

Mormon History

Fireside Talk Delivered by Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

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I want to thank Tony¹ for the opportunity to get together and do this. Tony and I were talking and I said there's something I want to talk about and he suggested this, and I was glad to respond. I wish all Mormons (Latter-day Saints and otherwise), I wish all Mormons were Tony. He is a man of convictions, but a man with a broad mind. He's reflective, he's contemplative and he's tolerant. If all men were like Tony Gilbert, we would have a lot fewer problems between all of ourselves. It's just the right kind of attitude that I see in him continuously.

I want to talk about Mormon History. I want to redefine some terms in order to get the problem of Mormon history into a position that you can understand some concepts. I'm going to use terms but I'm going to define the terms so you understand how I'm using them.

I'm not talking about any anti-Mormons. All of the stuff that the anti-Mormons have written is in a different category. If you go back to the very beginning and the first anti-Mormon stuff, Philastus Hurlbut was gathering a bunch of affidavits together to try and discredit Joseph Smith. His [Hurlbut's] works and his affidavits got gathered together by E.D. Howe and published in an early anti-Mormon book, first one *Mormonism Unveiled*. Ezra Booth wrote a series of nine letters. He was actually a member of the Church. He was one of those who in June of 1831 was among the first 23 who got ordained to the high priesthood in Kirtland. And then he turned on Joseph and he wrote a series of nine letters that were blasting him. It does not appear that what Ezra Booth did in his letters was intended to lie. He thought the truth as he understood it, he thought the truth was bad enough that if you just said what he saw, what he heard, and what he thought that that would be enough to undermine confidence in Joseph Smith. The problem is that his attitude was viral.

If you are trying to evaluate what Joseph Smith was saying and doing, you have to say, what was Joseph Smith meaning? For the interpretation of what Joseph Smith was meaning you don't get to stand back at arm's length and say, "I impute this." "I take what you're doing to mean this..." "I want to color what you have to say by this." You have to say, "None of my attitude or my disposition matters one iota. Joseph, tell us what you mean. Joseph, explain yourself. Joseph, account for your sayings. Joseph, what do you mean by that?"

You can't stand back and say, "Joseph, you said **this** here, and you said **that** there, and those two are irreconcilable. Therefore, Joseph, you are a liar!" You have to say, "Joseph, you said this here, and you said this there. What do you mean by that?" And let him explain it. Because if all you're going to do is to throw rocks you can say, "On Tuesday you said the sun was shining! And on Wednesday you said it was raining. It can't be both sunshine and rain!"

¹ Tony Gilbert

You're a liar." That's the problem with a great deal of the anti-Mormon stuff. If you're going to look at the anti-Mormon source material what you have to do is to say, I'm going to take their coloring. I'm going to take their bias, and I'm going to try and wade through that to find out what was really going on in the process.

But I'm not going to talk about those people today. I want to talk about people who believe. People whose religion is Mormonism. People who, despite radically different viewpoints view their religion as the religion of Mormonism, who accept the Book of Mormon as true, who believe that Joseph Smith was, in fact, a prophet. Because if you say, only look at those people you still have enormous conflict and enormous disagreement. I want to account for that. I want to try and get my hands around that so that maybe we can all take one step back from Mormon history and say, okay, now I get why we have such a tumult of opinion and strife and contentions among ourselves.

I want to define the term "apologists" as those people who have written the story that we all have accepted as the orthodox story that gave rise to and accounts for the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That includes, most notably, B.H. Roberts. B.H. Roberts was involved in the gathering of the *Documentary History of the Church*. He is the one who wrote the serialized *Comprehensive History of the Church*. He wrote the *Comprehensive History of the Church* as a series of magazine articles that got published in the East. Then they got gathered together and published in the seven volumes of the *Comprehensive History*. He's one of the folks that is primarily responsible for the apologetic history.

When I was baptized into the LDS Church I was handed a book that was written by William Berrett. I don't know how many of you remember William Berrett, but he wrote a book in one volume called *The Restored Church*. It was one of those glossy paged things with color photos in it. I read it cover to cover as the first introduction. It was used in the Seminary and Institute programs. I checked; you can still find it on Amazon if you're looking for one. After reading Berrett's *Restored Church* I bought and I read B.H. Robert's *Comprehensive History*. I bought and I read *The Documentary History of the Church*. I did that in the first year.

