision in which Joseph Smith was supposed to have seen God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ).

On October 29, 1835, Joseph Smith made this statement in the *History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 293:

. . . my scribe commenced writing in my journal a history of my life; . . .

Apparently this account of Joseph Smith's life was never published. If the Mormon historians still have this history they keep it well hid from the general public. Levi Edgar Young, who was the head of the Seven Presidents of Seventies in the Mormon Church, told LaMar Petersen and others of secret manuscripts which are kept locked in a vault. The following is from notes made by LaMar Petersen of an interview with Levi Edgar Young held February 3, 1953:

A list of 5 questions was presented. Bro. Young indicated some surprise at the nature of the questions but said he heartily approved of them being asked. Said they were important, fundamental, were being asked more by members of the Church, and should be asked. Said the Church should have a committee available where answers to such questions could be obtained. He has quit going down with his own questions to Brother Joseph Fielding (Smith) because he was laughed at and put off.

His curiosity was excited when reading in Roberts' Doc. History reference to "documents from which these writings were compiled." Asked to see them. Told to get higher permission. Obtained that permission. Examined documents. Written, he thought, about 1837 or 1838. Was told not to copy or tell what they contained. Said it was a "strange" account of the First Vision. Was put back in the vault. Remains unused, unknown.

Another interview was held with Levi Edgar Young in the Church Office Building on March 4, 1953. The following is from LaMar Petersen's notes of that interview:

Stated again that there were many secret manuscripts in the vaults "downstairs"; that some day they would be read and made known. Spoke of the fine handwriting in the journals because of the cost of paper. Went one time from Bro. Joseph Fielding's to Bro. Ivins to borrow microscope [magnifying glass?]. When he returned the manuscripts had been locked up again. Dale Morgan had asked him: "why doesn't the Church open its files to serious scholars doing historical research?" Bro. Young agreed that the library should be opened to all accredited students and that some day it would be.

Mormon historians state that in 1838 Joseph Smith began writing the account of the history of the Church which is now published by the Church. Joseph Smith began publishing this history in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. It was published in installments, and therefore only part of the history was published before Joseph Smith's death. The Church continued to publish the history in the *Times and Seasons* after his death until they were driven from Nauvoo. The remainder of the history was published in the *Millennial Star* and also in the *Deseret News*. In 1902 the *History of the Church* was reprinted in seven volumes, and it has been republished several times since then.

In this study we are going to show some of the changes that have been made between the history as it was first published and the way it reads today (1951 edition of the *History of the Church*). It would be impossible to show all of the changes in the history in such a small study, however,

we will try to show some of the more important ones. Since there have been over 17,000 words added and 45,000 words deleted, it would make this study very large to include all of the words that have been added or omitted, therefore in many cases we only refer to the page numbers and tell how many words have been added or deleted. This study does not include volume seven of the *History of the Church* because it was written after the death of Joseph Smith. When we say that there have been more than 62,000 words added or omitted in the *History of the Church*, it should be understood that we did not read many of the revelations, affidavits, etc. A more thorough study would, no doubt, reveal many other changes.

In 1961 we wrote to many of the highest authorities in the Mormon Church and asked for a microfilm of Joseph Smith's history in the handwritten form, as well as other manuscripts. The Mormon Church leaders refused to allow us to have a microfilm or to allow us to examine the documents. The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards answered our letter as follows:

I am returning herewith the \$10 enclosed in your letter of April 7.

I have no interest, whatever, in doing anything to furnish you information you ask for in your letter for the purpose for which you desire the same.

See the photo at the front of this book. Photographs of other letters received from Mormon Church leaders are included in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

Because the Mormon Church leaders have refused to allow us access to the original handwritten manuscripts this study will be limited to showing changes between the printed versions. Fortunately, however, we have had access to the thesis, *Textual Changes in the Pearl of Great Price*, by Walter L. Whipple. Mr. Whipple was a student at Brigham Young University, and he was allowed to examine the first part of the handwritten manuscript. We will refer to this thesis in the first part of this study.

This study will show that some of the statements made by Mormon writers concerning the *History of the Church* are absolutely false. Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, claims that Joseph Smith's teachings have never had to undergo the slightest change, and that they are completely free from alterations and revisions. Speaking of Joseph Smith's teachings he states that they "are so well-knit and perfectly logical that they have never had to undergo the **slightest change or alteration** during a century in which every other church in Christendom has continually revamped its doctrines" (*No, Ma'am, That's Not History*, pages 57 and 58). On pages 61 and 62 of the same book Dr. Nibley states:

The gospel as the Mormons know it sprang full-grown from the words of Joseph Smith. It has never been **worked over or touched up** in any way, and is **free of revisions and alterations**.

