

CENSORING THE JOS

PART I



The Problem:

Joseph Smith's "official" account of his first vision and the visits of the angel Moroni was written in 1838 and first published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. Since the writing took place from eleven to eighteen years after the events described, anti-Mormon writers were quick to exploit the time-lag as a welcome chink in the Mormon armor. "Why," they asked, "did Smith wait so long to make his official statement?" And they insisted that the only possible answer was that the stories of the first vision and the golden plates were invented in retrospect—they were pure fabrications.

In 1842 J. B. Turner declared that the story of Moroni was a product of the year 1834, "when the history was first interlarded with prophetic declarations of the angel, which had already been fulfilled, the whole story new vamped, stereotyped, and given to the world for the edification of the Saints, in the columns of the *Messenger and Advocate*."¹ John C. Bennett took up the cry, citing as proof a report of one of Joseph Smith's former neighbors to the effect that in the years before the publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, *Senior*, had said nothing to *him* about its being a religious book—"He gave me no intimation at that time that the book was to be of a religious character, or that it had anything to do with revelation. He declared it to be a speculation."² In the following years Henry Caswall, following Turner, declared the story of the first vision to be a "blasphemous tale substituted for the former inventions of the same description," the former inventions being "various and contradictory stories respecting the angel and the gold plates, the narrative being altered to suit successive exigencies."³

Invariably these reports turn out upon examination to be not the declarations of Joseph Smith or his followers at all, but remarks attributed to them at second and third hand by former neighbors; "various and contradictory" they certainly are, but the contradictions are among the statements made by the "witnesses" and not by the accused.

But critics love to speculate. In 1844 a *History of*

Illinois after giving a very garbled version of the first story commented: "Whether the above reflections passed through the mind of a lad of fifteen, uneducated, and exhibiting, as yet, no evidence of precocious genius; or whether they are reflections of maturer life, or the emanations of older and brighter intellects than his own, our readers will judge for themselves."⁴

It was literary intuition that convinced the eminent W. J. Conybeare, writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1854, that Joseph Smith's report that he was commanded to join no church and told "that all existing Christian sects were in error . . . was no doubt an afterthought. At the time, he probably only proclaimed that his 'deliverance from the enemy' had been effected by a supernatural appearance."⁵ And why was it "no doubt" an afterthought? And by what authority does Conybeare put the words of "deliverance from the enemy" in quotation marks, as if they were the actual words of Joseph Smith, which they are not? The same writer assures us, speaking of the Book of Mormon: ". . . at first he only claims to have miraculously discovered a sacred record, but does not himself pretend to inspiration." The proof of this he finds in sections 13, 14, and 9 of the Doctrine and Covenants: since these passages refer to *future* revelation, Conybeare assumes that there cannot have been any *earlier* revelations before them.⁶

To prove that Joseph Smith was guilty of "changing his story about his alleged golden plates . . . as a means of making him a prophet," the much-quoted Mr. Linn produced a letter received by James T. Cobb of Salt Lake City "under the date of April 23, 1879, from Hiel and Joseph Lewis, sons of the Reverend Nathaniel Lewis, of Harmony, Pennsylvania, and relatives of Joseph's father-in-law, in which they gave the story of the finding of the plates as told in their hearing by Joseph to their father, when he was translating them. This statement, in effect, was that he dreamed of an iron box containing gold plates . . . 'he saw a man standing over the spot who, to him, appeared like a Spaniard. . . .' (He then narrated how he got the box in company with Emma.) 'In all this narrative there was not one word about visions of God,

EPH SMITH STORY

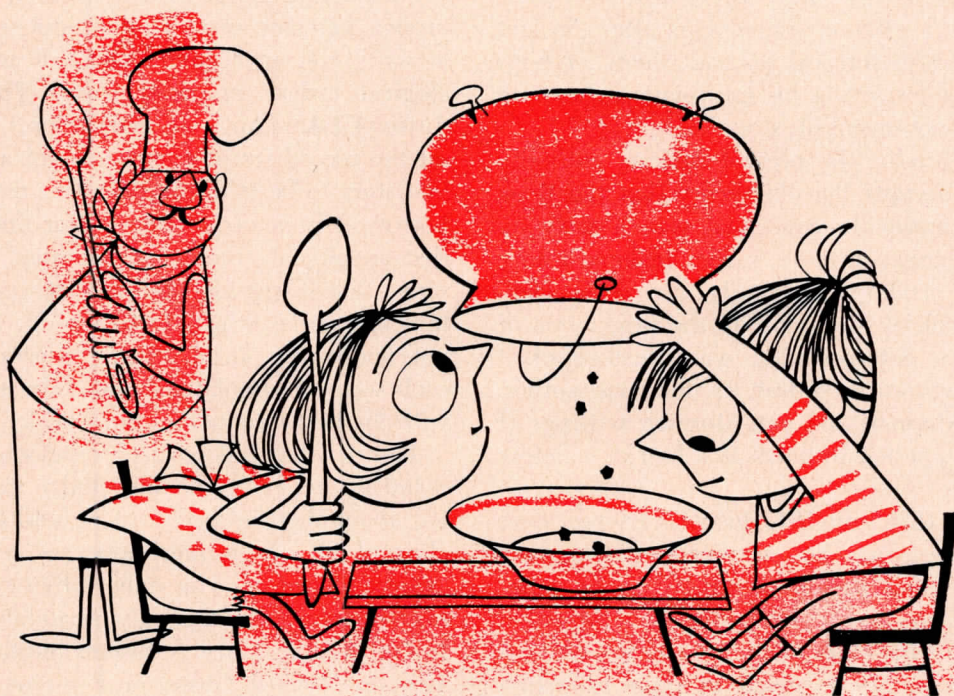
BY
HUGH NIBLEY

or of angels, or heavenly revelations; all his information was about that dream and the bleeding ghost. The heavenly visions and messages of angels, etc., contained in the Mormon books were afterthoughts, revised to order.'"⁷ The learned Linn makes no effort whatever to test the reliability of this report, reaching him as it does at third-hand from parties who claimed that it is "in effect" the memory of a dream that they overheard Joseph Smith telling to somebody else more than fifty years before; he accepts it without question as the one true and authentic account of the origin of the Book of Mormon.

A very little research would have shown Mr. Linn that his Reverend Nathaniel Lewis is none other than Elder Nathaniel C. Lewis who in 1833 swore an affidavit that he knew Joseph Smith to be "a liar and an impostor," though he admits that his behavior was unobjectionable. He rests his case on Joseph Smith's connection with the Book of Mormon, claiming that

the Prophet actually asked *him* "whether he should proceed to translate the Book of Plates . . . or not," explaining that "God had commanded him to translate it, but that he was afraid of the people."⁸

Since Joseph proceeded with the translation, Mr. Lewis must have advised him to do so. Or did he? Did Joseph Smith having God's instructions, as he thought, really ask his hostile neighbor what to do? Though it is Lewis's purpose in writing this document to discredit the Book of Mormon, *he* knows nothing of that damning Spanish dream story which was supposedly addressed to *him* and overheard by his two sons, who suddenly remembered it fifty years later. The Lewis boys insist that "there was not one word about visions of God or angels," etc., in Joseph's story at the time "when he was translating." Yet their father's own story, written forty-six years earlier, is that at that time or earlier—when Joseph was still hesitating as to "whether he should proceed to



"To remove the religious parts of the Book of Mormon would be equivalent to removing the rice from rice pudding."

translate or not," he not only claimed to have the plates, but also insisted that *God* had commanded him to translate them. All this simply confirms what the Prophet himself says in the preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, namely, that there actually were all kinds of wild stories circulating about the as yet unpublished book.

According to D.H.C. Bartlett, writing in 1911, the "account of the origin of the Book of Mormon accepted by orthodox Mormons . . . written by Smith, under the inspiration of Rigdon, some eleven years later when in Nauvoo, was clearly an after-thought." What makes this so clear is again the Lewis letter, showing that "Smith at that time had no thought of God, angels, or divine revelations. He was simply a magical dreamer, beholding the ghost of a murdered Spaniard."⁹ "It is well for us to remember," writes the Rev. John Quincy Adams in 1916, "that the story of these experiences and of the discovery [of the Book of Mormon] was not written before 1838, when it was prepared under the direction of Sidney Rigdon, or by him. Others say positively that the story was revised from time to time, always gaining in its miraculous and mysterious character."¹⁰ Never mind who the "others" were—they were positive. "We cannot trust his narrative," J. H. Snowden wrote of the Prophet in 1926, "especially as his *history of himself* was written in 1838, eighteen years after the first vision, during which interval he had plenty of both time and reasons for letting his imagination elaborate and embellish if not invent his story."¹¹

Finally Mrs. Brodie, the present ranking authority on the subject, accepts the old theory that the Book of Mormon as originally conceived was "merely an ingenious speculation," a mere "money-making history of the Indians," (who, incidentally, are never mentioned in the Book of Mormon), in the production of which "no divine interpretation was dreamed of."¹² As to the first vision, according to the same author, there is in all Mormon and anti-Mormon writings of every kind and type not so much as a hint of it before the year 1840:

" . . . between 1820 and 1840 Joseph's friends were writing long panegyrics; his enemies were defaming him in an unceasing stream of affidavits and pamphlets . . . but no one in this long period even intimated that he had heard the story of the two gods. At least no such intimation has survived in print or manuscript. . . . Joseph's own description of the first vision was not published until 1842, twenty-two years

after the memorable event."¹³

Characteristically, Mrs. Brodie labors to stretch the gap to its maximum width. We intend to show here that the gap is really a very narrow one and can be quite easily explained. But first let us consider the common argument that the existence of earlier and widely differing accounts of Smith's youthful doings is proof in itself that his own story is a late fabrication, the earlier tales being nearer the truth, no matter how wildly they conflict.

"Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons," Joseph Smith begins his story, ". . . I have been induced to write this history."¹⁴ Since the very purpose of publishing this account is to refute a great number of stories already in circulation, it is comical to see the zeal with which anti-Mormon writers pounce upon every faintest indication that such stories did exist as a refutation of Joseph and absolute proof that his story, since it came later, must have been an afterthought.

But the usual object of official statements is to correct already prevailing errors. It was for that reason that Luke undertook the writing of his gospel: *Because* ". . . many have taken in hand to set forth . . . those things . . . which they who were eye-witnesses from the beginning handed down to us, I have thought it proper, knowing what really happened from the first, to write you an accurate and full account in chronological order, my good friend Theophilus, . . ." (Luke 1:1-4.) [Author's translation.] Luke wants to set the record straight once and for all; his is *not* the first story to be told, but that does not mean that it is borrowed from earlier tales. Nor does the mere fact that an official account is published at a given time prove that it was invented at that time. Note further that the stories which Luke intends to supersede are not necessarily anti-Christian stories (though many such were in circulation), but tales told by believers with the best intention in the world.

The devoted followers of religious leaders are not noted for restraint and objectivity in the things they tell about their adored leaders; and the least reliable class of all are former believers who have turned against a leader. The only authority for what John says is John, and the only acceptable authority for Joseph Smith's story is Joseph Smith, not the Whitmers or Willard Chase or Pomeroy Tucker. Some critics, for example, seem to think that if they can show that a friend or (Continued on page 522)

Censoring Joseph Smith's Story

(Continued from page 492)

enemy of Joseph Smith reports him as saying that he was visited by Nephi, they have caught the Prophet in a fraud.¹⁵ It has moreover long been an axiom with anti-Mormon writers, that if Joseph Smith's enemies tell wildly conflicting stories about him, that does not prove that *they* are lying, but that *he* deceived and tricked them all!

The Reticence of the Saints:

But, one may ask, why should Joseph Smith have waited so long to tell his story officially? From his own explanation it is apparent that he would not have told it publicly at all had he not been "induced" to do so by all the scandal stories that were circulating. It was a rule among those possessing the gospel in ancient times that the greater teachings be not publicly divulged.¹⁶ Even at the risk of serious misunderstanding and persecution, the early Christians and the Jewish sectaries before them would not reveal the secrets of their religion to the world;¹⁷ and the constant charge against the Mormons, and especially against Joseph Smith, from the beginning was that they clothed their affairs and doings in secrecy.¹⁸

The injunction to secrecy is more than a desire to mystify; it is fundamental to all eschatological thinking: "To you it is given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven," Christ told a few elect disciples behind locked doors, "but to them it is *not* given."¹⁹ Eduard Meyer maintained that Joseph Smith's first vision was borrowed from the New Testament account of the Transfiguration, which in turn was taken from the story of Moses talking with God on Sinai.²⁰ These instances all furnish interesting commentaries on the subject of secrecy. Consider for a moment the Transfiguration.

