

Was There An Original?

Sunstone

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Facilitator: Many of you are familiar with Denver Snuffer, his contributions and his work in recent years. He is a graduate of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University, a practicing attorney for 36 years, father of nine children, and a faithful Latter-day Saint until his recent excommunication for apostasy in 2013 for writing a volume on LDS history. Denver, we'll go ahead and turn the time over to you now and listen to what you have to share.

Denver Snuffer: This talk is an abridgement of a paper by the same title. The paper is 55 pages and it has 213 footnotes. It's going to be released on my website this evening. I mention that so that you understand that this talk is just an abridgement of that. If you have any issue with the content, the sources that I rely upon of historical, scriptural, and doctrinal material are available in the paper and you can look at that to determine the source I rely upon.

Mormonism is compelling. It's a very big religion, at least when it began. Since its beginning it has diminished considerably. Joseph Smith asserted:

The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another, when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds...

Everything that's true, lovely or of good report was intended to be part of original Mormonism.

Joseph's original Mormonism was inclusive, not exclusive. All truth belonged to Mormonism but it never pretended to have it all. Mormonism was the search for truth. It was originally the search to discover "truth" without fear of finding something new.

To Joseph, Mormonism did not possess all truth. His religion was not based on conceit, but on humility—the willingness to continue to search, pray, study and hope for newly revealed additions. It was understood there was a great deal more yet to be discovered. The claim that Mormonism was the "only true and living church" presumed the willingness to hear God's voice and receive new truth; it was not because it already had all truth. It was "living" during Joseph's life because it continued to grow and expand. Living organisms grow, dead ones decay.

Boyd K. Packer may have had a point in asserting, "Some things that are true are not very useful." Packer did not clarify to what end truth needed to be "useful," because the original

end of Mormonism was not about institutional loyalty but it was to teach mankind to converse with the Lord through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence; then to enter into His presence, and thereby be redeemed from the fall. We must all concede that Packer is quite right that truth which destroys idolatry is never “useful” to the idol.

The present fracturing of Mormonism is because it lost sight of the original inclusiveness. The opposite of the Packer standard is the one suggested by J. Reuben Clark, “If we have the truth, it cannot be harmed by investigation. If we have not the truth, it ought to be harmed.” Between J. Reuben Clark and Boyd K. Packer, the LDS version of Mormonism departed from an inclusive truth to an exclusive truth, becoming in the process, intolerant, arrogant, and consequently much smaller. That intolerance makes the claim to have all truth all the more amusing to anyone who compares the vacuous content of correlated Mormonism to the interesting liveliness of the original.

Mormonism revived the original relevance of religion because mankind wants big picture answers from the God who created us. Because all of us hope to hear answers from God, we remain interested still today. No matter how much our predecessors have tampered with and discarded from the original, the power of the ideals of that original still haunt all who have been exposed to it.

Even if the present-day interest for some is thought to be a postmortem of a stillborn cult, critics must acknowledge the power of the original ideas of Joseph Smith. Critics continue to complain because they remain interested, even if disaffected. They linger over the corpse as if they fear another resurrection.

Critics are justified to fear a Mormon revival. If God really did talk to Joseph, Mormonism may again assume the role of God’s soapbox to address mankind. If all truth belongs to Mormonism, everyone looking for truth will want to take part.

At one time Mormonism claimed the true and only God of heaven, who sent His Son Jesus Christ to save mankind, still cared enough to talk to us. By participating WE can become as important as the people who produced the Bible. The rest of Judaism and Christianity may have dead prophets and a silent God, but in Mormonism, God’s voice originally spoke anew.

The presence of God’s active voice is the foundation of original Mormonism. If Mormons can hear God’s voice, it renders all other religions inferior. By implication, it also renders every other Judeo-Christian religion “an abomination” because it’s obviously wrong to reject the voice of God calling you to come unto Him by becoming a Mormon.

Because God spoke, everything changed continually. It was an expanding changeling, never taking a final form.