It does not take much research to reveal that Dr. Nibley's statement is completely false.

John A. Widtsoe, who was an Apostle in the Mormon Church, made this statement:

The Prophet and the Church stand in this history free of historical interpretations and other external trappings. There are no arguments for its case. **There are no attempts to "cover over" any event.** (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 vol. in 1, page 332)

The Mormon historian Joseph Fielding Smith makes this claim for the accuracy of the history:

"The most important history in the world is the history of our Church, **and it is the most accurate history in all the world, it must be so.**" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 199)

Joseph Fielding Smith even claims that the Lord protects the history of the Church:

... if errors creep in it, the Lord himself will bring to pass means whereby **they will be eliminated**.

You pick up a record of the history of the Church **and that record is accurate.** (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 202)

In the following work we will prove beyond doubt that these statements by Hugh Nibley, John A. Widtsoe and Joseph Fielding Smith are completely false. The Mormon historians have broken almost all the rules of honesty. It is a well-known fact that when an omission is made in a document it must be indicated by ellipses signs. The Mormon historians have almost completely ignored this rule; in many cases they have deleted thousands of words without any indication. They have also added thousands of words without any indication. They have changed the spelling, grammar, punctuation and rearranged the words. There can be no doubt that the changes were deliberate (although there may have been a few typographical errors). Three very important changes have been made concerning the Word of Wisdom (a revelation which forbids the use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and hot drinks). The first printed version of the history revealed that Joseph Smith drank beer and recommended the use of whiskey and tobacco. All this has been removed from later editions.

Prophecies that did not come to pass had to be changed. There were many exaggerated statements that had to be changed. There were many statements that contradicted other statements in the history that were changed. There were crude statements and other statements which were lewd that the Mormon historians deleted. Joseph Smith quoted the enemies of the Church as using the name of the Lord in vain many times in the history. Much of this profanity has been deleted. In the first printed version Joseph Smith cursed his enemies, condemned other churches and beliefs, and called the President of the United States a fool. Many of these extreme statements were deleted or changed. The Mormon historians did not allow Joseph Smith to make many mistakes. When he made a wrong statement, they took the liberty of correcting it. If he used bad grammar, they corrected it. And when he used an excessive amount of foreign words they deleted them. They were evidently trying to make Joseph Smith into a very saintly man. They do not dare let their people see the real Joseph Smith. They would rather falsify the *History of the Church* than allow Joseph Smith's true character to be known. The following appeared in *Tiffany's Monthly* in 1859:

People sometimes wonder that the Mormon can revere Joseph Smith, That they can by any means make a Saint of him. But they must remember, that the Joseph Smith preached in England, and the one shot at Carthage, Ill., are not the same. The ideal prophet differs widely from the real person. To one, ignorant of his character, he may be idealized and be made the impersonation of every virtue. He may be associated in the mind with all that is pure, true, lovely and divine. Art may make him, indeed, an object of religious veneration. **But remember, the Joseph Smith thus venerated, is not the real, actual Joseph Smith . . . but one that art has created.** (*Tiffany's Monthly*, 1859, page 170)

The Mormon Church leaders have worked hard to destroy the truth concerning Joseph Smith and the Church. They ask the members of the Church to donate the journals of the pioneers to the Church, and then if they find anything in these journals that is detrimental to the interests of the Church they keep the journal hid. Joseph Fielding Smith said:

Moreover, there are many important private journals scattered about which we would like to obtain for preservation and for historical purposes . . . If they are given to us, we will file them away where they will be preserved. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 206)

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of Brigham Young University, donated his great-grandfather's journal to the Church Historian's Office. They locked it in a safe, and when he asked to see it

he was refused. See *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* for a photographic reproduction of a letter from Hugh Nibley, in which he admits that he was refused access to this journal.