Jesus chose three special apostles, Peter, James, and John, to go with him to a remote spot, "where they were alone" (Mark 9:2) to pray, and "while he was praying the appearance of his face changed and his raiment became white and brilliant as lightning. . . ." (Luke 9:28.) Then a cloud came and overshadowed them: and they were sore

afraid, but a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased; hear him." (*Ibid.*, 9:34-35); or "This is my chosen (or elect) Son: hear him," (Mark 9:7), or "This is my beloved Son: hear him." (Luke 9:35.)

When the apostles came to themselves, Jesus raised them to their feet (Matt. 17:6-8), and gave them strict instructions "that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead." (Mark 9:9.) Accordingly "they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen." (Luke 9:36.)

Now the Transfiguration was the greatest of all manifestations of the Father and the Son, yet John, the most searching of the gospels, makes no mention of it; none of the Apostolic Fathers ever refers to it; there is no hint of it in any of the Apologists; even the vast literature of debate on the nature of the Godhead contains hardly a note of it. Aside from the three synoptic gospels which tell the story with variations, nobody seems to know anything about it. What could such a strange silence possibly mean, save that the fathers and doctors of the Church have never heard of the Transfiguration, for if they had, they surely would be talking of it all the time.

Or take the Gospel of Luke, which begins and ends with wonderful manifestations: First of all an angel appears to Zacharias in the temple, introduces himself: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I have been sent to converse with you and to preach the gospel to you." (*Ibid.*, 1:19.) The conversation, full of scriptural citations, must have lasted a very long time, since we are told that the multitude outside grew restless with waiting and wondered what could possibly have happened to Zacharias. Yet Luke records only a few short sentences of the angel and this great visitation—the one opening the Dispensation of the Meridian of Time—is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament!

Again, at the end of his gospel Luke tells of a great sermon delivered by the Lord after his resurrection when, ". . . beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he ex-

pounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (*Ibid.*, 24:27.) Yet Luke gives us only the two opening sentences of that all-enlightening discourse, and nobody else mentions it.

These instances illustrate the important point that silence in the record is not a proof of ignorance or lack of interest by the writers; the holiest things were not meant for general distribution: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not," said the Lord, "how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12.) Those to whom "the mysteries of the Kingdom" have been imparted have always been bound to secrecy, and the more wonderful the information, the more carefully guarded it was.²¹ The pearls are not to be thrown about promiscuously: Such things are given *only* to those who ask for them sincerely; the door is open only to those who knock at it; the treasures are found only by those who seek for them. (Matt. 7:6-8.)

The writer's great-grandfather, a Jew, one day after he had given Joseph Smith a lesson in German and Hebrew asked him about certain particulars of the first vision. In reply he was told some remarkable things, which he wrote down in his journal that very day. But in the ensuing forty years of his life, during which he had many children and grandchildren and preached many sermons, Brother Neibaur seems never once to have referred to the wonderful things the Prophet told him—it was quite by accident that the writer discovered them in his journal. Why was the talkative old man so close-lipped on the one thing that could have made him famous? Because it was a sacred and privileged communication; it was never published to the world and never should be.

The Book of Mormon Sets the Tone:

Now let us turn briefly to the theory that the Book of Mormon was strictly a secular document, that Joseph Smith "when he was translating it" had no idea whatever "about visions of God, or of angels, or heavenly revelations," those being added to his story in 1838 or 1834. The refutation of this absurd claim is simple, but it requires doing something that critics of Joseph

Smith are invincibly opposed to doing, namely, reading the Book of Mormon. If that is too much to ask, let them read only the first five pages:

"On page 1 of the first edition there is a summary: 'The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, because he prophesieth unto the people concerning their iniquity. . . . We also read of many prophets, prophesying unto the people.' On page 2 a 'pillar of fire' appears to Lehi in the desert, and after hearing and seeing many

wonderful things he returns to his house at Jerusalem and is promptly 'carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open; and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne. . . . And it came to pass that he saw one descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day . . . and the first came and stood before my father, and gave him a book, and bade him that he should read.' Again, marvelous manifestations follow, and on the next page the Lord speaks to Lehi

in a dream. On page 4 Nephi 'did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, . . .' (v. 16.) And on the same page, 'the Lord spake unto me'—a prophecy follows on the next page and then 'I Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father.' (v. 1.)

Now all this belongs to the strictly historical part of the Book of Mormon; the really religious parts are yet to come. And yet this book, copyright before the middle of 1829, is supposed to have been written by a man who had not the remotest idea "about visions of God, or of angels, or heavenly revelations." The book swarms with wonders and marvels, and the earliest stories about Joseph Smith—the local newspaper reports from 1829 and the affidavits of 1833—charge him with pushing the miraculous and mysterious to the extreme.

How, then, could Joseph Smith's own story have "gained in the miraculous and mysterious" through the years until its official culmination in 1838? His own visions and visitations are not more marvelous than those reported throughout the Book of Mormon, which, in fact, they closely resemble. What, then, is all this nonsense about Joseph Smith getting all these ideas later? Or Brodie's idea that he only converted it into a religious book at the last moment?

There is nothing extraneous or afterthought about the religious element in the Book of Mormon, to remove the religious parts of which would be equivalent to removing the rice from a rice pudding—there is really nothing else to it.

The author knew perfectly well that this could not be a popular book. If any reader is naive enough to think that those words (and there are many others like them) were merely inserted for effect let him study the newspaper announcements appearing *before* the publication of the Book of Mormon to see what excellent reason Joseph Smith had for knowing how the public would receive his efforts to set up, of all things, another word of God right beside the Bible. Those who charge Joseph Smith with writing the Book of Mormon as a publicity stunt do not hesitate to accept the affidavit of Nathaniel Lewis, who says that Smith was worried as to "whether he

This day—with its problems and promise

RICHARD L. EVANS



Some nineteen centuries or so ago there walked among men one Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. His fortunes varied from being acclaimed King to being condemned to death. Even the sick whom he healed did not always pause to give gratitude. And in his time of greatest need he could not even count on those who but a few days before had strewn his path with palms. The principles he proclaimed were not popular with the prevailing powers of his time and were not well understood by the people. And because his precepts and principles have not everywhere prevailed, men have sometimes become cynical, have sometimes despaired, have sometimes lost hope and faith in the future. But his own life was the evidence of what men and life could be like if his precepts were put even into partial practice. And even though men have made many mistakes in the use of their God-given freedom, the promising part of the picture is this: not that so many forsake these principles, but that the principles themselves persist—that they are here and await only a time when men shall turn to them. If there were no plan, no pattern, no purpose; if there were no all-prevailing Providence, no way provided for the solution of the problems, there would be reason for a depth of despair. But the fact is that there is an answer, that there is a pattern for peace, that there is an all-prevailing purpose, and that there is sound reason for faith in the future—in the gospel of the Prince of Peace, which is here, and ever ready for us to turn to. "These things I have spoken unto you," he said, "that in me ye might have peace."¹ This is the great assurance of life. This is the great reason for hope and faith in the future.*

"The Spoken Word," from Temple Square presented over KSL and the Columbia Broadcasting System, March 26, 1961. Copyright 1961.

¹John 16:33.
*Revised.

should proceed to translate the Book of Plates . . . or not. He said that God had commanded him to translate it, but he was afraid of the people. . . .²³ And this was his idea of a popular book? Every page of the Book of Mormon proclaims its

status as scripture; to say that there was a time when "no divine interpretation was dreamed of"²⁴ is to talk about another book entirely; there is nothing accidental, capricious, or makeshift about the Book of Mormon, the religious element of which

is solidly built into every sentence.

But now it is time to consider how the critics have dealt with the first vision story since the publication of the official statement in 1842. This is a most enlightening history.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

¹Professor J. B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages, or the Rise, Progress and Causes of Mormonism* (N.Y.: Platt & Peters, London: Wiley & Putnam, 1842), p. 7.

²John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), p. 79.

³Henry Caswall, *The Prophet of the Nineteenth Century; or, the Rise, Progress, and Present State of Mormons or Latter-Day Saints* (London: J.G.F. & J. Rivington, 1843), p. 72.

⁴*History of Illinois*, 1844, p. 387.

⁵W. J. Conybeare, "Mormonism," in *The Edinburgh Review*, April 1854, p. 7.

⁶W. J. Conybeare, *Essays Ecclesiastical and Social* (London: Longem, Brown, etc., 1853), p. 289.

⁷W. A. Linn, *The Story of the Mormons from the Date of their Origin to the Year 1901* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1923), p. 28.

⁸E. D. Howe, *History of the Mormons: of a Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion* (Painesville, Ohio: Printed and published by the Author, 1840), pp. 266ff.

⁹The Rev. D.H.C. Bartlett, *The Mormons or, Latter-Day Saints, Whence Came They?* (Liverpool: J. A. Thompson & Co., 1911), p. 8.

¹⁰J. Q. Adams, D.D., *The Birth of Mormonism* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1916), pp. 20ff.

¹¹J. H. Snowden, *The Truth About Mormonism* (N.Y.: G. H. Doran, 1926), p. 52.

¹²F. M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (N.Y.: A. Knopf, 1947), pp. 55, 83, 38.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 24ff.

¹⁴*Documentary History of the Church*, I, p. 1. Pearl of Great Price, Writings of Joseph Smith, 2:1.

¹⁵Mr. L. Petersen, *Problems in Mormon Text* (Salt Lake City, 1957), p. 3, n. 4, labors this point most strangely. He cites as evidence the *Millennial Star* for August 1842 and the 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price—the first printed in England, far away from Joseph Smith, and the second edition years after his death; for them Joseph Smith cannot be held responsible nor for a Reorganite history published in 1902. Petersen's prize exhibit is the statement of a nephew of David Whitmer, who avers that he had heard his grandmother say that the angel had shown her (!) the plates, the angel being "Brother Nephi." That Mr. P. should have to search so far among literally thousands of retellings of the story of Moroni to find this inevitable slip is actually a vindication of the original. Teachers of the Book of Mormon know well how often the (Continued on page 528)

The "innocence" of intent . . .

RICHARD L. EVANS



Sometime ago we talked of the attitude of intent, and today we should like for a moment to mention a further side of the subject. Some two centuries ago, Jean Baptiste Massillon in commenting on *The Curse of a Malignant Tongue* posed some questions concerning the "innocence" of intent: "What matters it to the brother whom you stab whether it be done through indiscretion or malice? Does an arrow, unwittingly drawn, make a less dangerous or slighter wound than if sent on purpose? . . . It is here he ought to put a guard of circumspection on his tongue, weigh every word, put them together in his heart, says the sage Ecclesiasticus, and let them ripen in his mouth. . . ."¹ This turns on the point of those who having done damage say they didn't mean to do it—for example, loose talkers whose words do damage, as well as loose doers whose deeds do damage. And besides the talkers, there are also the listeners, concerning whom August Hare asked and answered his own question: "When will talkers refrain from evil-speaking? When listeners refrain from evil-hearing?"² "There would not be so many open mouths," said another observer, "if there were not so many open ears."³ There could be times when any or all of us could be critical of others, or when we misjudge, or when we say what we shouldn't say or do what we shouldn't do—and then later say we are sorry—sincerely so—and wish, oh how we sometimes wish we could take back something said, something done! To turn again to Massillon for a moment: "We would not wish to tarnish a man of character, . . . that would be too infamous and mean: . . . [yet] I know that it is, above all, by the innocence of the intention that [slanderers] pretend to justify themselves; . . . But . . . where is the innocence of an amusement [when] . . . in effect, you excuse the malignity of your . . . [tongue] by the innocence of your intentions."¹ Of course we are sometimes sorry, and in a measure may not have intended to say what we said, to do what we did, but must we not remember that the hurt, the unintended damage cannot completely be recalled. "Does an arrow, . . . make a less dangerous . . . wound than if sent on purpose? . . . [We] ought to put a guard of circumspection on . . . [the] tongue, [and] weigh every word."¹

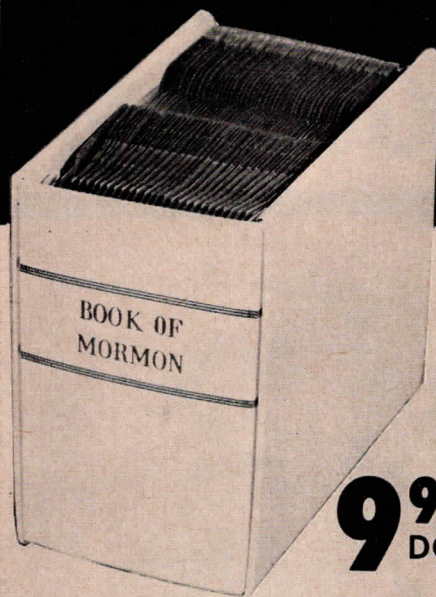
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¹Jean Baptiste Massillon, *The Curse of a Malignant Tongue*.