Joseph Fielding Smith wrote a book called, *Essentials in Church History*. George Q. Cannon wrote, *The Life of Joseph Smith*. There are a series of others who are part of what I'm going to define as the apologists, including John A. Widtsoe, Glen Leonard, Thomas Alexander. Organizations sprung up to try and support the apologetic view of the Church and that includes FARMS and it now includes FAIR. As part of FAIR it includes the *Mormon Interpreter*. If you want to know what I'm defining as "apologists", it's that group of people and the narrative and the story that they want to tell.

I'm going to define another term. These are people that I'm calling the "anti-apologists". This includes people that are very friendly and very widely accepted, like Richard Bushman

². It would include D. Michael Quinn³. It would include Juanita Brooks⁴, Gregory Prince⁵, Mark Staker⁶, and Terryl Givens⁷. What I'm referring to as anti-apologists are people who are accepting of the history of Mormonism but who are saying that the apologists are not complete. They're not trying to pick a fight with or undermine the Church. What they're trying to do is to say that the story that has been told by these people are not complete enough so that we want to tell a different – and we believe more complete – story.

These people do have motives. For example, Richard Bushman. He was the Columbia University History Chair. His intellectual ability to defend Mormonism to other historical critics provoked him into saying, "We can do a better job and we can be more fair." What he was trying to do was give full disclosure.

In the case of D. Michael Quinn, he still defines himself as a Mormon. He's no longer a member of the Church but if you ask him what his religion is, it's Mormonism. In some cases I believe that Michael Quinn's motivation was he was hurting. He learned things. He felt bad about what he learned. He felt cheated or robbed, and he was lashing out to try and say, "Yes, but..." He was venting on the Church. You have to realize that after D. Michael Quinn's work was done there isn't a single historical writer of Mormonism, Rex Bushman or the late apologists that I've mentioned, that don't go to Michael Quinn and the source material that Michael Quinn uncovered, because he worked in the LDS Church History Library. He had access to diaries and journals. He made copies of original source material that would not otherwise be available for anyone to see. When he finished with some of the work that he was doing he donated that material to Yale University Library so that it wouldn't be lost. Someone went back to Yale University Library and took copies of the material that was back there, typeset it, and rolled out some limited edition books that made available, for the very first time, a bunch of diaries that Michael Quinn had read, and a bunch of journals and a bunch of other source material that had not been previously available.

At the same time that these people are doing their work, there were sources for Church history, Mormon history, that were not previously available, such as *The Joseph Smith Papers* that have been coming out recently. Probably every one of you here own, if not all of them, some of them. A work was done to go back and to find all of the discourses that were ever given by Brigham Young. You can take the *Discourses of Brigham Young* that were drawn out of the *Journal of Discourses* and you can hold it in one book. It is standard book size. It has large print. That's the complete discourses of Brigham Young, until Richard Van Wagoner went out and searched for and found source material. In fairness there were

² *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism, Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction, Rough Stone Rolling*, etc.

³ *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, Mormon Hierarchy, Extensions of Power*, etc.

⁴ *Mountain Meadows Massacre*

⁵ *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*

⁶ *Hearken O Ye People*

⁷ *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion, When Souls Had Wings*, etc

some shorthand transcriptions of Brigham Young's talks that had never been translated from shorthand into English that took a big project to get that done. The *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* is now a five volume set. They are very large volumes. They are oversize books. They are small print. They are double column. There are 3,260 pages of small print. Someone had gone to the trouble of trying to find all of what Brigham Young had said. They had searched for and they got into one set, 1,100 entries of Brigham Young addresses. This five volume set that became available in 1999 has 4,400 entries, many of which have not been seen previously. If you're trying to understand who Brigham Young was, and you've read anything that was written before 1999, you're only looking at a tiny fraction of what is now available to understand or see what Brigham Young was all about.

This was a set of books that no one thought would be commercial. Only 350 copies of it were ever made. It was intended that libraries buy them – Yale University, Brigham Young University, University of Chicago, California – big libraries, people that were interested in theology or history. I bought a set when it first came out. They're still around but they're really quite expensive if you're going to find one now.