Joseph Smith's mother wrote a book which the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt published; however, Brigham Young evidently felt that the book was too revealing for he ordered the edition "suppressed or destroyed." After making changes in the book (which was after Mrs. Smith's death) the Church reprinted it. The Church has encouraged the destruction of publications that are critical of Joseph Smith or of the Church. The *Deseret News*, Church Section, carried a disgraceful article in 1953, in which the following statement was made:

Good-natured Sven A. Wiman can manage a cautious grin when his married daughter relates in English, and which he can understand pretty well, how when he returned home each evening from his part-time employment in various used book stores throughout Sweden he would produce an anti-Mormon book and then proceed **to burn it**. Sweden, you learn, has literally no end of anti-Church books, and Elder Wiman set himself up as a one-man clean-up committee **to destroy** as many of these diatribes against the Church as possible. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 16, 1953, page 10)

Under Mr. Wiman's picture appears this statement:

"Avenging Angel"—Since his conversion to the Church in 1936, Sven A. Wiman has spent years working in many used book stores throughout Sweden collecting LDS books which are generally hard to come by, and securing and **burning** anti-LDS books—of which there are thousands.

A man who had been on a mission for the Mormon Church said that in a hundred years the Church will have a beautiful history. This may be true if the Mormon Church leaders continue to encourage the destruction of books that are critical, change the *History of the Church*, and keep the vital records of the Church hid from those who are doing research. They may have a beautiful history, but it will be a false history. Even Joseph Fielding Smith admits that a false history is harmful:

In regard to the recording of history, the thing that **is most important is accuracy**. If history is not accurate, **it is harmful**. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 198)

The Mormon historians have not only changed the *History of the Church*, but they have further deceived the people by making the claim that no historical or doctrinal statement has been changed. The following statement appears in the preface to the *History of the Church*:

Changes in Joseph Smith's History

. . . **No historical or doctrinal statement has been changed.** (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, preface vi)

Not only has the history of the Church been changed since it was first printed, but there is also evidence to prove that changes were made before it was first printed. In other words there is evidence that even the first printed version of the history is inaccurate. When the history was first printed the Church historians claimed that it was accurate:

When the Church historians George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff completed their publication of the History of Joseph Smith, down to the 8th of August, 1844, which history was published in installments in the *Deseret News*, Utah, and in the *Millennial Star*, England, they expressed themselves upon the correctness of what they had published in the following manner:

“The History of Joseph Smith is now before the world, and we are satisfied that a history more correct in its details than this was never published. . . . We, therefore, hereby bear our testimony to all the world, unto whom these words shall come, that the History of Joseph Smith is true, and is one of the **most authentic histories every written.**” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, preface v-vi)

There is an abundance of evidence to show that this statement by George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff (who later became President of the Church) is absolutely false. Charles Wesley Wandell, who worked in the Church Historian's Office after the death of Joseph Smith, accused the leaders of the Mormon Church of falsifying the history. When he saw the way that they were printing it in 1855, he made this comment in his journal:

I notice **the interpolations** because having been employed (myself) in the Historian's office at Nauvoo by Doctor Richards, and employed, too, in 1845, in compiling this very autobiography, I know that after Joseph's death his memoir was “**doctored**” to suit **the new order of things**, and this, too, **by the direct order of Brigham Young** to Doctor Richards and systematically by Richards. (Statement from the journal of Charles Wesley Wandell, as printed in the *Journal of History*, vol. 8, page 76)

Brigham Young admitted that he helped to revise the history after Joseph Smith's death. Under the date of April 1, 1845, he made this statement:

I commenced **revising** the History of Joseph Smith at Brother Richards' office: Elder Heber C. Kimball and George A. Smith were with me. (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, page 389)

Under the date of April 2, 1845, Brigham Young stated:

Engaged at Elder Richards' office with Elders Kimball and Smith **revising** Church History. (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, pages 389-390)

Under the date of May 13, 1845, Brigham Young stated:

With Elders Heber C. Kimball, W. Richards and George A. Smith reading and **revising** Church History at Brother Edward Hunter's where we had retired to keep out of the way of writs reported to have been issued against us.

The following day this statement by Brigham Young appears:

Continued at Brother Edward Hunter's . . . we read and **revised** history all day. (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, page 411)

On May 16, 1845, this statement appears:

I spent the day at Brother Hunter's in company with Brothers Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, George A. Smith and N. K. Whitney **revising** history: . . .

The following day this statement appears:

Revising history as yesterday, with the addition of Brother John Taylor: . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, page 411)

Under the date of May 20, 1845, Brigham Young records:

We read and **revised** fifty-seven pages of History of Joseph Smith from Book “B”: . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, page 414)

End of sample pages.
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