

QUESTION TIME

VOLUME 1

QUESTION TIME

VOLUME 2

A collection of often-asked
questions and answers from the

Saints' Herald

Well indexed for ready use

Reorganized CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

of Latter Day Saints

HERALD HOUSE

1967

The legend concerning Adam grew out of some remarks attributed to Joseph Smith, Jr. The Utah church has made much of this. The Reorganization has not taken the legend seriously, whatever the basis of the remarks attributed to Joseph Smith. The name is mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants but only representative of a condition rather than an American location.

We have many things in North America, and an ancient history much deeper than many know, but I doubt if the Garden of Eden can be placed on this continent. This strains any interpretation of the facts.

Rigdon was correctly quoted in his speech with reference to the word "extermination." This may have been in Governor Boggs's mind when he issued his infamous "Extermination Order." In the light of history Rigdon's remark was unfortunate and undoubtedly inflammatory.

Judging by pictures available, the characterization of Rigdon was not too accurate in my opinion. He had more dignity than appeared in the film. Probably the purpose was to convey the idea of his not being the prime figure in the church. The main thing to keep in mind is that the film was intended to show the courage of General Doniphan. In doing this the producer dealt kindly with the Latter Day Saint pioneers and this was well done even if unusual.

160. Manuscript History by John Whittmer

QUESTION

Is there in existence a manuscript history by John Whittmer? I have been told that John Whittmer's history printed in the "Journal of History" (RLDS) is not a faithful copy. Would you state the facts?

ANSWER

Yes, there is a manuscript copy of a writing by John Whittmer. It is in the possession of the Reorganized Church. It came to us with other material (the Book of Mormon manuscript and some original transcriptions of early revelations to the church) from the family of David Whittmer in 1903. It consists of ninety-six pages of lined foolscap written in ink.

Concerning the second part of your question, it is important to state that nineteen chapters out of twenty-two were printed in the *Journal of History*, 1908, edited by Heman C. Smith, church historian at the time. It is unfortunate that the publication of this work did not contain an explanatory note as to why chapters 20-22 were not

printed. The facts are as follows: John Whittmer was appointed by revelation in March, 1831, to be church historian and served the church until he was disfellowshipped in 1838. He served with distinction in several fields of ministry, including membership on the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants committee, as editor of the *Messenger and Advocate*, and as assistant president of a Missouri High Council, as well as commencing to write church history.

When leaving the church, he took with him the writings he had made. On page eighty-five of the manuscript he states, "Therefore I close the history of the Church of Latter Day Saints," and then after a few lines of request that his faults may be forgiven, pens three final words, "Farewell, March 1838." It is obvious that this was intended to be the conclusion, and the editor of the *Journal of History* so interpreted it and finished the printing there.

The supplementary chapters (20, 21, 22) were written in different ink and include items of which John Whittmer was not a witness. In commenting on some of the problems of Nauvoo (he did not reside there) he says, "According to the best information I could get," etc. This approach, coupled with the fact that the last three chapters were an afterthought and were written much later than his official connection as historian, raises the question of their accuracy.

It may be said that the accuracy of any dating could be doubtful. The manuscript appears to have been prepared after 1835, as reference is made to page numbers in the 1835 edition of Doctrine and Covenants. It contains statements in parentheses, such as (insert revelation here). This would indicate a preparation for printing from notes or diary after 1835 but before 1838. The last three chapters were very probably much later than this.

At least when the supplementary chapters were written, Whittmer was suffering (rightly or wrongly) from a sense of injustice.

161. Oliver Cowdery

QUESTION

Did Oliver Cowdery join the Mormon church shortly before he died?

ANSWER

In a letter published in the *Millennial Star* of January 1, 1849, George A. Smith states that Oliver Cowdery visited Council Bluffs with his family and was invited to address a gathering of the Saints