There was an effort made to gather together and put into typeset the Wilford Woodruff journals. That is a ten volume set, and that ten volume set has been out of print for over 25 years, but they're still out there. They were put into print and you can find them still if you're willing to be patient and you're willing to spend enough money to get a copy. The Wilford Woodruff journal is one of the primary sources from which all of the historians drew and reached the conclusions that they reached.

The *Times and Seasons* were put into print. They are a seven volume set. All of the newspapers throughout the entire period of the publication, from 1840 to 1847, are in the *Times and Seasons* print edition.

I approached Mormon History like it mattered. I thought that what the religion was based upon at its final analysis, was a revelation by Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith, and that Joseph Smith, called as he was by God to do a work – and I still believe this – had some very important things to contribute. As I went through all of the works of the apologists and I ran out of anything they had to say, and then I looked at the work of the anti-apologists, one of the things that occurred to me as I read the anti-apologists was that they not only succeeded in persuading me that what the apologists had done was incomplete and in some instances unfair, but they aroused in me the suspicion that these guys were probably incomplete equally and unfair perhaps more so, because some of them were smarting from the sting of having realized that stories that had been told and retold were really nothing more than fiction. If the religion matters then the truth of the religion matters all the more. After getting through all of those what occurred to me was it's really necessary to go back and look at the original material and to look at what the sources are. I don't expect people to do this and I don't expect people who don't have an interest in it to ever take the trouble of even finding these things. But I care about it and I'm interested in it, and I wanted to try to get to the bottom of it.

One of the fascinating things about the history is that all of these people tell the history like there's a plot line. There's a story to what's going on. They tell the story like: I'm leaving this house and I'm headed triumphantly out to the Interstate. With angels accompanying me I will go down south on Interstate 15 and, inspired by God, I will turn at 106th and I will head eastward towards the rising sun, towards Jerusalem, yea in the direction the Lord Himself shall one day return, until I arrive safely and happily at my destination. And they tell that story and we have a lot of confidence in that story. But when you read the journals of the people who lived the history what you realize is that when they left here they were headed to Brigham City, and they ran into a bunch of orange barrels. Swearing impatiently they took a southern route because they never imagined that they were going to have to head to the south. Then, through a series of happenstances and collisions and car trouble and flat tires and a search on your iPhone that locates the nearest place that will tow you to replace your flat tire, you exit at 106th. Then, through a series of pathetic acts of charity, someone houses me on the east side of Sandy, bruised and beaten, exhausted, and with my car in the shop. And that's a very different story. When you read the journals what you realize is that these people's understanding of what was going to happen and what was underway is just like that. They don't have a clue. They lived their life like you live your life. You have your hopes, you have your desires, you have your fears, you have your uncertainties. Sometime you tailor your hopes to reflect the sad realities of what's going on, and then you adjust, and you adjust, and you adjust.

I got to the point where I'm reading all of the contemporaneous events. I got to the point I was reading the diaries and the journals. Because I have read all of what the apologists have to say, and all of the anti-apologists reply an expansion on that, I can read the diaries and the journals and fit them into a story that is already out there.

When I read the secretary to the First Presidency's minutes about the meetings where they're struggling over trying to get statehood and they're grappling with the opposition that they're getting in Congress and the federal court system over the practice of plural marriage, I already know what the story is going to turn out like. What's new and interesting and vibrant is how they're reacting as these events are underway, and what their intentions are. How they hoped it would turn out otherwise. What they planned and schemed and agreed and conspired to lie about in order to try and trick the government into allowing us to become a state so that on the other side of statehood, knowing that family law is a state law issue and not a federal law issue (boy, did that change recently), they would be able to do whatever they wanted to do in the structure of family life and there's not a thing that the federal government could do about it. But the federal government perceived that they were lying about it, and so they made adjustments in the constitution for the state of Utah, and so everything folds out the way that it folds out.