²August W. Hare.

³Joseph Hall.

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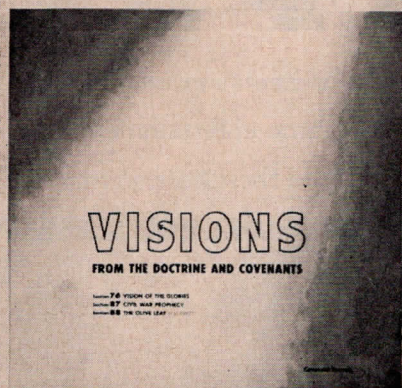


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(Continued from page 526) proper names in the book are confused by students in writing papers and exams; the names Mormon, Nephi, Lehi, and Moroni especially are mixed with great frequency. This writer has made the mistake more than once.

¹⁶This principle is stated by Tertullian, *De praescript.*, 25-26; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, i, 1ff; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromatum* I; in Migne, *Patrol. Graec.*, VIII, 704. Cf. Matt. vii, 6ff; xi, 25-27; xiii, 9-17; xvi, 20; xix, 11; xxiv, 3, etc. Even the later Church Fathers maintained that the highest teachings of the apostles had been kept secret, D. Thomasius, *Dogmengeschichte der alten Kirche* (Erlangen, 1866), I, 209, 297f.

¹⁷This is well brought out in Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, x.

¹⁸So E. D. Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁹Matt. vii, 6ff.

²⁰Ed. Meyer, *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen* (Halle, 1912) pp. 279ff.

²¹To the sources given above in note 16 one might add the interesting (and very ancient) discussion in the *Clementine Recognitions*, II, 60, and III, 1.

²²Ed. Meyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 49. For an estimate of Meyer's scholarship, see the articles on him in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* or the *Illustrada*.

²³See above, note 8.

²⁴Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

Strength to Lift a Featherbed

(Continued from page 495)

team, and we'll take them up that draw for water. There must be some nearby."

"Can I go, too, huh, Father?" Niels pleaded.

"No, son, the horses are tired, and you'd just be an extra burden. Besides, you need to stay and watch after your mother and sister. We won't be long," his father answered.

Niels pouted again as preparations were made to set up camp.

Kristen busied herself, though fleeting flashes of massacre dissected the mechanical thoughts and habits of preparation for the night.

When the essentials for supper were unloaded, her two men mounted and trotted the lathered

(Continued on page 530)

CENSORING

THE JOSEPH SMITH STORY

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PART II

Suppressing the First Vision Story after 1842:

In 1842 J. Turner gave the following resumé of Joseph Smith's story of the first vision: "Joseph Smith was, as he states, in disgust with all the sects, and almost in despair of ever coming to the knowledge of the truth, amid so many contradictory and conflicting claims. He resorted to prayer for 'a full manifestation of divine approbation,' and 'for the assurance that he was accepted of him.' This occurred sometime in the winter of 1823."²⁴ This is the whole story as Turner tells it; the first part is obviously taken, as he avers, from Joseph Smith's own story, but the other parts, actually put in quotation marks as if they were Smith's own words, are not found in that story at all. Turner has re-edited the story until there is virtually nothing left of it.

In the following year an ambitious study in the *Dublin University Magazine* describes the first vision thus: "Into this cloud of glory, Smith," says the narrative, "was received, and he met within it two angelic personages, who exactly resembled each other; they informed him that all his sins were forgiven."²⁵ Here again there can be no doubt that the story is told from the original, but those all-important words, which Joseph Smith puts in italics, which identify the heavenly visitors, and which give the account of the vision its unique status are completely omitted. That the omission is studied and deliberate appears from the statement of the editor that "every part of this tale is an obvious plagiarism from Mohammed's account of the first revelation made to him in the cave of Hira." For "every part of this tale" has certainly not been reported, the most obvious parallel of all, the very words with which the Father introduced the Son on the Mount of Transfiguration, being deleted. Why should young Smith have gone to Mohammed when the Bible, as Eduard Meyer points out, presents much closer and much more readily available material for plagiarism?

In 1851 the *American Whig Review* reported: "Occasionally he was heard advancing contradictory statements concerning the discovery made by him of certain gold plates. . . . These various stories gradually assumed form, and in aftertimes, the story told . . . was as follows." Then comes Joseph Smith's account of the revivals and his perplexity, and then, "one day, as he retired to a grove for purposes of prayer and meditation, an angel from heaven appeared . . . prophesying that he should be the founder of a sect destined to be greater than the others. He was directed to search the summit of the hill Camora [sic]," and told ". . . he was to be married to a woman described to him, and whom he should know as soon as they might meet; and was to prepare himself for the labor of translating by diligent study of Coptic. In 1827 he might return and claim the book."²⁶ The thing to note is that this wild hodge-podge is confidently put forth as the final, official Mormon version of what happened, after that version had been in circulation for at least thirteen years.

In the following year (1852) Gunnison's famous work on the Mormons appeared, in which the story of Joseph Smith is told from the beginning "according to his autobiography";

and yet the first vision is nowhere mentioned, the appearance of Moroni being put forth as the first manifestation seen by Joseph: "Judging from what he says in his autobiography," writes Gunnison, "... his prayers were answered by a heavenly vision," whereupon the author proceeds to tell of Moroni's visit.²⁷

The *Edinburgh Review* of 1854 takes the prize with this: "Young Joseph amused himself by . . . fixing the attention of his pious friends upon himself, by an 'experience' more wonderful than any of theirs. . . . 'I saw,' said he, 'a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . .'" Joseph Smith's own story is then given right up to the words "standing above me in the air," where—it abruptly breaks off with the comment, "He goes on in his 'Autobiography' (from which we quote) to say, that these heavenly messengers declared all existing Christian sects in error, and forbade him to join any of them."²⁸ Again the all-important part has been skipped, our critic

checking himself in the nick of time. This article was printed again with some changes in 1863, but with still no indication of who the heavenly beings might be.²⁸

And here is the complete story as told by J. Reynold in 1855: "Smith became interested for the salvation of his soul, and prayed fervidly in a grove near his father's house in Palmyra, and at last the darkness gave way and the light descended from Heaven until the whole country was illuminated with a dazzling brilliancy that was indescribable."²⁹ That, as we said, is the whole story.

One of the most famous anti-Mormon books was John Hyde's *Mormonism*, which goes so far as to report that "Smith pretends to receive his first vision while praying in the

the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, ~~saying me by name, and said, pointing to the other,~~
"This is my Beloved Son, hear Him!"

~~My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, and which I should join.~~

~~I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in His sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."~~

~~He again forbade me to join with any of them, and many other things did He say unto me, which I cannot write at this time.~~ When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven.

Some few weeks after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very

woods. He asserts that God the Father and Jesus Christ came to him from the heavens." Hyde specifies the time as April 1820. Yet having admitted so much, Hyde covers it up later in his book when he writes: "Joseph Smith, born in 1805, sees an angel in 1820, who tells him his sins are forgiven. In 1823 he sees another angel."³⁰ This is an interesting example of how a critic will refute himself to discredit Joseph Smith's story.

One of the first and most important anti-Mormon books to appear in a foreign language was T. Olshausen's *Geschichte der Mormonen*, 1856, which recounts: "As Joseph Smith completed his sixteenth year of life (1822), he began to think about the salvation of his soul. He frequently went to a retired spot in the forest to pray. After he had prayed fervently and often, and thereby removed the powers of darkness by which he was possessed, he saw one day a bright and glorious light, his spirit was carried away and he saw two bright figures. . . ."³¹ But like the others Olshausen gives never a hint as to who the bright figures might be.

In what pretended to be a very sophisticated and objective study, J. deRadius wrote in 1864: "Whether from insanity or sheer hypocrisy, the lad professed to have been favored, while in prayer, with a miraculous vision. 'A pillar of light descended upon me,' he says, 'and I saw two personages standing above me in the air.' They assured him that his sins were forgiven, and that all existing churches were alike in error. His vanity led him to proclaim his vision, and the persecution which he says he met with . . . made him only the more obstinate."³²

Then in 1867 came Pomeroy Tucker's immortal work in which the first vision is described thus:

"About this time [1827] Smith had a remarkable vision. He pretended that, while engaged in secret prayer, alone in the wilderness, an 'angel of the Lord,' appeared to him, with the glad tidings that 'all his sins had been forgiven,' and proclaiming further that 'all the religious denominations were believing in false doctrines, and consequently that none of them were acceptable of God as of His Church and Kingdom,' also he had received a promise that the true doctrine of the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be revealed to him. Following this, soon came another angel, (or possibly the same one) revealing to him that he was himself 'the favored instrument of the new revelation.' . . ."³³

The distortions and omissions, as well as the typical Tucker embellishments, are quite apparent; characteristic is the lavish use of quotation marks, making it appear that Tucker remembers the very words of Joseph Smith, forty years later.

An official history of Ohio, 1875, assures us that "Joe Smith's story is as follows: 'He says that in the year 1820, as he in a retired place was earnestly engaged in prayer, two angels appeared to him. They informed him that God had forgiven all his sins, that all the then religious denominations were in error, that the Indians were the descendants of the lost tribes, that these writings were safely deposited in a secret place, that he was selected by God to receive them, and translate them into the English tongue.'"³⁴ He says all that . . . ?

And listen to the once highly touted Mrs. Dickinson:

"In 1821 there was a revival in the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches at Palmyra, and some of the Smith family declared they were 'converted.' . . . Joe asserted a partiality for the Methodists, but ultimately declared that he could not decide which was right. He said that . . . he gave himself up to prayer for days, 'agonizing,' that the truth might be made known to him among all of the conflicting opinions that he heard among these different sects; that suddenly his chamber was illuminated, an angel appeared and conversed with him, instructed him in the ways of righteousness, and informed him that there was *no true Church on earth*. He was further told that his prayers were heard, that he was 'dearly beloved of the Lord, and should be commissioned a priest after the order of Melchisedec—organizing a church of the faithful persons in that line to receive the Lord, in the Millennium. In a second visit the angel informed him 'that the truth should spring out of the earth'; . . ."³⁵

It would be hard to do a more careful job of garbling the first vision story.

R. W. Beers' version is remarkable for the fulness of detail with which it leads up to—nothing: "Joseph, in his own account of his early life, says that he 'became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect,' but he was not able to decide which was right. In his bewilderment he gave himself up to prayer for days, that the truth might be made known to him among all the conflicting opinions that he heard among these different sects; and finally a heavenly messenger bade him not to join any sect. And three years afterward, in September 22, 1823," etc.³⁶

In the same year W. Messaros wrote: "In 1820, young Smith pretended to be converted at a Methodist revival and was received into the Church. The next month he claimed that he saw a vision of the Saviour and several Apostles, who informed him that his sins were forgiven, and that he had been chosen to preach a new gospel on earth, holier than any that had been hitherto taught. Before (Continued on page 605)

Censoring the Joseph Smith Story

(Continued from page 579)

six months had elapsed, he was worse than ever, swearing, drinking, and comporting himself with his accustomed vileness. But this did not frighten away his celestial visitors."³⁷

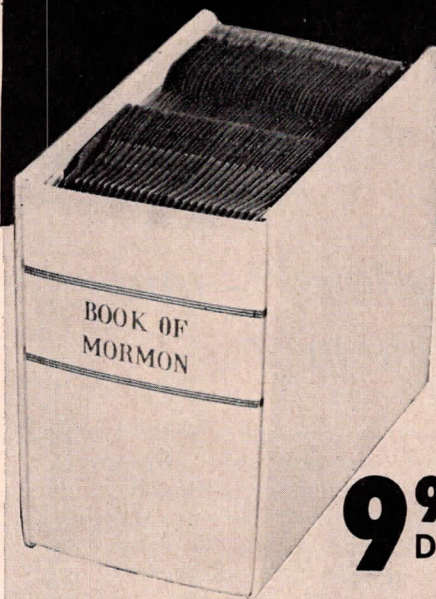
Though frankly hostile, C. F. Ward's *Mormonism Exposed* is no more inaccurate than the others: "In the spring of the year 1820 (at this time, be it remembered Smith was a lad of 15 years of age) an angel appeared to him (so he alleges) and forbade him to join himself to any church or sect, that they were all wrong. I leave it to you to reflect upon the tremendous improbability of this yarn from the beginning."³⁸ But did he ever allege that? And though Thomas Gregg in his anti-Mormon "classic" promises to include "the more important portions" of "Joseph Smith's statement," he omits the part of the first vision which Smith puts in italics—obviously one of the less important portions.³⁹

"This is the fabricated story published to the world by this imposter." M. W. Montgomery declares in 1890: "Smith claimed that the Lord visited him in a vision at frequent intervals and told him that the golden plates contained the fulness of the Gospel dispensation."⁴⁰ A fabricated story indeed!

