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# **Falsification of Joseph Smith's History**



**By Jerald and Sandra Tanner**

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## Falsification of Joseph Smith's History

In 1838 Joseph Smith began writing the account of his life 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 appeared in print before Joseph Smith's death. The Church continued to publish the history in the *Times and Seasons* after his death until the Mormons 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.

Mormon leaders claim that Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* is the most accurate history in the world and that it has never been changed or falsified in any way. Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the Mormon Church, stated: "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). The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made these statements:

Joseph was sincere or he would have permitted some events to be hidden and only major concerns of the Church to come before the public. There was **no** undercover planning in his work—there was nothing to hide. . . . The use of the modern printing press ensured the continued existence of the correct history of the Church. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, Salt Lake City, 1951, page 250)

The *History of the Church* and the utterances therein contain, if read properly, a continued evidence that Joseph Smith told the truth. . . . Throughout all his writings runs the simple spirit of truth.

There is in them **no attempt to "cover up" any act** of his life. . . . Mormon history and doctrine have been carefully preserved in the published records of the Church—and all has been published. (*Ibid.*, pages 256-257)

The History of Joseph Smith, published by the Church, as to events and dates, may be accepted as an unusually accurate historical document. It will increase in importance with the years and become more and more a proof of the honest sincerity of the founders of the Church in this dispensation.

The history is trustworthy. No flaws have been found in it. (*Ibid.*, page 297)

The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards also claimed that no changes have been made in the *History of the Church*. In a letter to Morris L. Reynolds he stated: "Your second question: 'Has Joseph Smith's History been changed from the original history?' **No. No changes have been made** in meaning in any way" (Letter by LeGrand Richards, dated May 11, 1966). Dr. Hugh Nibley also stated that "There have been no changes in Joseph Smith's history" (Letter dated May 12, 1966).

In the Preface to vol. 1 of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, we find the statement that "no historical or doctrinal statement has been changed" (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, Preface, page vi).

The material which follows will prove beyond all doubt that the statements quoted above are completely false. Actually, the Mormon historians have broken almost all the rules of honesty in their publication of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*. 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. In our *Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 1, pages 36-39, we show how three important changes were made to cover up the fact that Joseph Smith broke the "Word of Wisdom." Certainly no one would argue that these changes happened by accident, for they bear unmistakable evidence of falsification. Some of Joseph Smith's prophecies that did NOT come to pass have been changed. Many exaggerated and contradictory statements were either changed or deleted without indication. Crude or indecent statements were also deleted. Joseph Smith quoted the enemies of the Church as using the name of the Lord in vain many times in the history, but much of this profanity has been removed by the Mormon leaders. In the first printed version of Joseph Smith's *History* he 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 leaders 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 Mormon leaders 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.

## *Falsification of Joseph Smith's History*

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 published. 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 George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff (who later became President of the Church) stated that “a history more correct in its details than this was never published” and that it was “one of the **most authentic histories ever written**” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, Preface v-vi). There is an abundance of evidence to show that this statement 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 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)

Although the early Mormon leaders claimed that Joseph Smith’s History was “one of the most authentic histories ever written,” they admitted that there had been some revisions made under Brigham Young’s leadership. In the *History of the Church*, vol. 7, page 243, we read: “Moreover, since the death of the Prophet Joseph, the history has been carefully **revised** under the strict inspection of President **Brigham Young**, and approved of by him.” The word *revised*, of course, might be understood in several different ways and would not necessarily mean that Joseph Smith’s History was falsified. Perhaps we can gain insight into Brigham Young’s methods from a statement he made in a sermon delivered on August 2, 1857:

Brother Heber says that the music is taken out of his sermons when brother Carrington **clips out a word here and there**: and I have taken out the music from mine, . . .

I know that I have seen the day when, let men use language like brother Heber has today, and **many would apostatize from the true faith**. In printing my remarks, I **often omit the sharp words**, . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, page 99)

We must remember also that after Brigham Young suppressed the book written by Joseph Smith’s mother, it was “revised” and then republished. Over 2,000 words were added, deleted or changed without any indication. Brigham Young seems to have been a very dishonest historian, and therefore when the Mormon historians speak of Joseph Smith’s History being “revised” we can only conclude that this meant falsification. That the Mormon historians did a great deal of tampering with Joseph Smith’s History before publishing it is obvious from the following statements in Brigham Young’s History:

Tuesday, April 1, 1845.—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)

Wednesday, 2.—Engaged at Elder Richards’ office with Elders Kimball and Smith revising Church History. (*Ibid.*, pages 389-390)

Tuesday, 13.—With Elders Heber C. Kimball, W. Richards and George A. Smith reading and revising Church History . . . (*Ibid.*, page 408)

Wednesday, 14—. . . we read and revised history all day. (*Ibid.*, page 411)

Friday, 16.—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: . . .

Saturday, 17.—Revising history as yesterday. . . . (*Ibid.*, page 411)

Tuesday, 20.—We read and revised fifty-seven pages of History of Joseph Smith from Book “B”. . . (*Ibid.*, page 414)

Wednesday, 18.—I met with Elders Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor and George A. Smith at Brother Taylor’s; we revised a portion of the History of Joseph Smith. . . .

Thursday, 19.—I spent the day with Brothers H. C. Kimball and George A. Smith revising history. . . .

Friday, 20.—Elders H. C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, George A. Smith, and myself engaged revising Church History. (*Ibid.*, pages 427-428)

For other references concerning the revision of Joseph Smith’s History see *History of the Church*, vol. 7, pages 514, 519, 520, 532, 533 and 556.

We now have definite proof that Joseph Smith’s History was “doctored” before it was first published by the Church. It is very hard to understand how men who claimed to be historians and religious leaders could put forth such a fraudulent history and then claim that it is “one of the most authentic histories ever written.”

### **WRITTEN BY JOSEPH SMITH?**

A few years ago we published a book entitled *Changes in Joseph Smith’s History*. In this book we showed that thousands of words were added, deleted, or changed since Joseph Smith’s History was first published. On pages 7-9 of this book we stated:

On the title page to vol. 1 of the *History of the Church*, this statement appears: “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet BY HIMSELF;” this study, however, reveals that much of the history was not written by Joseph Smith. Only a small part of the history was printed during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, and we are very suspicious that Joseph Smith did not finish writing the history before his death.

End of sample pages.  
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