Given the fact that everyone whose writing has an agenda, the question that occurred to me is, if I'm going to try and understand history of the restoration and God's involvement in us, how do you find the framework from which to reconstruct what God did? Not what men wanted or men hoped for. Not what men were thinking at the time. Not what men took advantage of because of opportunities that presented themselves. The question is, in my

way of thinking, what was God up to? Did God have a plan and if so, where might that plan be found?

As it turns out, not only is the Book of Mormon filled with commentary about what was going to happen at the time the Book of Mormon rolled forth but the prophecies of Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants likewise contain an entire library of material saying, this is what God says he would do if, but then, if not, this is what God would do. And so, no matter how much I may have wished for it to turn out otherwise, no matter how much I may be rooting for a different story, the question that I posed to myself was: If these prophecies mean what they say, what then does the Mormon history look like? Because it's going to have a whole lot more faith than what the anti-apologists give to it, but it's not going to be as pleasant, as flattering, or as self confident as what the apologists are going to say it looks like. In an effort to try and put it together in a way that made sense and harmonized – not with what men wanted or hoped or what they wanted to kick around but what the prophecies say would be happening in the last days, including what Christ himself said to the Nephites in the 16th chapter of Third Nephi. It turns out you can write a new history of what has happened with the restoration in Mormon history and you can reach conclusions that will fly in the face of what the apologists and the anti-apologists say. It is, in my view, just as faith promoting, just as glorious, just as triumphant, as the greatest story spun by the apologists, but it has a completely different look and feel.

If you're going to jump into Mormon history one of the things that frustrates me to no end are the many people who claim to be faithful believing Latter-day Saints, who accept Joseph Smith as the prophet of the restoration, but believe that Joseph Smith is a liar, who believe that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who believe that Joseph Smith said one thing in public and another thing in private, and believe that a prophet of god can do that and can get away with that.

In April of 1838, the high council at Far West held a trial in which Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated. Nine charges were brought against him, seven of them were sustained. One of the charges brought against Oliver Cowdery was that he was defaming the prophet Joseph Smith by accusing him of committing adultery. Joseph Smith testified in court. He was examined on the issue. Oliver Cowdery was questioned by Joseph Smith in the Church court and Oliver Cowdery backed off of those charges during the trial. One of the reasons why Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the Church was because it was found that he lied about the prophet Joseph Smith. This is in April.

A series of crises were underway and a lot of the Church leaders were losing their fidelity to Joseph and their willingness to participate in the Church. A series of excommunications took place including the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Church historian. The Church historian was John Whitmer, brother of David Whitmer, who himself was one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, his brother one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He had been given the commission to write the history of the Church and he had been writing it since 1831, but he

left after he was excommunicated and he took the history with him. When he took the history with him, Joseph Smith began the process of rebuilding the history of the Church.

The history of the Church written in 1838 was written by Joseph in an attempt to make up for what had been stolen from the Church by its historian, John Whitmer.

I want you to listen to these words in the context of 1838 and what had been going on, including the trial and excommunication of Oliver Cowdery.

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history.

Joseph isn't writing a response to what went on when he was a child in 1820, having the First Vision and the persecution that occurred then. He's rewriting the history to defend the Church in 1838 against members of the Church's own leadership ranks that left the Church and would subsequently testify the next year against him in legal proceedings that were conducted in Richmond, Missouri, in which he was under trial for his life.

Remember that Oliver Cowdery had been on trial for his membership because he had, among other things, attributed to Joseph immorality. Keep that in mind when you read Joseph's words in his history written a few months later, that in making a confession of his own sins: "...No one need suppose [him] guilty of any great or malignant sins. [For] a disposition to commit such was never in my [character]." (JS-H 1:28.) Joseph Smith, after the accusation that he is an adulterer, says: "I never had the disposition to commit great or malignant sins. That was never in my heart."

What was it that Oliver was talking about? Oliver characterized it as "a dirty, filthy affair." We hear the word "affair" and today we put that into a certain context meaning immorality, gross immorality. He was talking about the relationship between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger. Fanny Alger is someone that if you haven't encountered you will encounter. All you have to do is go online and look for Joseph Smith being blasted for his gross immorality and the first woman with whom Joseph Smith purportedly had "immoral relations" was Fanny Alger. When you study all the history and you look at all the source material, here is the material that you will find that deals with Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger: William McLellen, a former apostle, excommunicated from the Church in the 1880s, wrote a letter to Joseph Smith III, son of Emma Smith, in which William McLellen said that he spoke with Emma Smith. Emma Smith told him, William McLellen, that she witnessed the whole TRANSACTION (all in capital letters) in the barn!!! in his letter to Joseph Smith III.