The twentieth century was ushered in by T. W. Young's remarkable work, which tells us that when Joseph Smith was fifteen years old no church would receive him as a member, since he "pretended to have revelations and visions, and to have received visits from John the Baptist, and the apostles Peter, James, and John. It is hardly to be expected that any sensible church would receive such a disreputable character. His pretended revelations made him the butt of the community. . . . He finally left home to escape ridicule." Four years later, according to this high authority, Smith returned to Palmyra and was visited there by Moroni.⁴¹

In a work published in Utah, and therefore recommended as highly authentic, Josiah Gibbs in 1909 announced that "Mormon chronology begins in 1823," and proceeds to tell

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of Joseph Smith and the founding of the Church with *no mention whatever* of the first vision, though he has a great deal to say about the nature of God as set forth in the King Follett Discourse.⁴²

In 1911 two writers played an identical trick with the first vision story. G. Townsend told Joseph Smith's version down to "... standing above me in the air," and continued as follows: "One of them spoke to me. . . . When I came to

myself I found myself lying on my back looking up into heaven. Three years later he had two similar experiences."⁴³ And D.H.C. Bartlett uses the useful little dots to the same effect: "Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. . . . When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven."⁴⁴ Is it pure coincidence that the dot technique should be

thus twice employed in a single year? Anti-Mormon writings have a way of following a changing pattern through the years.

The Reverend J. Q. Adams published an influential little anti-Mormon book in 1916. In it he tells of the revivals, which took place according to him in 1821: "At this time, Joe gave himself up to prayer, so he said, for many days 'agonizing' to know the truth. [Shades of Mrs. Dickinson! Did he really say 'agonizing'?] Suddenly his chamber was illuminated and an angel appeared and told him there was no true church on earth. It is easy to prophesy now. The angel assured him that his prayers were heard, and 'he was dearly beloved of the Lord, and should be commissioned a prophet after the order of Melchizedek, organizing a church of faithful persons in that line to receive the Lord in the Millennium.' In a second visit he was further told 'that the truth should spring out of the earth;' and then, or at a later time, that the earth was the hill Comorah [sic], near his home."⁴⁵ Mr. Adams lifts from Mrs. Dickinson as freely as Mrs. Brodie later does from him ("It was easy to prophesy now"), and yet he insists that this mishmash "briefly sums up a long story as told by Joe and later Mormon authorities." And then the Rev. Adams makes a significant comment: "A decent reverence for the Holy God ought to forbid the repetition of these stories, such as, for example, that the Father appeared in human form and introduced his Son Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith. But reverence has never been a Mormon characteristic."⁴⁶ This is an enlightening statement of policy: Decent, reverent people should on principle *never mention* the story of the first vision.

This is bad enough, but what shall we say of a master's thesis written in 1929 on Joseph Smith and his work, which can report: "After a series of visions in which two angels appear and converse with him, a being 'surrounded with a light like that of day . . . ' materialized. Smith was directed by this apparition whom he afterwards says is Mormon, to a stone box of 'golden plates'?"⁴⁷

For artful dodging, the doctor's dissertation of George Arbaugh surpasses the mere master's thesis of

"A Word to Fathers" - and about Them

RICHARD L. EVANS



We should like today to approach a subject with less perhaps of sentiment and more perhaps of substance than is sometimes so, although it is neither always possible nor desirable so to separate.

And perhaps we best could pursue the subject by citing some sentences from some who have honored their fathers by honoring the obligations and opportunities of life: "Looking back," Roger W. Babson said of his father, ". . . I cannot help thinking how utterly wasteful of advice children are. . . . We usually are either too busy or too proud to ask for [it]. . . . Surely this is a great mistake. . . . But today it is too late. His spirit has fled. No wealth nor power can call it back. . . . Those of you . . . who have parents . . . talk things over with them more than you do. . . . Someone else can take your place in almost every other job excepting in the job of being a faithful son or daughter. One word to fathers: Don't wait too long before taking your children into your confidence. Don't figure that you'll know . . . [there] will be time enough. . . . This very night . . . open to them your heart. . . . Our families do not want us to leave them with a bigger business. They want more of us. . . . We have only a few years here at most. Let us use them sensibly and quit chasing one another like squirrels in a cage. . . . No other person in the whole wide world can take our place in the . . . home. . . ."¹ Thomas Carlyle said this of his father in thoughts perhaps that each of us would wish to say: "Nothing that he undertook to do but he did it faithfully and like a true man. I shall look on the houses he built with a certain proud interest. They stand firm and sound. . . . I owe him much more than existence, I owe him a noble inspiring example. . . . His death was unexpected? Not so; every morning and every evening, for perhaps sixty years, he had prayed to the Great Father in words which I shall now no more hear him impressively pronounce, 'Prepare us for these solemn events, death, judgment, and eternity.' He would pray also, 'For-sake us not now when we are old and our heads grown gray.' God did not forsake him. . . . Let me not mourn for my father, let me do worthily of him. . . . Let me . . . walk as blamelessly through this . . . world, if God so will, to rejoin him at last. . . . God give me to live to my father's honor, and to His. And . . . in the world of realities may the Great Father again bring us together in perfect holiness and perfect love!"²

¹To Nathaniel Babson by Roger W. Babson.

²Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences*: James Carlyle.

"The Spoken Word," from Temple Square presented over KSL and the Columbia Broadcasting System, June 18, 1961. Copyright 1961.

Miss Pancoast by as much as the glory of the doctorate surpasses that of the Magister Artium. Here we have a Ph.D. thesis from the University of Chicago, reprinted as late as 1950, devoted *entirely*, as the title proclaims, to the subject of *Revelation in Mormonism*, and the first vision is only mentioned in *one* sentence, where it is diligently buried:

"How different was the official account worked out at Nauvoo, containing artificial visions and pious platitudes and generous Scripture quotations! Riley amazingly assumed the historicity of the official story. Meyer recognized that the vision in which the Father and Son appear is borrowed from the transfiguration of Christ, but he mistakenly supposed that Riley's interpretation was, in general, sound."⁴⁸

And that, if you please, is the only mention in Arbaugh's whole book on Mormon revelation of the first vision, the most important revelation of all. If Riley's position is so "amazing," and if a scholar of Eduard Meyer's eminence accepts it, why doesn't Arbaugh tell us just what is wrong with it? That should be the proper business of his thesis, and yet he will not even touch it. Nor will he consider Meyer's very good reasons for accepting 1820 as the date for the first vision, whatever might have happened. For Eduard Meyer, who knew perhaps more about the history of religions than any other man of our century, was convinced that the first vision furnished a reliable key to Joseph Smith's career: without the first vision nothing Smith does makes sense, with it, everything he does makes very good sense.⁴⁹

In 1957 Arbaugh returned to the fray with an impartial little book called *Gods, Sex, and Saints, the Mormon Story*, in which he has this to say of the first vision: "In 1820, according to divine plan, two gods, the Father (Adam) and Jesus, appeared to Joseph Smith near his home in New York. They revealed to him the Nephite scriptures which in time were restored to him by Moroni."⁵⁰ The gratuitous touches about Adam and the Nephite scriptures are Mr. Arbaugh's own invention; he cannot simply repeat the story without disfiguring it with gross inaccuracies. Why is that?

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Does he suspect that the original story makes very good sense, so that the ordinary reader cannot be trusted with it? Arbaugh's irresponsibility is apparent in the opening blast of his new book: "About 1830, in the state of New York, a new sect was founded by Joseph Smith. . . ."⁵¹ About 1830? Can't he do better than guess the year?

In its original form, the present study was burdened by quotations from more than fifty important anti-Mormon writings, all of which were guilty of deliberately disfiguring the first vision story. To save space this monotonous catalog has been cut in half, so that we have presented above only twenty-five of the list, and herewith consign to the decent obscurity of a footnote the other sources, which the reader may consult at his leisure.⁵² All of them will be found busily censoring Joseph Smith's story by calculated distortion and omission, and invariably by deleting the all-important words which identify the heavenly visitors. The writers from whose works we have just quoted are by no means obscure or minor figures in the field; in fact, we know of no really important anti-Mormon writer who is not mentioned in this article—if we have overlooked some (which is quite possible), the fact still remains that the above twenty-five include the really big names in anti-Mormon literature, i.e., it is a genuinely representative list. All of these writers were acquainted with the official history of the first vision, and most of them explicitly assert that they are simply reporting that history; yet not one of them mentions the key episode of the story as the Mormons told it, the words underlined in the original, so that nobody could possibly miss them, the words that identify the Father and the Son.

There are indeed anti-Mormon books that report the crucial part of Joseph Smith's story, but they are the exception that proves the rule. A Government *Handbook of Religious Denominations* in the United States for the year 1844 actually printed Joseph Smith's own story *without comment*,⁵³ but the reader will search many a day without finding another book that can pass such a test for honesty. At least this writer has still to discover one. In

1861 the *Edinburgh Review* broke down and quoted the key lines from Joseph Smith's story: "Scarcely had he uttered this prayer, when his tongue, he says, became paralyzed and he fell into a state of profound depression [He says?]. . . . One of them, calling him by name said, pointing to his companion—'This is my well-beloved Son: hearken to him.'" At last the all-important words are out (though inaccurately reported), but their effect must be instantly expunged by the acid of editorial comment: "This alleged vision is an excellent sample of the poverty of invention and impudent audacity by which all the visions or revelations of the prophet were characterized."⁵⁴ If it is such an excellent example, why don't anti-Mormon writers welcome it instead of avoiding it? Because there is nothing they can say to disprove it, though some of them try hard, as when Mrs. Brodie, after quoting Joseph Smith's story at length, hastens to add: "Lesser visions than this were common in the folklore of the area" (so what? we dare say people even had dreams), and follows this up with a typical insinuation: "Oddly enough, however, the Palmyra newspapers, which in later years gave him plenty of publicity, took no notice of Joseph's vision either at the time it was supposed to have occurred or at any other time."⁵⁵ We are to understand that there is something very odd about that newspaper silence, something very suspicious. Only Mrs. Brodie has overplayed her hand, for it is she who tells us that "in later years" when the newspapers "gave him plenty of publicity" and *when they certainly knew all about the first vision they still did not mention it*—". . . either at the time it was supposed to have happened or at any other time." Thus her argument of silence is worthless as proving ignorance on the part of the newspapers, for they preserved the same silence at a time when they definitely knew Joseph Smith's story.

Stimulated by the reading of this article in manuscript, Dr. Milton Backman of BYU recently undertook a search through all available histories of the United States and of religion in America, and discovered that all writers who mention the first vision *without a single exception*

have distorted Joseph Smith's account, even while they profess to be following it. It would be hard to match such thorough and wholesale abuse of a document in the whole history of historiography.

(To be continued)

FOOTNOTES

⁵¹J. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵²Editorial, "Mormonism; or, New Mohammedanism in England and America," in *Dublin University Magazine*, March 1843, p. 285.

⁵³*American Whig Review*, June 1851, p. 557.

⁵⁴Lt. J. W. Gunnison, *The Mormons or Latter-day Saints* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1856), pp. 26, 91.

⁵⁵W. J. Conybeare, in *The Edinburgh Review*, April 1854, p. 162; see also *ibid.*, 1863, p. 7.

⁵⁶John Reynolds, *My Own Times, embracing also, the History of My Life* (Illinois, 1855), p. 565.

⁵⁷John Hyde, Jr., *Mormonism, Its Leaders and Designs* (N.Y.: W. P. Fetridge, 1857) pp. 199, 240.

⁵⁸Theod. Olshausen, *Geschichte der Mormonen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1856), p. 11.

⁵⁹J.S.C. Radius, *Historical Account of Every Sect of the Christian Religion*, 2nd Ed. (London: T. Blower, 1864.) p. 112.

⁶⁰Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (N.Y.: D. Appleton & Co., 1867), p. 28.

⁶¹J. Abbott, *History of Ohio* (1875), p. 698.

⁶²E. E. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism*, Intd. by Thulow Weed (N.Y.: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), pp. 32f.

⁶³R. W. Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle and How to Solve It*. (N.Y., Chicago, London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887), p. 28.