David Whitmer was dissatisfied because everything continually changed. His *Address to All Believers in Christ* started with the issue of Mormonism-in-motion:

They have departed in a great measure from the faith of the Church of Christ as it was first established, by heeding revelations given through Joseph Smith, who, after being called of God to translate his sacred word -- the Book of Mormon -- drifted into many errors and gave many revelations to introduce doctrines, ordinances and offices in the church, which are in conflict with Christ's teachings.

They also changed the name of the church.

He thought the Bible and Book of Mormon were the only faithful canon, and all else was vanity and foolishness.

I am only going to refer to a handful of examples to illustrate the shifting contours of Mormonism during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Many others could be added.

Mormonism forces us to confront the choice: Mormonism, or the false Judeo-Christian religions that are "other than Mormonism." We have a choice between only two churches. The Book of Mormon explains, "Behold, there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil." This claim alone made original Mormonism relevant.

If "there are save two churches only," and only one is the church of the Lamb of God, splintered Mormonism cannot be the "one true church." It is now anything but monolithic. Which version is "true" (because it is impossible for squabbling and disagreeing versions to all be the "only true church") particularly when the various factions have gone to the trouble of excommunicating one another.

Mormonism has or does include over 84 sects. It's an interesting list of names. If there is only one true Mormon church it ought to be "true and living" and "righteous" and "united"—so those words in the names of some of these congregations of the various splinters are both apt and attention-getting.

Mormonism rose only briefly above the religious squabbling of its time. Following Joseph's and Hyrum's murders, Mormonism has subsequently degenerated and splintered. It now can be described in the same terms Joseph Smith used to explain the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians of 1820:

The whole of Mormonism is affected by an unusual excitement, and multitudes unite themselves to the different Mormon parties, which creates no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo, here!" and some, "Lo, there!" Some are contending for the LDS faith, some for the RLDS, and some for the FLDS. But, notwithstanding the great love the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifest by the respective advocates, who are active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted,

as they are pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts begin to file off, some to one party and some to another, it is seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts are more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensues—prophets, seers and revelators contending against presidents, prophets, kings and revelators, and pseudo-saint against pseudo-saint; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, are entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.

This Sunstone conference is the result of the divisions now found in Mormonism. The conference topic is: “Many Mormonisms and the Mormon Movement.” The divergences all reckon from a common starting point, and it is that point of beginning that I hope to address. I am concerned with whether there was an original Mormonism. To accept “Many Mormonisms” as a welcome outcome is contrary to the first premise of “one true church,” all others being the devil’s whores. If Mormonism has any eternal value it will be found by identifying the original—the one God called “true and living” and was the “only one with which [He was] well pleased.” What was that?

If there is any hope of successfully separating the many Mormonisms into more or less like what began with Joseph Smith, we have to answer the question: how do we define the original? And that is not a simple task.

Today’s Mormonism is separated from the martyrdom by 172 years. It’s a landscape filled with proprietary Mormon orthodoxies attempting to stifle the spontaneous and unruly springs of revelation, inspiration, and ‘conversing with the Lord through the veil.’ Every splinter has an hierarchy whose right alone it is to hear and announce God’s voice. If any should come from outside the hierarchies claiming revelation, dutiful followers believe they should test them, by asking that they cut off an arm or some other member of the body, and then restore it again, so that we can know they come with power. (You needed to go through the temple before 1990.) It does not matter the institutions fail to provide such miraculous signs. If the sheep donate enough, the power of constructing monuments with brick and mortar using the widow’s mite is enough of a sign to show God approves the leadership. After all, if they build a great temple (or a tower to heaven), isn’t that sign enough?

So what was original Mormonism? How would you describe it with certitude? During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, Mormonism had the ill-defined visage of a kaleidoscope. As soon as one indispensable characteristic is identified for the original, we find discontinuity. The voice that Joseph heard never stopped tampering, adjusting, modifying, adding and improving—unless of course you didn’t like what he did. And if you disliked it, he fell from grace, did not improve but damaged the original before he died, leaving something others would need to reorganize and reclaim.