Okay, that sounds salacious. It really reads – those exclamation points probably mean something, and "transaction", is that a code word for something immoral and unseemly, and you're trying to convey that but you're using the word "transaction"? What do you

mean by that? William McLellen, repeating what he says Emma told him before her death, written three decades after the discussion, put into a letter written to Joseph Smith III. That's one source. The second source is Mosiah Hancock, the son of Levi Hancock, wrote (I think this account was written after 1900). Mosiah Hancock wrote that his father, Levi Hancock, told him, Mosiah Hancock, that he, Levi Hancock, had performed a wedding ceremony in the barn in which Joseph was sealed to Fanny Alger, Joseph telling Levi the words to use and Levi repeating the words, which would be "the transaction" (with three exclamation points) that Emma witnessed through the door of the barn.

Fanny Alger would subsequently marry a man and would bear nine children. Between Joseph and Emma they had eight children. Between Joseph and Fanny Alger there were no offspring produced. Joseph Smith claimed to have been a virtuous man after the allegations in 1838 involving Fanny Alger, saying that he had never committed any grave or malignant sins. The problem I have with the anti-apologists, and I now have with the apologists, because the apologists have to include the institution of the Church itself, is that they are saying that Joseph Smith was someone other than who I believe Joseph Smith was.

While he was confined in the Liberty Jail, the Lord said to Joseph, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage after thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings (constantly) from under thy hand. And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors."

This presents another level of uncertainty about Mormon history because wise and noble people are going to look to Joseph as a source of blessings, not to Joseph as someone to excuse and cover over my own sins. Joseph Smith stood up in Nauvoo about sixty days before his death and said to the people that would inherit all of his legacy, and who would own the history, and who would manage the restoration following him, Joseph Smith said to them on that day: "You don't know me. You never knew me. No man knows my history. If I had not lived it I wouldn't have believed it myself."

The people who don't believe in Joseph's virtue inherited the restoration that came through him. Now in reconstructing the history they're doing things with it that I would suggest you go back all the way to the source material if you're really interested. I include in the anti-apologists Brian Hales, because Brian Hales has the view that the Church has never done an adequate enough job of reconstructing Joseph Smith's polygamy and, sure enough, the three volume set that he has written is called, *Joseph Smith's History*. If you ignore the editorial conclusions and you look at the source material that he's gathered; one of the sources that he looks to to try and prove that Joseph Smith had marital relations, that is sex, with other women, is a quote from Eliza Snow in which she doesn't answer the question. Eliza Snow says, "If you have to ask the question then you don't know Joseph very well." If I think that Joseph Smith is an adulterer and I hear her say, "Well, if you have to ask the question, then you didn't know Joseph very well," and I reach one conclusion. But if I think Joseph was a virtuous man and I see Eliza Snow saying, "If you have to ask the question,

you didn't know Joseph at all," I reach a different conclusion. She did not answer yes or no. She left you to put whatever is in your heart onto the table of the restoration.

The fact of the matter is that you could go into issue after issue. You can go into question after question. If you go back and you read the material and you say, okay, let's take everything that has been written about Mormon history and let's erase all of it in terms of interpretation, and let's go back to the First Vision and the visitation by the angel Moroni. Let's say, if God had a work for Joseph Smith to do then let's try and figure out exactly what the work was that God entrusted to Joseph to accomplish. I don't care what happened after he handed it off. I don't care what happened after he died. I don't care what happened with really well intentioned people. The question is: what was the work that God had Joseph do? And if you confine it to that and you draw a line at that point and you say, everything that happens thereafter cannot help me in interpreting what went on. When the picture that emerges of Joseph Smith takes a very different look and feel than the picture that emerges of Joseph Smith when you start gathering affidavits in order to win a lawsuit over property in the 1860s. A very different picture than the image of Joseph Smith that emerges when the Mormon reformation gets underway.