⁶⁴Rev. Waldo Messaros, *The Road to Heaven* (Philadelphia: Globe Bible Pub. Co., 1888), p. 584.

⁶⁵C. Fenwick Ward, *Mormonism Exposed: 'The Founder of Mormonism an Infamous Impostor'*, (Manchester: Wm. Kemp, 1897).

⁶⁶Thos. Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra* (N.Y.: J. B. Alden, 1890), p. 12.

⁶⁷M. W. Montgomery, *The Mormon Delusion* (1890), p. 17.

⁶⁸Rev. T. W. Young, *Mormonism: Its Origin Doctrines and Dangers* (Ann Arbor: Goe. Wahr, 1900), p. 12.

⁶⁹Josiah F. Gibbs, *Lights and Shadows of Mormonism* (Salt Lake Tribune Pub. Co., 1909), p. 167.

⁷⁰Geo. Townsend, *The Conversion of Mormonism* (Hartford: Church Mission Pub. Co., 1911), p. 8.

⁷¹Rev. D.H.C. Bartlett, *The Mormons, or Latter-day Saints, Whence Came They?* (Liverpool: J. A. Thompson & Co., 1911) p. 6.

⁷²J. Q. Adams, *The Birth of Mormonism* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1916), p. 19.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 20. C. Sheridan Jones, *The Truth about the Mormons. Secrets of Salt Lake City* (London: Wm. Rider, 1920.)

⁷⁴Eva L. Pancoast, *Mormons at Kirtland*

(M.A. Thesis, Western Reserve Univ., May 1, 1929), p. 4.

⁴⁶Geo. B. Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism* (U. of Chicago Press, 1932, reprinted 1952), pp. 34f.

⁴⁷E. Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-33, 47, 16f.

⁵⁰G. B. Arbaugh, *Gods, Sex, and Saints. The Mormon Story* (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Press, 1957), p. 24.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 9.

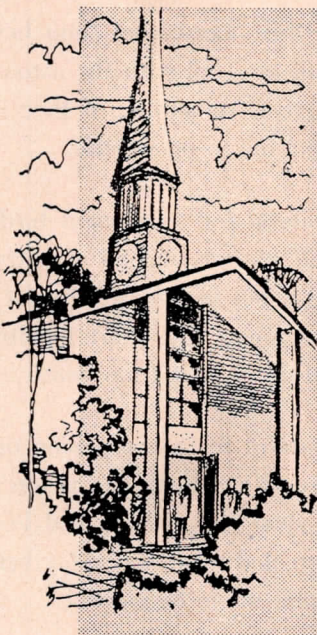
⁵²We give them in chronological order: Rupp's *Religious Denominations*, 1844, cited by C. F. Potter, *The Story of Religion as told in the Lives of Its Leaders* (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1929), p. 528; E. Hickman, *Mormonism Sifted* (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1850), p. 3; *Tracts on Mormonism*, No. 2 (London, 1850) Historian's Office 089, Vol. 3, No. 807, p. 5); Emerson Davis, D.D., *The Half Century* (Boston: Tappan & Whittemore, 1851), p. 394; *Census of Great Britain 1851*, Religious Worship, 1853, p. cvi.; Samuel M. Smucker, *The Religious, Social, and Political History of the Mormons, or Latter-day Saints, from Their Origin to the Present Time* (London, 1851), p. 20, and in many subsequent editions; *The National Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 6 (June 1854), p. 482; Rev. Emilius Guers, *Irvingism and Mormonism Tested by Scripture* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1854), p. 52; B. G. Ferris, *Utah and the Mormons, The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and Prospects of the Latter-day Saints* (N.Y.: Harper & Bros., 1856), p. 57; *Is Mormonism True or Not?* (London 1855), p. 11. (Historian's Off., 089.1 #7390); *The Lamps of the Temple* (London, 1856), pp. 479, 490ff.; S. M. Smucker, *Religious and Political History of the Mormons* (N.Y. and Auburn, 1856), pp. 20, 32; John Timbs, *English Eccentrics and Eccentricities* (London: R. Bentley, 1866), p. 228; N. W. Green, *Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition* (Hartford: Belnap & Bliss, 1870), p. 412; J. H. Beadle, *Life in Utah; or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism; the History of Mormonism*, (Toronto: H. H. Hovey & Co., 1873), p. 23; W. Lang, *History of Seneca County* (Springfield, O.: Transcript Printing Co., 1880), p. 649; Geo. Wotherspoon, *Mormonism: or The Faith of the Latter-day Saints: Its History and Moral* (London: The Sunday Lecture Society, 1886); Thos. E. Hill, *Hill's Album of Biography and Art* (Chicago: Hill Standard Book Co., 1888), pp. 32f; *Knowledge, A Weekly Magazine* (N.Y.: John B. Alden) Vol. I, No. 9, August 2, 1890, p. 176; O. F. Berry, *The Mormon Settlement in Illinois*, in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1906, No. 7, p. 88; J. D. McMillan, D.D., "An Outline of Mormon History," in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, Vol. V, No. 8 (Aug. 1913), p. 113; Harry M. Beardsley, *Joseph Smith and His Modern Empire* (Boston; N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), p. 83f; "Marrying Mormons. The Strange Case of American Polygamy," in *M.D. Magazine* III (June 1959), pp. 111-5.

⁵³I.D. Rupp (Ed.), *Religious Denominations in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1844), pp. 404ff.

⁵⁴Edinburgh Review, October 1861, p. 202.

⁵⁵F. M. Brodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 22f.

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THE JOSEPH SMITH STORY

BY HUGH NIBLEY

Mrs. Brodie, it will be recalled, rests her impeachment of the first vision story on the silence of the record between 1820 and 1840. But the argument of silence is if anything even less significant before 1840 than after. For if fifty-odd "standard works" on the history of Mormonism can all omit the key to that history even after that history has been formally published to the world, what are the chances of finding anything like a coherent account of that supremely unpopular and much-mishandled story in the much scantier literature of the earlier period, *before* there was any official Mormon version to act as a source, a check, or a control? One might argue that it is inconceivable that anti-Mormon writers, eager to convict Joseph Smith of blasphemy and boundless impudence, would pass by such a juicy item as the first vision story in silence. Yet we have just seen that fifty of them did just that; though they claimed to be quoting Joseph Smith's own story, none of them "even intimated," to quote Mrs. B., "that he had heard the story of the two gods." All of which shows that ignorance of an event is not the only reason for silence concerning it. Policy and prejudice play a dominant role in religious history, and especially in anti-Mormon history.

But, it may be argued, the suppression of the story after 1840 was not *total*. Neither was it before 1840. Let us consider some of the "implications" that turn up in the earlier literature which have somehow—but not surprisingly—quite escaped the notice of Mrs. Brodie, in spite of her predilection for implications. We must warn the reader that the stories we are about to quote are a mess—but no more so than those we have already quoted. It has been standard procedure among anti-Mormon writers to attribute all this confusion to Joseph Smith himself, who is charged with having told a great many conflicting stories, by way of explaining why the stories told against him by his enemies never agree. To this charge the fifty writers just cited provide an adequate refutation: No two of them tell the same story even after Joseph Smith is long dead and when they all claim to be following a single original. Who is responsible for

that? Not Joseph Smith and the Mormons, certainly.

It will be recalled that Joseph Smith was, as he puts it, "induced" to write his story "owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons. . . ." Did he merely imagine such things? He did not. On November 30, 1830 the Painesville *Telegraph* reported: "To record the thousand tales which are in circulation respecting the book and its propagators would be an endless task and probably lead to the promulgation of a hundred times more than was founded on truth."⁵⁶ The editor is well aware of what a swarm of stories about Joseph Smith are going around, and how easily they depart from the truth. Did Joseph Smith and the Mormons make up all those shockers—about themselves? We have examined a great number of those stories, which we compare in a recent study,⁵⁷ and found that they all turn on a few stock themes: There are the digging stories, the peep stones, appearances of angels and devils, crooked business deals and speculations, the mysterious plates, and, not least of all the first vision story.

Let us see how Mrs. Brodie tries to build up a case against Joseph Smith by implication. It was in 1834 "shortly after *Mormonism Unveiled* appeared" that Joseph Smith published the "first sketch of his early years," which "took the form of an apology for his youthful indiscretions."⁵⁸ This statement is misleading: an apology is an explanation or justification of actions which are explicitly admitted; but Joseph Smith's "apology" flatly denies Howe's charges that make him "the vilest wretch on earth," and insists that his "imperfections" are nothing worse than "a light, and too often, vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation."⁵⁸ In issuing this denial, Joseph Smith tells no story whatever; this is *not* a "first sketch of his early years" or of anything else, but simply a refutation of charges of gross misconduct. But by pretending that it is a history, Mrs. Brodie can announce that it "differed surprisingly" from the "official autobiography" of 1838 or 1842.⁵⁹ Of course it did; they are two totally different types of document, but there is not the slightest conflict between

them; they are photographs of the same man, just as Lincoln's jokes and his Gettysburg Address though they "differed surprisingly" are different photographs of the same man.

But if Joseph Smith invented all his heavenly visitors in reply to Mr. E. D. Howe, one is at a loss to explain how all those religious manifestations got into Howe's book in the first place; for example, Howe quotes Ezra Booth as reporting in 1831: "Smith describes an angel, as having the appearance of 'a tall, slim, well-built, handsome man, with a bright pillar upon his head.'" ⁶⁰ Now, what we would like to know is how Joseph Smith could have been going around in 1831 giving intimate firsthand descriptions of angels—pillar of light and all—if he first invented his angelic interviews in 1838? Howe is not one to report the first vision; he declares his extreme reluctance to report any of Joseph Smith's supernatural tales, ⁶¹ and insists that "no one but the vilest wretch on earth, disregarding all that is sacred, would ever dare to have profaned the sacred oracles of truth to such base purposes. . . . We are left without weapons to combat the credulous Mormon believer." ⁶² Yet on the other hand he resents Joseph's reticence and accuses him of "mystifying everything." ⁶³ From which it is quite plain that Howe was denied access to a good deal of information, and that he was angered and frustrated. As a result his record is a monument of confusion, contradiction, and invective.

Take, for example, Peter Ingersoll's story of how when "he was once ploughing near the house of Joseph Smith, Sr." he was returning to work through the field when the elder Smith stopped him and gave him a lecture on seer stones, gazed at one in his own hat, and "being very much exhausted, said in a faint voice, 'If you knew what I had seen, you would believe.'" This according to Ingersoll, took place sometime between 1822 and "about 1830." ⁶⁴ One wonders just how reliable this story is. Is Ingersoll making up the story or just mixing it up? Could this be a garbled version of what happened to Joseph Smith the day after Moroni's first visit—working in the field, going back to the house, fainting, the ap-

pearance of a vision, a conversation with the elder Smith in the field, Father Smith's declaration of belief? It is all there, only with Peter Ingersoll, one of the greatest storytellers of them all, in the leading role. ⁶⁵

The man who claimed to have known Joseph best, to have been in fact his intimate associate "from his twelfth to his twentieth year," reported in 1867:

"About this time (1827) Smith had a remarkable vision. He pretended that, while engaged in secret prayer, alone in the wilderness, an 'angel of the Lord,' appeared to him, with the glad tidings that 'all his sins had been forgiven,' and proclaiming further that 'all religious denominations were believing in false doctrines, and consequently that none of them were acceptable of God as of His Church and Kingdom'; also he had received a 'promise that the true doctrine and the fullness of the gospel should at some future time be revealed to him.' Following this, soon came another angel (or possibly the same one,) revealing to him that he was himself to be 'the favored instrument of the new revelation. . . .' In the fall of the same year Smith had yet a more miraculous and astonishing vision than any preceding one." ⁶⁶

Mr. Tucker does not bother to tell us what that most marvelous vision of all might have been, but instead he reports that Joseph then "announced to his family and friends and the bigoted persons who adhered to his supernaturalism," that he would go and get the plates. These visions, according to Tucker, were "repeatedly quoted by his credulous friends at the time." ⁶⁷

Now if Tucker is anything like the reliable firsthand source that the critics take him to be, it would be hard to deny that the story of the first vision was being told and retold in 1827: the usual distortions are there, but it is plain enough what is being distorted. At the very least it is certain that Tucker lived in Palmyra in the early 1820's (he moved to Canandaigua in 1822 or 1823 and stayed there four years), and he does seem to have the strong impression that stories of Joseph Smith's visions were current at that time. *(Continued on page 736)*

competition to become the chief incentive to work. Encourage them all, of course, to do their best, but let your competition from now on be with your own mission, your own past record, and not with any other mission. Teach your missionaries that their competition must be with themselves and not with the other missionaries, but inspire them with ambition and enthusiasm. Encourage them to be humble and prayerful. Do not downgrade them with unfavorable comparisons. Preserve their self-confidence and self-respect. Do not break their spirits. When great movements get the impetus of a prairie fire there is danger. I hope I have not spoken out of place. I am just sounding this word of warning.

