

Le Grand Richards

“No. No changes have been made in any way.”

It should be apparent from the question that the writer had seen issues of the Millennial Star. On page 424 of Vol. 1 is an account of “the first visitation of angels” which seems to put some doubt on the story of the vision of Joseph Smith Jr. In the History of the Church the words are changed to read, “My first vision.” The Millennial Star indicated that Joseph Smith drank beer. This was reprinted in the History of the Church with the words, “drank a glass of beer at Mossers,” deleted. A bishop instructing the L.D.S. Institute at Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho, admitted the deletion but justified it on the grounds that “It would be pretty hard to explain to a twelve or fourteen year old.” Of course, the recent publication of Juanita Brook’s book, On The Mormon Frontier, the Diary of Hosea Stout, conclusively proves that the Word of Wisdom meant nothing to the leaders of the church with such direct quotes as, “And we went to L. Schussler’s Brewery and got what beer we wanted to drink, after which we marched back to the quarters.” (p 33, Vol. 1) “I went. We had a most agreeable entertainment and had a very agreeable supper well served up, plenty of wine, beer, and other good drinks.” (p 55, Vol. 1) “Danced and drank whiskey at Military Ball while detached there by Brigham Young.” (p 292, Vol. 1) “The whiskey which we had brought along as well as everything else was given over to the order of the president, who treated us when we came in. It came welcome to the pioneers.” (p 284, Vol. 2)

My search for the facts concerning whether the History of the Church had been changed led me to a book published by Jerald and Sandra Tanner entitled Changes in Joseph Smith History, where they present a documented claim that more than 62,000 words have been added or deleted from the original history.

As the correspondance progressed, I asked Hugh B. Brown, Dr. Hugh Nibley, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Le Grand Richards, “Is the Adam God Doctrine as taught in the Journal of Discourses true?” Their answers were as follow:

Hugh B. Brown:

“The Adam-God doctrine is not the doctrine of the Church, and reports on that subject as published in the Journal of Discourses are not accurate.”

Hugh Nibley:

“3. ‘The Adam-God Doctrine’ is not a doctrine but a brief peek at an unexplored world.”

Joseph Fielding Smith:

“The doctrine concerning Adam has been distorted.”

Le Grand Richards:

“Answer: No. The First Presidency of the Church have answered this several times in the Deseret News and otherwise.”

Such answers raise more questions: Why does the Zion Book Store still sell the Journal of Discourses with the statement by Brigham Young on page 50 of Vol.1, “Adam is our God, our only God, the only one with whom we have to do?” Why did the Deseret Book Store advertise this book in recent years as “The Voice of the Prophets,” “Containing distinctive L.D.S. doctrines and the unmistakable mark of divine inspiration?” (Salt Lake Tribune, Sunday, March 31, 1963, p 16A) Was Brigham Young a prophet? Did he have authority? Did he speak by divine Inspiration?

My fourth question was: “Is the Atonement of one’s own blood necessary for salvation if certain sins are committed?” To this question Hugh B. Brown, Hugh Nibley, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Le Grand Richards made the following remarks:

Hugh B. Brown:

“There is no doctrine of the church requiring the shedding of blood for salvation where certain sins have been committed.” “We have been accused of such doctrine, but it is not true.”

Joseph Fielding Smith:

“Yes. The Law of the Lord has been from the beginning that if a man committed murder, he was to pay the penalty by the shedding of his own blood. This is a divine Law.”

Hugh Nibley:

“4. Certain sins can only be atoned by the shedding of blood, as the Scriptures tell us. They also tell us that it does NOT have to be one’s own blood, since God has provided a substitute in His Son.”

Le Grand Richards

“Fourth: ‘Is the atonement of one’s own blood necessary for salvation if certain sins are committed?’ Answer: The Scriptures indicate that if one kills with the sword that he will die with the sword, and I think that is the reason some states have introduced the principle of capital punishment. But, the church, of course, has never exercised any jurisdiction to take a person’s life. The only thing the Church can do for a sinner is to excommunicate him from the Church. So whatever a man has to do to atone for committing murder, he will have to settle with his Heavenly Father.”