A very different picture emerges than the one that comes out after 1852 when what will become D&C Section 132 is first made public. Actually, it's the teaching. The revelation itself wasn't made public for another decade or so after that. When the actual document does get made public that is now Section 132 it isn't in Joseph's handwriting. It wasn't in Joseph's scribe's handwriting. It's in the handwriting of a fellow, Joseph Kingston, that wasn't one of Joseph's clerks at the time.

Mormonism is true but it is possible for people to believe in Mormonism and have a whole bundle of ideas in their head that I don't share with them. The difference between the views that I have of Mormonism and the views that that person has of Mormonism can largely be accounted for based upon how much study, effort, review, thoughtfulness, has gone into where they are and where I am. The effort to uncover the story of the restoration is still left undone, it's still incomplete. I have been working as diligently as I can in every spare minute that I have, and I have to tell you, there's still a monumental pile of material yet to be reviewed before I get to the end of what's out there. I work full time for a living. I don't have the luxury of doing this as a profession; I do it as a hobby. These things are expensive to acquire and require months to review and get through and find. But let me tell you, the search is worth it.

No matter how shallow the pool is that you've drunk out of in trying to figure out what the history of Mormonism is, let me assure you that if you uncover a question there is an answer to your question. There is something out there that will give you the truth of the matter. I get so tired of reading these silly, inane anti-Mormon rants like that Grant Palmer book: *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* is silly. It's trite. That letter to the CES thing that has caused a crisis? I read it and I laugh out loud at how superficially silly it is. In my view there is a great work left to be done, and I have to stay focused on some things that are important, some things that still never got completed in Joseph's day that got promised

would be completed at some point. We may yet see the restoration take on a power and a glory that it hardly attained to at the beginning. The easiest way to hijack that is to spend all of your time dealing with refuting arguments about our history. I have given up any ambition of either refuting critics or refuting my own critics. The only thing I'm interested in doing is trying to at last state truthfully, based upon the work that God had Joseph do, what it was that God accomplished through him. Historians can go back and take everything I've written and they can fill in all the gaps, and they can defend everything I've written. I'm going to keep pressing on and I'm going to keep plowing new ground in order to try and construct what it was the restoration was intended to accomplish.

I would encourage every one of you to take seriously the restoration of the gospel. I would encourage every one of you to realize that Joseph Smith was exactly what he said he was and probably a whole lot more than he was ever willing to disclose.

When the endowment was rolling out in the red brick store Joseph Smith didn't have three angels named Peter, James, and John, he had two angels, and he didn't put a name to those two angels. But he had two because there's two witnesses required. Changing it to three and identifying them as Peter, James, and John was an innovation of Brigham Young, adopted to the temple ceremonies in order to reinforce the primacy of the Quorum of the Twelve as the leadership of the Church but it wasn't there to begin with.

In the endowment, the temple ceremonies, Joseph Smith constructed in a ceremony in a ritual form the idea of beginning a walk back in which you encountered sentinels along the way and you demonstrated by the life you had lived that you were in possession of certain standards of conduct so that eventually you could arrive at the point where you were able to converse with the Lord through the veil. And then, having proven yourself true and faithful in all things, you were permitted to enter into the presence of the Lord.

That ceremony has been tinkered with. There's been a lot that happened during Brigham Young's time. There's been a lot that happened since it got written down in 1876. The first revisions got done during the Smoot hearings in Washington, DC in order to conform the ceremony to the testimony that was given by the Church president at the time, and the first changes are in the handwriting of Joseph F. Smith. I'll leave it there. The ceremony has been altered but the theme of the ceremony has remained the same. What Joseph Smith did was he lived that journey. He accomplished that walk. He made that pathway back to conversing with the Lord through the veil and then entering into the Lord's presence. He encountered those that were opposed to the walk. He encountered those that were encouraging of the walk. If you want to know where the idea for the temple ceremony in the form that Joseph established it came from, all you have to do is read his letter when he was in exile:

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light!

The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county... And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places... And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:19-21.)