In your enthusiasm to increase the flock, be careful you don't lose the shepherds. The Lord spoke about leaving the ninety and nine and going out to save the one; I am thinking in reverse order. You are asking the one to go out and get the ninety and nine, but be sure you don't lose the one. God bless you, my brethren and sisters. God bless the missionaries. One of the most effective techniques of your work is that which all of you are employing and asking your missionaries to employ, that of bearing testimony. I want to tell you from the very center of my heart that I know that Joseph the Prophet talked with Jesus Christ. I know that this is the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, that this Church is led by revelation, and that the man who stands at the head of the Church today is a prophet of God.

I leave you that testimony and ask for your prayers for all of us that we remain humble and somehow be efficacious and partly, at least, equal to the task assigned to us. I leave you my blessing, a blessing of peace in your souls, wisdom in your minds and hearts, enthusiasm for the work. I bless you that you may go back inspired as never before to carry out the greatest work of all time. Revelations from God will continue to come, and the world will yet know, as they are beginning to know, that there is a force in the world that is capable of combating the satanic and implacable foe called communism or more properly called anti-Christ. I leave you that blessing and that testimony humbly in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Censoring the Joseph Smith Story

(Continued from page 725)

A closer check is provided by an article in the *Rochester Advertiser & Telegraph* for August 31, 1829: "In the fall of 1827," it says, "a person by the name of Joseph Smith, of Manchester, Ontario county, reported that he had been visited in a dream by the spirit of the Almighty and informed that in a certain hill in that town was deposited this Gold Bible . . . as he states . . . after penetrating mother earth a short distance the bible was found . . . [it was] nicely wrapped up and excluded from the 'vulgar gaze of poor and wicked mortals.'"⁶⁸

Here we find the usual freedom of invention, including the flowery editorial terms "mother earth" and "vulgar gaze of poor and wicked mortals" explicitly attributed to Joseph Smith himself two years before, though no sources are given. Again we see that the supernatural element in the Book of Mormon story is full blown in 1827 or at least in 1829—no need for Joseph Smith to wait until 1838 to invent it. The piece is just as thoroughly mixed up as the others we have cited, and an interesting note emerges in the confusion: it is not an angel who visits the young Joseph Smith but "the spirit of the Almighty," and that not in any abstract or mystic sense, but as a conveyor of specific information. If Joseph Smith was not talking to angels in 1827, it would seem from this scrambled account that he was talking to someone much higher up. Where could *that* rumor have started?

Just two weeks later (September 16, 1829) the *Palmyra Reflector* reported: "The Book of Mormon is expected to be ready for delivery in the course of one year. Great and marvelous things will 'come to pass' about these days."⁶⁹ Again the Book of Mormon is surrounded with an aura of the supernatural even before its publication. Then eight months later (May 15, 1830) the *Rochester Gem* announced: "The translator if we take his word for it, has been directed by an angel in this business . . . [This] is in point of blasphemy and imposition, the very summit."⁷⁰ So the stories of the angel were *not* invented years later, after all. But why wasn't it an

angel in the *Rochester Advertiser* account of the previous year, where "the spirit of the Almighty" was the visitor? Obviously, the earlier report has mixed up the story of Moroni with the first vision. That was a common blunder, as we have seen, in later years as well.

A few weeks after the appearance of the Book of Mormon, Obediah Dogberry published a satire on Joseph Smith in the *Palmyra Reflector*; it is the *Book of Pukei*, and we quote from Chap. ii. First the contents of the chapter are given: "1. The idle and slothful reverence the prophet. 2. The prophet reveals to them the first appearance of the Spirit. 3. The admonition and promises. 4. Description of the spirit. . . ."

Then beginning with verse 2: "And the Prophet answered and said . . . lo! yesternight stood before me in the wilderness of Manchester, the spirit. . . . And he said unto me, Joseph, the son of Joseph, hold up thine head . . . hold up thine face and let the light of mine countenance shine upon thee. . . . I am the spirit that walketh in darkness, and will shew thee great signs and wonders. And I looked, and behold a little old man stood before me, clad, as I supposed, in Egyptian raiment, except his Indian blanket and moccasins—his beard of silver white, hung far below his knees. On his head was an old-fashioned military half cocked hat . . . his speech was sweeter than molasses, and his words were the reformed Egyptian. And again he said unto me, 'Joseph thou who has been surnamed the *ignoramus*, knowest thou not, that great signs and wonders are to be done by thine hands?'"⁷¹

The broad, heavy Yankee humor is apparent enough, and it would be hard to explain such expressions as "reformed Egyptian" as coming from any but an official source. But what about the rest of the satire? Note the table of contents: "2. The Prophet reveals to them the first appearance of the Spirit. 3. Admonitions and promises. 4. Description of the Spirit." The first appearance of the Spirit is then depicted as taking place "in the wilderness of Manchester," where the Spirit addresses Joseph by name, introduces himself, and promises great things to come, including a work to be done by Smith himself.

(Continued on page 738)

(Continued from page 736)

In the burlesque description of "the Spirit," special mention is made of the *light* of his countenance and the extreme whiteness of his beard. With the coming of this light, Smith is told, "hold up thine head," as if before he had been cast down.

Now is Mr. Dogberry simply making all this up or is he satirizing? The humor of his heavy-handed discourse is anything but intrinsic; his long, laborious spoofing of the Book of Mormon (from which we

have quoted only a few lines) is only effective if the reader recognizes each point as a take-off on Joseph Smith, who is represented as having told his followers, "the idle and slothful"—and no one else!—of that "first appearance of the Spirit" which took place "in the wilderness of Manchester."

Just a week after the Painesville *Telegraph* had deplored "the thousand tales which are in circulation respecting the book and its propagators," that journal (December 7,

1830) added to the confusion with yet another tale:

"... friends and advocates of this wonderful book state that Mr. Oliver Cowdery has his commission directly from the God of Heaven, and that he has his credentials, written and signed by the hand of Jesus Christ, with whom he has personally conversed, and as such, said Cowdery claims that he and his associates are the only persons on earth who are qualified to administer in his name."⁷²

The source of this story is not given; we are not even told whether the "friends and advocates" in question were Mormons or merely sympathizers, or whether the report came at first, second, or thirdhand from personal friends of Cowdery. It is simply another of those "thousands of tales" going around in 1830; but the elements of the story are familiar—a personal face-to-face conversation with Jesus Christ, as a result of which it can be confidently announced that there was no authorized church on the earth at that time.

Another version of the story puts Sidney Rigdon in the leading role. One Alexander Majors claimed to recall that "an elder by the name of Rigdon preached in the courthouse one Sunday in 1832, in which he said he had been to the third heaven, and had talked face to face with God Almighty. The preachers in the community the next day went en masse to call upon him. He repeated what he had said the day before. . . ."⁷³

Yet according to the same Majors, Joseph Smith's story anticipated Rigdon's by a good two years, for in 1830 "five Mormon elders made their appearance in the county . . . said that they had the priesthood 'that had been organized by Joseph Smith, who had met an angel and received a revelation from God. . . .' In that day and age it was regarded as blasphemous . . . for anyone to claim that they met angels and received from them new revelations, and the religious portion of the community, especially, was very much incensed and aroused at the audacity of any person claiming such interviews from the invisible world."⁷⁴ From this it would appear that at an early date people were much angered and excited by Joseph Smith's claims to heavenly visitations; note that a distinction is made between the angel's visit and

Reaction Time

RICHARD L. EVANS



Last week we closed with a quotation which we now again recall: "Spend your time in nothing which you know must be repented of; in nothing on which you might not pray for the blessing of God; in nothing which you could not review with a quiet conscience . . . in nothing which you might not safely and properly be found doing if death should surprise you in the act."¹ Many, if not most of people's problems come with misuse of time—not only time in continuing quantity, but the decisions or reactions of a single second. Studies of the reaction time of people indicate how vitally important can be a fraction of a second. In the oft-portrayed use of side arms, for example, the difference between those who live and those who die is frequently a fraction of a second. And the same no doubt could be said for the days when swords and spears were the common weapons—and certainly the same can be said for these days of highway hazards, where, at sixty miles an hour, a car travels eighty-eight feet in a single second. And so the difference between life and death, good and evil, safety and sorrow, between a quiet or unquiet conscience, between what can and what cannot be recalled, is often only an instant. This is true of utterance as well as action. A second's thought before we say something would leave many things blessedly unsaid; a second's thought before we do something would leave many unwise things blessedly undone. The ill-advised action or utterance, without first thinking through, can lead to incalculable consequences. There is no problem in filling time. There are demands and invitations and urges and interests and opportunities in ten thousand different directions. It is a question of using time for what we should—for what is immediately necessary, and for what is of value everlastingly—and of striking a balance between the two. This suggests itself as a significant sentence; "... do not spend money for that which is of no worth, [or life or time] nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy."² We need time to think, to explore, to reach for the real essentials, to pursue a sincere and honest search, ever seeking to come closer to the answers that evade us, and to an understanding of eternal truth. And the thoughtful use of time, with honest intent, gives peace to the soul and a deep and satisfying assurance.

¹Richard Baxter (Eng. Divine, 1615-1691.)

²2 Nephi 9:51.

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"a revelation (i.e., a particular revelation) from God."

Since Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon were understandably confused with Joseph Smith in the stories that were going around, it is not surprising that Martin Harris had the same distinction. The indefatigable E. D. Howe was able to get an affidavit from one testifying that Martin Harris "frequently declares that he has conversed with Jesus Christ, Angels and the Devil . . . and at one time the presence of the Lord was so great that a screen was hung up between him and the Prophet."⁷⁵ One could not ask for a more obvious juggling of hearsay reports. We are told that the man claimed actually to have conversed with the Lord, and yet in his most wonderful experience he did not see Christ at all, but merely sensed "the presence of the Lord," from which he was shielded by a screen—only the screen was not between him and the Lord at all, but "between him and the Prophet." That would make Joseph Smith the one who was really in "the presence of the Lord," and not Harris. It is quite plain that somebody is confusing the story of the first vision with the well-known accounts of the translating of the plates.

(To be concluded)

FOOTNOTES

⁷⁶Quoted in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, Vol. II (Independence, Missouri; Zion's Printing and Publishing Co.), p. 43.

⁷⁷H. Nibley, *The Myth Makers* (S.L.C.: Bookcraft, 1961).

⁷⁸Brodie, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁰E. D. Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 75f.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁸⁵It is Ingersoll who tells that Jos. Smith, Sr., insisted that "the large stones on the top of the ground . . . are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun," *ibid.*, p. 233, and then labors mightily to persuade Ingersoll to join him in *digging* for money! *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁸⁶Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Italics ours.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁸⁸Cit. Kirkham, *op. cit.*, II, 32.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 29f.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹³Alex. Majors, *Seventy Years on the Frontier* (1893), p. 44.

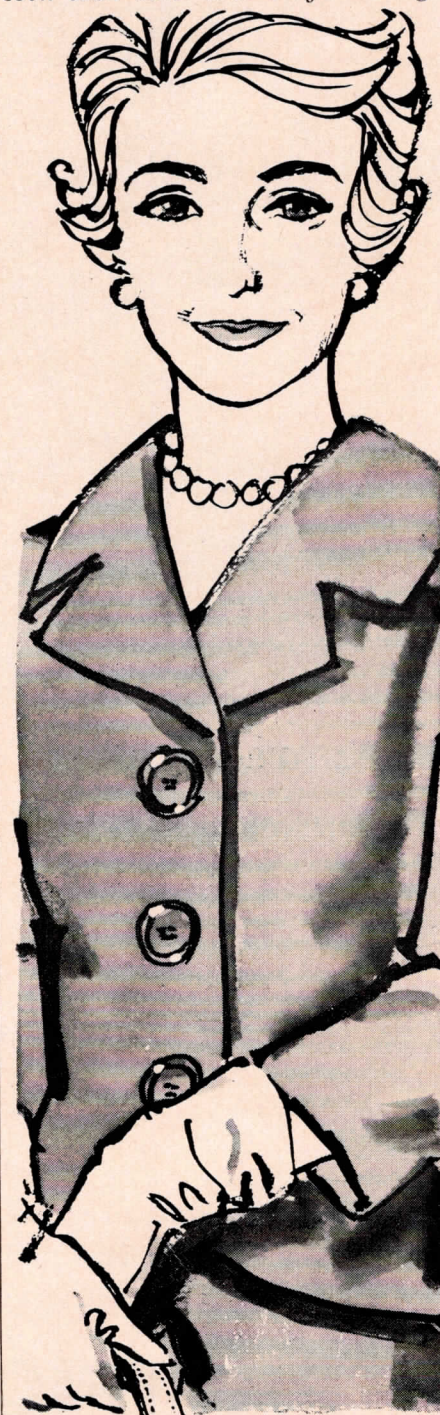
⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 43f.

