

## Letter to the Editor

I think *Dialogue* readers might be interested in a recent change at the Church History Building. I was shepherding a group of Young Men from our ward at a youth conference on Temple Square. Several hundred teenagers were present from many wards to participate in a full-day's schedule of events, involving many of the different buildings in the area. We got to a lecture area at the Church History Building, where a professional historian with a doctor's degree discussed with us the story of the translation of the Book of Mormon. On a table was a large white stovepipe hat made out of "bleached beaverskin hair." He began by showing slides of some of the paintings used in the past to illustrate how the translation occurred. He then asked what was wrong with each painting. The first showed Joseph Smith poring over the gold plates. He explained that the plates were not used in the translation. Next he showed a picture of the breastplate and urim and thummim and another of a seer stone, and asked what was wrong with that. Then he called for two volunteers. One sat by the hat, and slowly read a couple of verses from the Book of Mormon that had been placed at the bottom of the hat. The other sat across the table and carefully wrote down what the first volunteer read. "Oliver" then read back what "Joseph" had slowly dictated. The historian then explained that we needed to update in our minds how the translation really took place.

We went from there to the Museum of Church History and Art and saw a film of the First Vision. The narrator explained that there were nine different accounts, by Joseph and others, of what had happened, and stated that the account in the Pearl of Great Price contained elements from several of the different accounts.

Large groups of teenagers meet every few days for youth conferences on Temple Square all summer long. I am impressed that the Church is now making an effort to clarify some of the foundational events of Mormonism and present them in a more accurate format.

Incidentally, I started subscribing to *Dialogue* with the very first issue, and devoured it and every single issue that has followed. Thanks for a lifetime of stimulating, informed writing on all things Mormon. I'm very grateful and impressed!

—Reed Wahlquist