That was what Joseph Smith lived. That was what he described the restoration as having included. That was what he attempted to turn into a ritual to be housed in the temple so that everyone in the ceremony could experience the same kind of angelic ministrance coming and talking to you and giving to you the obligation to live a higher life and then a higher life still, and then yet another higher standard of conduct, until at last you're purified sufficiently to come and embrace the Lord through the veil, and upon embracing Him through the veil receive from Him, not a name but a seven-fold blessing that stretches from time into eternity.

Any of you who have been through the temple will realize that what goes on there is something that is very other-worldly, very foreign, very strange, very unusual. We don't typically see that level of ritual in the Mormon religion that's really relatively informal. But in the temple it gets quite formal. It's because that was the process by which Joseph Smith learned about what went on throughout history.

Do you really believe that God would trust into the hands of a wicked man, a liar, and a deceiver, the restoration of the gospel for the salvation of every one that would live in the world thereafter? I feel like it's silly that you have to defend the character of Joseph Smith to Mormons. But given the latest essays that have been published by the most successful Church that claims him as their founder, I find that the ridiculous is necessary.

Joseph Smith was a good man. Joseph Smith was a far better man than most of you think he was. Joseph Smith was true and faithful to everything that had been entrusted to his care. His greatest mistakes were trusting other people that deceived him, that lied to him, that misled him, that engaged in misconduct behind his back. Time and time again the people who betrayed Joseph, as soon as they were found out, blamed Joseph for what they were doing. Time and time again, the testimony of Samson Avard in the court in Richmond, Missouri, when he testified against Joseph, he was the one that went out and lead the mobs. He was the one that destroyed the property that belonged to the Missourians. He was the one who engaged in darkness and assault and murder with his band called the Danites. But when he testified in Richmond he said "Joseph did it, Joseph lead this. Joseph conspired to do this."

When John Bennett was caught committing adultery, practicing a system that involved adulterous relationships with other married women and he was caught and discredited, he immediately published a book saying that all of that he learned from Joseph. Joseph did it. But if you go to the talks of Joseph Smith consistently he denounced that kind of conduct. When you go to the words of Joseph Smith and you look at what happened in Missouri, consistently he sued for peace. When you go to the public talks and you go to the high council minutes of the Church courts that were held in Nauvoo, to find out and to deal with inappropriate misconduct by church members including adulterous relationships, Joseph Smith was the one who was the accuser. Joseph Smith was the one who brought them to the court. Joseph Smith was the one looking to find it, denouncing it, and standing against it. And yet, after he dies, Joseph Smith then becomes responsible for the practice of plural marriage in a way that he denounced while he was living.

Brigham Young got a testimony of plural wives while he was a missionary in England. Wilford Woodruff got a testimony of plural wives while he was in England. Snow got a testimony that it was true, and if Joseph's dead and you get to run the Church and you already know something is true and you're not quite sure whether anyone will accept an innovation from you, but you know that they honor the dead martyr, well, don't trust historians. Trust the people that lived it. Trust the scriptures. The best entries are the entries that were made on the day that the talk was given, the conversation was held, or the thing was witnessed. Unfortunately one of those people who was in an ideal position to contribute a lot, William Clayton, had a double set of books and we don't know which set was right and which set was altered, and how reliable he was. So when you're reading William Clayton's journals you've got to take into account the fact that Joseph was dead a lot longer than he was alive when William Clayton was working for the hierarchy, and he fell in line with Brigham Young and those that inherited the Church after the death of Joseph.

I haven't said for many years that the Church is true but I have said, and I say again, the Gospel is true, the restoration is true, Joseph was what he claimed to be and probably a lot more. And, if you stumble into questions in LDS Church history that raise some doubts in your mind about the restoration itself, trust me. If you'll just study the matter out and take the time to look into it, you're going to find an answer. Very often those answers are quite glorious, glorious beyond anything that you could imagine. If anything, Joseph Smith understated what he did. That list I read you, which is found in D&C Section 128, doesn't tell you what "divers angels from Adam or Michael down to the present," who claim and declared the keys, the rights, the honors, doesn't tell you what was involved there. Joseph Smith left out more than he put on the table.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that Joseph had a work to do and he did it. It was the introduction for something far more glorious that God is still going to do. It will include the establishment of Zion. It's going to happen. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

[Transcription Kiyoko Ball, v1.1]