⁹⁵E. D. Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Dynamic Friendship

BY RUTH C. IKERMAN

It had been twenty-five years since I had seen the close friend of my college days. Yet when she walked in the door on our reunion day, we started talking as though we had seen each other that very morning.



It was wonderfully reassuring to find that we could catch our lives together after all those years, and to realize that dynamic friendship goes on unendingly, "no matter what."

Neither of us had meant for the years to hurry past without visits. But the process of earning a living and family duties had made such journeys impossible. Now we were making the most of an afternoon together.

We remembered, among other things, a favorite course in English literature, and how it was there that we had read the famous advice of Samuel Johnson. He urged people to keep their friendship "in constant repair." Yet we had not managed many letters in all these years.

"Maybe there is a deeper wisdom than Samuel Johnson knew," said my friend reflectively. "If it's really friendship, it will not collapse with such neglect. Repair must be the wrong word."

What matters in friendship is the building of an attitude of understanding, and the mutual recognition that true understanding is all that matters. Then if getting together proves difficult, if sickness keeps from active participation, there is underlying strength in the knowledge that a friend does understand.

When circumstances change for the better, and there is opportunity for more normal living, no time has to be wasted in apology or explanations. But all the precious moments of companionship can be spent in enjoyment.

On the cultivating of an attitude of understanding, the development of true friendship is based. And this attitude is available to all wherever they happen to live, whatever their routine duties.

By practising this attitude of understanding with earthly friends we come to a greater appreciation of what it was that Jesus meant when he said, "Behold I have called you friends." Relying on his understanding, we are able to undertake more for our friends in this life, rejoicing in his eternal friendship.

And the power of friendship in building a better world cannot be overestimated. For it warms the heart when encountered daily or after a lapse of many years if it has the qualities of dynamic friendship.

Censoring the Joseph Smith Story

BY HUGH NIBLEY

CONCLUSION

An exceedingly wild story was attributed to Martin Harris by the *Weekly Visitor* in 1841, a story which Harris was reported to have told back in 1827—what memories these people have! According to this, after a futile attempt to get the plates “Joe went alone in silence home and was met on the way by an angel in the woods: ‘He spoke in a voice of thunder, and forked lightning shot through the trees and ran along the ground. The terror of the Divine messenger’s appearance instantly struck Smith to the earth, and he felt his whole frame convulsed with agony’ . . . the angel upbraided him and disappeared. ‘Smith went home trembling and full of terror. Another Divine communication was made to him, authorizing him to go alone and bring the chest and deposit it secretly under the hearth of his dwelling.’”⁷⁶ Again the suggestive and misleading quotes, again the garbled stories; this is another example of how thoroughly corrupted the first vision story can get, but the familiar elements are there: Joseph Smith alone in the silent woods, the light in the treetops, the young man struck to the ground and overcome so that “he felt his whole frame convulsed with agony,” the awesome appearance of “the Divine messenger,” who gives him instructions, the specification that the vision about the plates came later as well as the useful information that this story is being told at the third-hand after a lapse of many years. The authority for this story is an editor of the *Episcopal Recorder* of Philadelphia, who describes in detail how Harris told the tale to him “early in the autumn of 1827.”⁷⁷ A very unflattering retelling of the first vision story—what else could one expect?—but at least an early one.

On October 12, 1832, one J. B. Pixley wrote a worried letter to the editor of the *Christian Watchman*, in which he deplored the coming of the Mormons to Missouri. What particularly annoyed this correspondent was that the invaders had not changed any of the crazy ideas they had back in Ohio and New York: “. . . their creed,” he wrote, “appears to have undergone but little change. . . . The Mormons *still* prefer to talk with angels, visit the third heaven, and converse with Christ face to face. They pretend to have discovered where the Ark of the Covenant,

Aaron’s Rod, the Pot of Manna, etc., etc., now remain hid.”⁷⁸ Again the free invention—the Ark, the Rod, and the Pot are a unique contribution of the writer; but along with that go the now familiar motifs of angelic visitation and face-to-face conversation with Christ.

Pixley’s complaint is confirmed in the reports of a great mass meeting that was held at Independence, Missouri, on July 20, 1833. There was a report:

“The committee fears that . . . they (the Mormons) will soon have all the offices in the county in their hands; and that the lives and property of other citizens would be insecure, under the administration of men who are so ignorant and superstitious as to believe that they have been the subjects of miraculous and supernatural cures; hold converse with God and his angels, and possess and exercise the gifts of divination, and of unknown tongues.”⁷⁹

The *Missouri Intelligencer* and *Boone’s Lick Advertiser* of August 10, 1833 reports it thus:

“What would be the fate of our lives and property, in the hands of jurors and witnesses, who would not blush to declare and would not upon occasion hesitate to swear, that they have wrought miracles and supernatural cures; have converse with God and His angels; and possess and exercise the gift of divination and of unknown tongues . . . may be better imagined than described.”⁸⁰

“Of their pretended revelations from Heaven,” an editor comments, “their personal intercourse with God and his Angels—the maladies they pretend to heal by the laying on of hands—and the contemptible gibberish with which they profane the Sabbath . . . we have nothing to say.”⁸⁰ Alexander Majors claims to have had a conversation with Joseph Smith in Missouri at this time: “I told him frankly [Majors reports] that it [the trouble with the mobs] grew out of the fact that they claimed to have seen an angel, and to have received a new revelation from God. . . . He then scouted the idea that people would receive such treatment as they did merely because they claimed to have seen angels and talked with God and claimed to have a new revelation.”⁸¹ Whether Majors is gilding the lily or not, it is clear that the one thing that

most enraged the Missourians when the Mormons first came to Missouri in the early 1830's was the Mormon claim that somebody had "seen angels *and* talked with God."

This writer has made no systematic search of "intimations" of the first vision story in early Mormon and anti-Mormon writings. What we have presented here is simply what we have turned up on short notice among a lot of old notes which we gathered years ago with a wholly different project in view; but it is quite enough to refute the claim that not a single intimation that anyone ever heard the first vision story is to be found anywhere between 1820 and 1840. What the present state of the evidence most strongly suggests is that Joseph Smith did tell his story to some of his followers at an early date, that the story got abroad, as such things will, and in the process of being handed around inevitably became contaminated and corrupted beyond recognition, until at last Joseph Smith was obliged to issue a public statement. He did this reluctantly, confining his report to bare essentials. Throughout his life Joseph Smith was never eager to tell the story of his first vision. This is a thing which the publicity-minded writers of anti-Mormon books seem quite incapable of comprehending; hungry for "success" and attention themselves, they find it simply inconceivable that Joseph Smith or any of the prophets should have "kept it close, and told no man of any of those things which they had seen." (Luke 9:36.) For them the complete proof that Joseph Smith had no first vision is that he did not advertise it.

They're Still at It:

We should not conclude without referring the reader to a mimeographed sheet which was widely circulated in the mail in Utah during the third week of February of the present year (1961), and which brings our little study conveniently up to date.⁸² The writing begins with a pompous and resounding declaration: "It had recently been discovered that the teaching that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820 was not a part of early church doctrine until after the death of Brigham Young." This gives us a new terminal date

for our story—1877! The proof of this sensational claim is as follows:

"Brigham Young said, '*The Lord did not come . . . But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith, Jun., . . . and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong; . . .*' (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 2, p. 171.)"

What Brigham Young *did* say at the place indicated was:

"But as it was in the days of our Savior, so it was in the advent of this new dispensation. . . . The Lord did not come with the armies of heaven, in power and great glory, nor send His messenger panoplied with aught else than the truth of heaven, to communicate to the meek, lowly, the youth of humble origin, the sincere inquirer after the knowledge of God. But he did send his angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith, Jun., who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong."

By suppressing most of the first sentence, which explains that as in ancient times the Lord did not come himself nor send his messengers *in visible splendor*, our critics make the sentences appear to say that he did not come at all. And by further juggling it is made to appear that the Lord sent an angel instead of coming himself, and that it was the angel who told Joseph Smith that all the religious sects were wrong. Actually the statement "the Lord did not come" is promptly followed by the fuller specification ". . . *nor* sent His messenger," which our critics have carefully omitted, since that makes it perfectly clear that Brigham Young is denying neither class of heavenly manifestation, but simply stating that they did not happen *in a particular way*; for in the next sentence he goes on to specify that God "did send his angel to this same obscure person," and God (not "who"!)" informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects. . . ." God both instructed Joseph Smith and sent his angel—but he did not do either in visible splendor.

Next our discoverers (Continued on page 865)

in bringing again to the knowledge of man such vital information.

All who believe in God and delight in the search for truth should prayerfully read and study all that has come to light in these latter days concerning the mission of Christ so that the destructive influences of doubt and skepticism may be rooted out of their lives.

Censoring the Joseph Smith Story

(Continued from page 813)

quote a passage from Orson Hyde: "Some one may say 'If this work of the last days be true, *why did not the Savior come himself* and communicate this intelligence to the world?' *Because to the angels was committed the power of reaping the earth, and it was committed to none else.*" (JD, 6:355.)

Again they have pulled the same stunt, underlining the words that would make it appear that Jesus does not come at all, while what the author actually says is that he did not come "to the world," which is exactly the point that Brigham Young was making: Jesus Christ did not make a public appearance in glory; he did not personally circulate among men, but sent his angels for the reaping and the gathering. The preaching of the gospel and the reaping of the harvest, of which Brother Hyde is speaking, is one aspect of the work of this dispensation, under the direction of the angels; the visit of the Father and the Son is another and totally different aspect; there is no conflict whatever between the two great events, but Orson Hyde is speaking only of the preaching and the gathering, and what he says is perfectly correct.

Having with great fanfare fired off these two duds, the experts now bring their atomic cannon into play. The Great Discovery is a quotation from the *History of Joseph Smith* as published in the *Deseret News* of May 29, 1852:

"This afternoon, Erastus Holmes, of Newbury, Ohio, called on me to inquire about the establishment of the church, and to be instructed in doctrine more perfectly. I gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time I received the first visitation of angels,

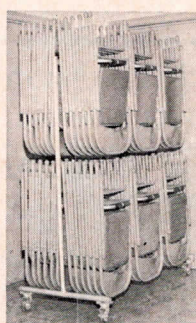


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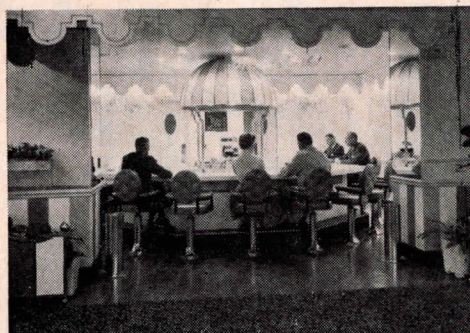
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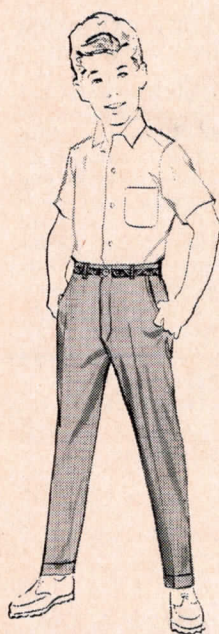
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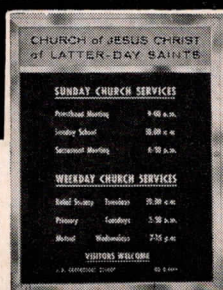
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which was when I was about *fourteen years old*; also the revelations that I received *afterwards* concerning the Book of Mormon, and a short account of the rise and progress of the church up to this date."

The discoverers of this passage have been at pains to underline the parts of it which make it clear that the Prophet is speaking of the first vision and nothing else. They have *not*, however, taken pains to point out that the date of this interview is Saturday, October 14, 1835—which makes a hash of the prevailing Party Line that Joseph Smith invented all his vision stories in Nauvoo some years later. This date of 1835 leads desperate contrivers to cry forgery, surmising that the date was slyly interpolated into the *Deseret News* account. But here we have an excellent control, for if the editors of the paper were free to invent stories and dates to suit their fancy, it is hardly conceivable that they would run the risk of a misunderstanding by using the ambiguous term "angels" when for many years it had been uniformly taught by the Church that the two visitors were the Father and the Son. The peculiarity of the language vouches for the authenticity of the story.