While Joseph was alive, there was no approved creed or necessary body of beliefs. Joseph was opposed to constricting the beliefs of saints. On April 8, 1843, while preaching, he

referred to an audience member, Pelatiah Brown, who had been summoned before the High Council for preaching false doctrine. Joseph explained his views:

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter Day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammelled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.

Joseph Smith's tolerant broadmindedness does not mean his silence about ideas circulating among the Mormons was an endorsement. Mormons at the time were all first generation converts. They brought with them many ideas from their prior religious traditions. Joseph made little attempt to compel uniformity, choosing instead to "preach, teach, expound, and exhort" a developing religion with increasingly nuanced broad features.

David Whitmer believed Rigdon exerted a powerfully negative influence on Joseph. In David Whitmer's retrospective *Address to All Believers in Christ*, Chapter 4, he explained, "Sydney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church. I believe Rigdon to have been the instigator of the secret organization known as the 'Danites' which was formed in Far West Missouri in June, 1838. In Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831, Rigdon would expound the Old Testament scriptures of the Bible and Book of Mormon (in his way) to Joseph, concerning the priesthood, high priests, etc., and would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it. Rigdon finally persuaded Brother Joseph to believe that the high priests which had such great power in ancient times, should be in the Church of Christ to-day. He had Brother Joseph inquire of the Lord about it, and they received an answer according to their erring desires."

While Whitmer's retrospective account was written decades after the events, he was directly involved and his recollection is worth considering, because Joseph believed Mormons should be free to believe anything they wanted, unconstrained by creed, the contours of Mormonism during Joseph's life were left poorly defined. The contributions from Pratt, Rigdon and others complicate, rather than contribute, to clarifying the original.

Mormonism's mercurial form during Joseph's lifetime can be seen by considering the most stable practice: baptism.

Baptism began before 1830. While the mode of baptism (by immersion) remained constant, both the language and the purposes changed. The original baptismal prayer set out in the Church Articles and Covenants used the identical prayer found in the Book of Mormon. The words of the prayer, after calling the initiate by name, included "having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you" and so on. Those words were changed in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants to "having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you," and so on. Once altered, the words were never changed back. The Book of Mormon commends one

baptismal prayer (given by Jesus Christ), and the Doctrine and Covenants commends a different prayer.

Proxy baptism of the living for the dead was added in 1840. Originally proxies of either sex could be baptized for both men and women. That later changed, and vicarious proxy work could be done on behalf of the same sex only, which would not prove a harbinger of later same-sex approval.

The purpose of baptism grew from remitting sins and joining the church, to include rebaptism as a means for rededication and purification, and rebaptism for the healing of the sick.

Emma Smith was rebaptized in October 1842 for her health. In April 1842, another additional clarification limited baptism and rebaptism for rededication for the living, to be performed in living waters like a lake, stream or river. Baptism for the dead or for the healing of the sick, were only to be performed in a temple font. So we see the practice of baptism expanded while Joseph was alive, even though it was perhaps the most stable feature of the original.

There is no single organized entity founded in 1830 that has remained intact. Every one of the organized corporate forms of Mormonism has morphed, been superseded, or rolled into new legal entity, and changed from whatever existed in New York on April 6, 1830.

There was never a single corporate form for an original. In January 1841, an Illinois corporation was formed and Joseph Smith elected the Trustee in Trust for that entity. This was likely the first legal organization of the church, as no formal corporate documentation from New York has ever been discovered. But Illinois law limited the corporation to owning no more than 5 acres. Upon Joseph's death, the church Trustee was lost and disputes over property followed. Property held in Joseph's name may have belonged to the church—or not, if you were Emma Smith. Hopefully no one believed that salvation was tied in any way to which corporate entity owned what property upon the death of Joseph Smith.

Each one of the proprietary, corporate forms of Mormonism are very pushy about insisting that they are “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.” But even if there were such a thing as continuity of a corporate entity from Joseph Smith until today, would that really be the original without doing, teaching, conducting and delivering what originally was done, taught, conducted and delivered? Can institutional identity decide religious authority apart from conduct? The LDS version of scriptures rejects that idea.

