

Dispersing the Darkness: *Joseph Smith and His First Vision*

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Two hundred years before the tumultuous events of 2020, darkness was dispersed by the “glorious light of the Restoration,”¹ which commenced with Joseph Smith’s First Vision. To celebrate the bicentennial of this historic theophany, the Church History Symposium (CHS) committee planned the 2020 symposium’s theme to “highlight various aspects” of Joseph’s vision so that “all . . . could experience . . . spiritual conviction [for] and intellectual enlightenment about [his vision].”²

In accordance with the symposium’s theme, Alexander L. Baugh, Steven C. Harper, Brent M. Rogers, and Benjamin C. Pykles—CHS committee members and successful gospel scholars—compiled fourteen enlightening essays in *Joseph Smith and His First Vision: Context, Place, and Meaning*. Taken from myriad presentations, including those given at the 2020 symposium, these essays analyze a variety of topics relating broadly and narrowly to the First Vision.

Essays from the symposium’s keynote speakers—Richard Lyman Bushman, Sheri L. Dew, and President Dallin H. Oaks—detail Joseph’s prophetic mission, his loneliness, and his legal cases, respectively, in the book’s first section.

In the next section, a few contributors consider the vision’s context by discussing the religious excitement prevalent during the Second Great Awakening.

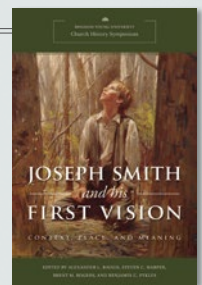
A contributor in the book’s third section examines the place of the First Vision by investigating the history of the Sacred Grove and its preservation.

In the final section of the book, contributors give additional meaning to the vision by studying topics ranging from the powers of darkness that assailed Joseph to his vision’s many cinematic depictions.

Just as the promise Joseph received from James 1:5 was “like a light shining forth in a dark place,”³ guiding him to the Restoration of the gospel, each of this book’s contributors sheds a light on various aspects of the First Vision—aspects that will illuminate our minds and hearts and help us to lift the darkness spread in 2020. ✂

Notes

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Closing Remarks,” *Ensign*, November 2019, 122.
2. Alexander L. Baugh et al., eds., *Joseph Smith and His First Vision: Context, Place, and Meaning* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2021), vi–vii.
3. Appendix: Orson Pratt, *A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions*, 1840, p. 4, josephsmithpapers.org.



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