Nor have our searchers bothered to note that exactly one week previous to his interview with Holmes, Joseph Smith had another visitor, as reported in the *Deseret News* just two weeks before the above item appeared:

"I was this morning introduced to a man from the east. After hearing my name he remarked that I was nothing but a man, indicating by that expression, that he had supposed that a person to whom the Lord should see fit to reveal his will, must be something more than a man. . . . And indeed, such is the darkness and ignorance of this generation, that they look upon it as incredible that a man should have any intercourse with his Maker."⁸³

Since all Christians have always believed that a man can have intercourse with his Maker through prayer, meditation, or mystical experiences, it must have been something very different to which the Prophet and his visitor were alluding. As we have noted, Joseph Smith did not choose to discuss these matters; indeed, he told Erastus Holmes very briefly of his

"juvenile years . . . up to the time I received the first visitation of angels," resuming again with "the revelations that I received afterwards concerning the Book of Mormon. . . ." This could mean, and seems to imply, that he actually skipped the part about his first vision.

But to return to our shrewd discoverers. "This statement of Joseph Smith," they triumphantly announce, "refutes the teaching that the Father and the Son appeared to him in the first vision of 1820. . . ." Refutes it? Does he say that the Father and Son did *not* appear to him? That would be a refutation. Does he say who the angels were, or how many?

THE YOUNG PIANIST

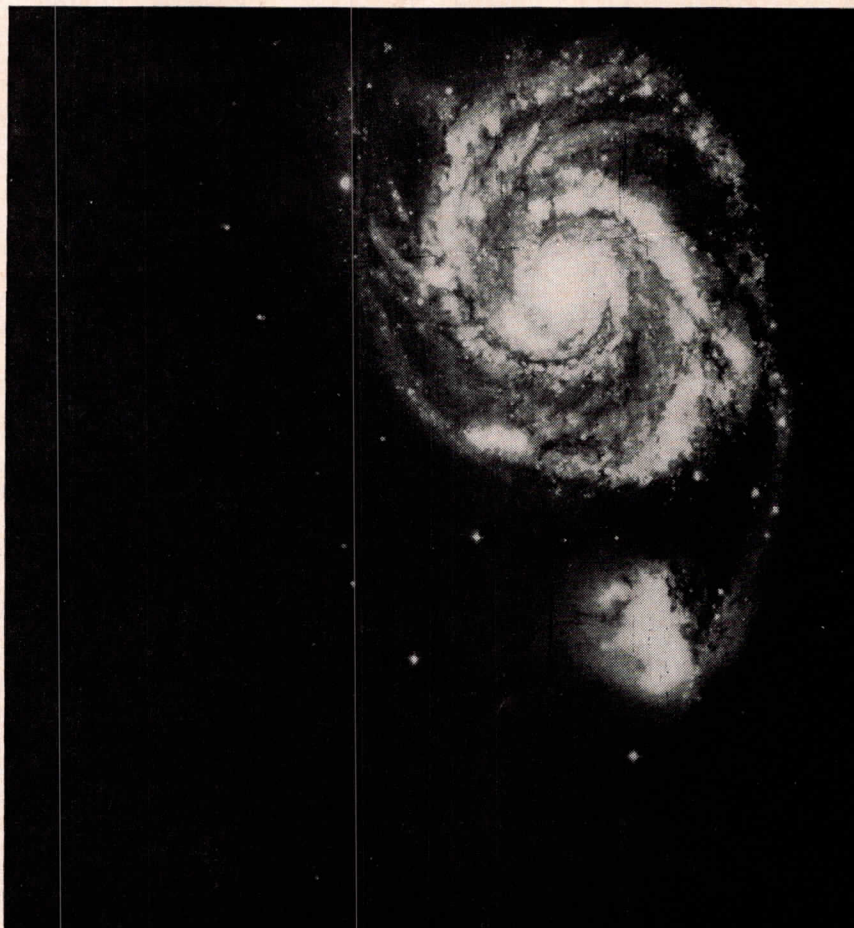
BY KAY CAMMER

*The inner beauty of a child
Is seen in every note she plays.
The music stored within her soul
Reflects in all the tender ways
She curls her fingers—moves her
head;
Time is forgotten—problems fled;
Pursued by sound the tension scatters—
She's lost in a world where music
matters.*

If our experts had taken the trouble to consult a good dictionary, they would have made another startling discovery, namely that an angel is "1. A ministering spirit or divine messenger. . . . 2. Any messenger of God, as a prophet, or preacher. . . . 3. A messenger generally. . . ." (Oxford Dictionary.) The word *angel* in English has "acquired a special meaning, particularly in the singular, as the designation of a supernatural bearer of a divine revelation. The transition was then easy to the sense of a generic name for the beings of the heavenly world. . . ." ⁸⁴ That is to say, *any* heavenly being is properly an angel. Messrs. Schaff and Herzog spare us the trouble of a long excursion into the *Patrologia* by admitting, though reluctantly, that it was "assumed by the Greek Fathers, the older Lutheran dogmatists, and Hengstenberg" that Jesus Christ, the Logos, was an angel, and that in the Bible "the distinction between the angel and Yahweh does not hinder from making



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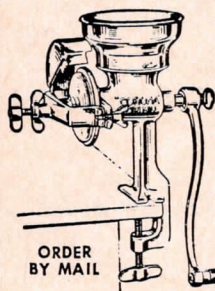
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the angel speak as Yahweh or from speaking of the angel as Yahweh," that is to say, Jehovah himself in his capacity of a messenger to men is an angel, just as, in the same capacity but in an evil sense, "Satan... is reckoned among the angels."⁸⁴ Even Elohim, when he visits the earth, has been called an angel.⁸⁵ Not to labor the point, it is perfectly correct usage to refer to *any* heavenly visitor as an angel. So when Joseph Smith, reviewing the past in "a brief relation" to a stranger, passes over the first vision as his "first visitation of angels" he is being both correct and evasive. Remember that this was some years before he was finally "induced" to come out with a public statement about the first vision; but all the time the story is there.

Since these articles began to appear in the Era, the writer has been drenched by a steady drizzle of letters from people who seem to make an avocation of searching for anything that might be interpreted as an inconsistency in the record. There is something comical in these laborious attempts to prove a negative and override living revelation by exploiting—while ignoring—the first principle of textual criticism. That principle (only too well known to the conscientious genealogist) is, that *no* written record of any length is free of serious errors. "The reader of a written document," the greatest living authority on documents has said, "never perceives more than a shadow of reality."

The sources of LDS church history, like all human chronicles, bristle with errors; the only way of approximating certitude is to check them against one another. If among a hundred fairly consistent reports of the first vision story three or four differ radically, that is simply to be expected; their existence does not discredit the consensus. And where such intimate and personal things as unique revelations to individuals are concerned it would be very strange indeed if wild aberrations and wide discrepancies did not appear in the reports. We know the policy of the early leaders regarding the reporting of revelations. A favorite theme of Brigham Young's was the tangible, personal nature of God, which he *never* illustrates by any mention of the first vision. Why not? He has explained at length:

... that man who cannot know things without telling any other living being upon the earth, who cannot keep his secrets and those that God reveals to him, never can receive the voice of his Lord. . . . Should you receive a vision of revelation from the Almighty . . . you should shut it up and seal it as close, and lock it as tight as heaven is to you, and make it as secret as the grave. The Lord has no confidence in those who reveal secrets, for he cannot safely reveal Himself to such persons. . . . If a person understands God . . . and the Lord reveals anything to that individual no matter what, unless he gives per-

FOR KATHY

BY ELEANOR ALLETTA CHAFFEE

*Why aren't you asleep?
You've had your warm milk,
Your story of castles,
The princess in silk.
Your toes have been counted,
Your songs have been sung;
Across snowy sheets
Your blanket is flung.
Why aren't you asleep?
Because like small birds
I wanted again
Your wonderful words, . . .*

mission to disclose it, it is locked up in eternal silence." (JD, 4:287f.)

The youthful and impulsive Joseph Smith was sometimes lax in this regard, and we all know how terribly he suffered for it in the case of the 116 pages. When he told a minister of the first vision, it only made trouble. Did he later deliberately disguise important revelations to keep them from the world? The code names occasionally used in the Doctrine and Covenants to designate persons and things show that (speaking by revelation) he did. If William Smith and Oliver Cowdery give confusing accounts of the first vision, we must remember that the Prophet knew from the first that those men were not to be trusted with too much information. The vanity and ambition of Cowdery were rebuked as early as 1829 (D&C 9), and George Albert Smith, Sr. commenting on "the conduct of William Smith in the days of Joseph and afterwards," describes it as a

campaign "to annihilate and destroy the principles which the Prophet taught to the nations of the earth." (JD 5:101f.) Were such men to be trusted with a full account of the first vision before it was officially given to the world?

Constantly beset by the designing and over-curious, Joseph Smith was often obliged to put his questioners off, just as the Lord himself did. Whether it was the sly schoolmen ever striving to catch him in a contradiction or his earnest disciples seeking to know the mysteries, Jesus would put them off, sometimes with a flat rebuke, sometimes with half-answers, but most often with words of hidden meaning: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" As a result, people were constantly puzzled and offended by what he taught them—his disciples wrangled, and the public rioted. The trouble was, as Brigham Young often points out, that Christ was speaking of the things of eternity to people wholly in thrall to the things of this world. It was utterly impossible to understand the Son without the spirit of revelation from the Father. Once one has that spirit, the truth of things is made clear no matter how deplorable the state of the documents may be; without it, all the "scholarship" in the world is of no avail to determine what really happened.

FOOTNOTES

⁷⁶Weekly Visitor, London, 1841, p. 61 (Hist. Off. 089.1 #3391).

⁷⁷J. A. Clark, *Gleanings by the Way* (Philadelphia: W. Simon, 1842), pp. 222ff.

⁷⁸Cit. *Missouri Intelligencer & Boone's Lick Advertiser*, April 13, 1833. (Hist. Off. 089.1 #10767.)

⁷⁹*Jeffersonian Republican*, Mo., Aug. 17, 1833, p. 8.

⁸⁰*Mo. Intell. & Boone's Lick Adv.*, Aug. 10, 1833.

⁸¹A. Majors, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁸²A mimeographed sheet circulated by Mr. & Mrs. Jerald Tanner, 319 No. 5th West, S.L.C.

⁸³*Deseret News*, Sat., May 15, 1852, Vol. II, No. 14.

⁸⁴Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, I, 174-6.

⁸⁵Ps. viii, 5. Most commentators interpret the Elohim of Gen. xxxii, 28-30 as "the angel."

We love peace, as we abhor pusillanimity; but not peace at any price. There is a peace more destructive of the manhood of living man war is destructive of his material body. Chains are worse than bayonets.

—Douglas Jerrold

Gold Ribbon Cook at Arizona State Fair gives you her winning recipe for Best Crescent Rolls

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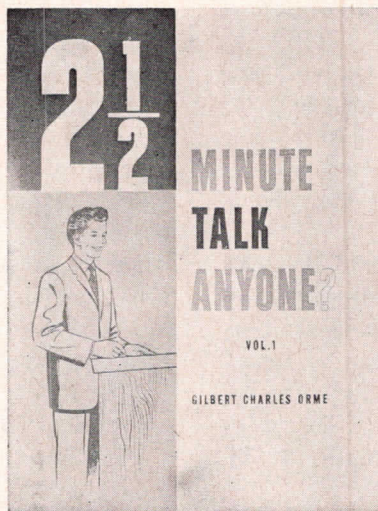
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup very warm water
1 package or cake Fleischmann's Yeast,
 active dry or compressed
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Planters Peanut Oil
3 cups sifted flour (about)

Scald milk; stir in sugar and salt; cool to lukewarm. Measure very warm water into large bowl. Sprinkle or crumble in Fleischmann's Yeast; stir to dissolve. Stir in lukewarm milk mixture, Planters Peanut Oil and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sifted flour; beat until smooth. Stir in remaining flour to make soft dough. Turn onto lightly floured board; knead until

smooth, about 8 minutes. Place in greased bowl; turn once to grease top. Cover; let rise in warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour. Punch dough down; divide in half. Roll each piece into 12-inch circle. Cut into 12 pie-shaped pieces. Roll up from rounded edge. Place on greased baking sheet, point underneath. Cover; let rise in warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes. Bake at 425° F. 12-15 minutes until golden brown. Brush with melted margarine.



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