

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH SMITH.

On July 1st of the present year the NEWS published, in a correspondence from Elder Samuel G. Spencer, a series of questions and answers which made up an interview between Elder Spencer and others and Mr. Joseph Smith, president of the Reorganized church. The interview took place in March, at Independence, Missouri, in Mr. Luff's house, Elder Spencer and the other missionaries having been in attendance at a conference of the Latter-day Saints held at Independence. About the 15th of July the editor of the NEWS received the following:

LAMONI, Iowa, July 9, 1896.
Publishers Deseret News, Salt Lake City, Utah:

Gentlemen—In your issue of July 1st, you have chosen to publish Elder S. G. Spencer's report of an interview with me at Independence, Mo., March 18th, 1896.

The heading is misleading, as it implies that the questions asked by Mr. Spencer were submitted to me, being written and I replied to them in a similar way.

No questions were submitted to me nor did I know that they were in written form; nor did I either write answers, or have any of the answers submitted to me after they were written. Mr. Spencer has misrepresented me in several of the answers; and as Mr. Spencer wrote you that his object in sending his version for publication was that all might "judge for themselves," I ask you for the same purpose to publish my version.

I wrote J. M. Stubbart, one of our Elders, in regard to it, and send a copy of what I wrote him.

I am in no sense afraid of the answers I did make to Mr. Spencer's questions, as I made them, nor of the logical consequences of them; but, I regret that men who came to me in ostensible kindness, and were courteously treated, should have misrepresented me, even in the slightest.

Please publish this letter and my version of that interview and oblige,

Yours respectfully,

JOSEPH SMITH.

P. S. Mr. Spencer has taken advantage of what he stated to me was for personal information, and published without my consent.

Accompanying this was the letter referred to as sent to Mr. Stubbart, the first paragraph of which reads:

Yours of the 15th received. In reply: Messrs. S. G. Spencer, E. S. Hart, A. G. Young and W. E. Criddle were at Brother Joseph Luff's house, and Mr. Spencer did the talking. He asked me several questions, the form of which I do not remember. If he had them written I did not see them; but he certainly has not given the answers as I gave them. He had asked me for an interview, and I granted it. He brought the others with him at his own motion, and without consulting me. I had no thought he would misrepresent me. If he had the questions numbered and set down, I did not see them; nor were his minutes of what I said submitted to me for correction. I hoped he, nor either of them, would go away and lie about me.

Then follows a series of questions and answers, which Mr. Smith claims to be his recollection of what the conversation was. The letter closes with these words:

Those men are not at liberty to use, or misuse an interview with me, which Mr. Spencer said was for their own private benefit. Besides this, the folders are

not bound by any absurd answer of mine to baffling questions contrary to the books of the Church. Yours in bonds.

Then is appended the following note:

The above is a reply of mine to Brother J. M. Stubbart, who sent me a copy of a list of questions said to have been used by Elder W. E. Criddle of Utah. As I never saw the written questions, nor yet the answers which they have given, in writing, for examination and indorsement, I am not bound by them either.

The NEWS forwarded Mr. Smith's letter and account of the interview to Elder Spencer, with the request that we present them to the Elders present on the occasion of the interview, and return them with a brief statement of the facts. As the Elders were separated in their different fields of labor, this required some time. The NEWS editor also wrote to Mr. Smith, informing him that before the interview was published it had been verified by this paper; telling him of the reference of the complaint to Elder Spencer and his associate, and assuring him that the NEWS had no intention of treating him either unfairly or harshly. The following came in response:

LAMONI, Iowa, July 25th, 1896.
Mr. John Q. Cannon, Salt Lake City, Utah:

Dear Sir:—Yours of July 20th at hand. I do not wish to be too intrusive, but the fact that the "Interview" published by you, and which is being circulated by the eldership under S. G. Spencer, does misrepresent me, I must request to be set right.

A proper verification of that interview, would have required that Elder Joseph Luff and myself should have been permitted to see the answers, and the questions as well, before it was published. The statement that the answers were written "in the presence of all," is misleading, as it carries the idea that all, including Elder Luff and myself, knew what was written; which is not correct. Hoping for fair dealing, I am yours respectfully,

JOSEPH SMITH.

Elder Spencer and companions also forwarded to the NEWS this statement:

KANSAS CITY, Mo., July 24, 1896.
To the Editor:

Dear Sir:—Yours of the 20th at hand and contents noted; and manuscript of Mr. Joseph Smith, stating his version of interview, carefully perused.

The accusations and explanations made and endeavored by Mr. Smith are indeed very unbecoming his ecclesiastical claims. We see no reason why he seeks to deny the true answers as they have already been published. He states that we had the interview for our "own private benefit."

Why should he be afraid of the world's knowing what he admitted to us in "private?"

Since receiving your letter I have handed my journal, in which the interview is written, to Elder Eugene S. Hart, who carefully examined the same as I read your publication of it in the NEWS; and there is no difference whatsoever that will change the meaning thereof. This was read in the presence of Elders C. Burton Jr. and W. F. Butt.

We are willing under oath to affirm that the questions (excepting one asked by Elder Hart and others before going to Mr. Luff's residence; that Mr. Joseph Smith did know that the answers were written, as Elder Spencer held his jour-

nal on his knees, his fountain pen in hand, and some of the answers were read to him after they were written; especially when it was one of which he seemingly tried to evade a direct answer, we asking, "Is that the answer you wish to give?" (repeating answer). We distinctly remember the answer as to whether it was possible that the voice was of a seducing spirit, etc., being one among those that were read to him.

We declare in words of soberness, knowing full well that no "liar" shall inherit the kingdom of God, that the answers are complete to the questions asked in said interview, entirely free from any misleading feature.

And, no matter how Mr. Smith may scramble together fragments of reminiscences of the interview, he cannot succeed in denying the answers he gave us on that occasion, and we fail to see why he should attempt it. The same afternoon of the interview, the questions and answers were read at the mission office, Kansas City, Mo., to other Elders, in the presence of those who witnessed the interview.

(Signed) SAMUEL G. SPENCER,
EUGENE S. HART,
ARCHIBALD G. YOUNG,
W. E. CRIDDLE.

We might leave the matter here, content to let every fairminded discriminating person judge as to the points at issue in the controversy; but Mr. Smith seems to press for more and we will add a few words by way of review and comment. When the interview was first offered to the NEWS for publication, it was sent, not by Elder Spencer, but by one of the other signers to the last document given. Knowing that Mr. Smith, who has many estimable qualities and for whom we have a high regard, especially because of his family associations, as well as for other reasons, had an unfortunate penchant for juggling and twisting words and facts, after the fashion of some lawyers, we asked a verification of the interview, receiving the letter signed by Elder Spencer, which recited how the questions were formulated and the answers taken down, and contained an identical report of the interview, taken from Elder Spencer's journal. This we published in the NEWS of July 1st.

Now as to Mr. Smith's accusation against the NEWS, in his first letter; for the NEWS put the heading to the article. He says the heading is misleading, as it implied that the questions were submitted to him in writing, and replied to by him in similar way. The heading read: "Interview with Joseph Smith. Questions submitted to and answered by him." There is not the shadow of an intimation that either questions or answers were written or were not. So whether they were or were not written, Mr. Smith's accusation that the heading is misleading is untrue; it being an illustration of the word jugglery and distortion to which we have referred.

In his letter to the NEWS Mr. Smith says:

No questions were submitted to me.

In his letter to Mr. Stubbart he says of the interview with Mr. Spencer:

He asked me several questions, the form of which I do not remember.

Now the fact whether or not questions are submitted has no dependence whatever upon the other fact as to