

Knowing Brother Joseph Again: Perceptions and Perspectives

Davis Bitton



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"We live in an age of relativism. What is beautiful for one is not for another, what is good and moral for one is not for another, and what is true for one is not for another. Such an attitude, widespread in the world, condemns those who testify of truth....

"I shudder at the thought that my presentation here will lead to such soft relativism. I do not think that everything is up for grabs, with each person's opinion being equally valid. Just as Jesus was either the Savior and Redeemer of the world or he was not, so Joseph Smith was either a true, authorized prophet of God or he was not. In recounting his visions, either he spoke the truth or he did not.

"Yet the fact remains that different people saw him in different ways. Even his followers emphasized different facets at different times. All human beings are complex and resist the reductionism that would dismiss them with a single adjective or noun. People like Joseph Smith are rich and complex. . . . Different people saw him differently or focused on a different facet of his personality at different times. Inescapably, what they observed or found out about him was refracted through the lens of their own experience. Some of the different, flickering, not always compatible views are the subject of this book." —Davis Bitton

Davis Bitton's life was cut short before he could finish revisions on this collection of insightful essays about Joseph Smith, a prophet whom he also considers a hero in both classical terms and in the context of nineteenth-century America. Knowing Brother Joseph Again explores images of Joseph Smith from both the devotion of believers and the hostility and skepticism of opponents.

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