There was never a single name used to identify an original Mormon church. Originally, the “Church of Christ” had changed names several times from the 1830s to 1841. In addition to different names, a series of entities, many of which were not legally separate from the individuals involved, were formed to hold property belonging to the “Church of Christ.” The first name didn't last and was occasionally replaced by the “Church of Jesus Christ.” The third iteration was the “Church of the Latter Day Saints,” and still later the “Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter Day Saints.” On April 26, 1838, a revelation settled the question of name as “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” but the revealed name was not used until years later.

Today, the Doctrine and Covenants has changed the original revealed name, substituting a different name. There is no entity that uses the original name.

“Original” Mormonism must reckon from some form of continuity, but continuity of exactly what? Practices changed markedly during Joseph’s life and never acquired a settled form. It took six years from founding of the church before washings and anointings were introduced. Once introduced, they were changed. Originally they were done with whisky scented with cinnamon, followed by perfumed olive oil. Feet and face washing were added after the Kirtland Temple dedication on March 27, 1836. The rites were revised in Nauvoo and tubs were added as a practical accommodation in the Nauvoo Temple. Joseph died before the completion of the Nauvoo Temple and therefore neither a building design for the upper floors, nor a ceremony for the endowment, were completed by Joseph Smith before his death. Brigham Young completed the unfinished ceremony and claimed Joseph Smith told him to.

According to L. John Nuttall’s diary, Brigham Young stated he received the endowment from Joseph before the temple was available and “after we got through Bro Joseph turned to me and said Bro Brigham this is not arranged right but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed...” How confident are you that they were completed in the way Heaven wanted?

The remark giving Brigham permission to complete the temple rites were made in private. In public, Joseph declared, “Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.” The first question this raises is whether Joseph contradicted himself by changing things. The only way to reconcile the many changes he instituted is to take note that he made only additive expansions, finishing and recovering the ordinances instituted in the heavens. He was transmitting what came from above to believers, and it came incrementally. Joseph’s changes never took away from the ordinances, but frequently expanded on what was here before.

Joseph never did anything with “the ordinances instituted in the heavens” like the LDS Church has done. The elimination of the Christian minister from the endowment in 1990, along with the abandonment of the penalties from the ceremony at the same time, were purely deductive. Joseph never did anything like that. Likewise, LDS washings and anointings were changed in 2011 to eliminate actual washing and actual anointing, replacing them with “simply symbolic” references. That was yet another deductive deviation from “the ordinances instituted in the heavens.” It violated Joseph’s principal that they “are not to be altered or changed.” The original Mormonism may have added, but it respected what was previously revealed. All later forms of corporate Mormonism have been deductive.

The RLDS Church made even greater deductions. They abandoned baptisms for the dead, washings, anointings, eternal marriage, and the temple rites altogether. Subtraction from the ordinances is one clear way to confirm the original form of Mormonism no longer exists. If there is to be an original, it will require adding back what has been lost.

The First Vision is a clear illustration of Joseph's practice of adding to the religion. Originally, the event was not part of the Mormon narrative at all. Once it was added, it changed over multiple retellings. The 1832 account focused on Joseph's personal salvation. The 1835 account is the first to mention a struggle with the devil. The account evolved in the 1838 retelling to have cosmic implications for the salvation of all mankind. Both the Father and the Son appeared, and the purpose was not to forgive Joseph's sins, but to confirm the entire Christian world "were all corrupt" and taught "the commandments of men" "having a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof." It is the 1838 version that is canonized in the Pearl of Great Price. Like everything else for so long as Joseph Smith was involved, the First Vision expanded, both in details and meaning, until it was no longer about Joseph the individual, but the salvation of all mankind.

The description of the Godhead, which was settled during Joseph's lifetime, became unsettled after his death. When *Lectures on Faith* was adopted as scripture by a conference in 1835, the Godhead consisted of two personages: the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost was not a person but "the mind" of the Father and Son. It is described similarly in Moses 6:61, as a "record" or the "truth of all things" and not an individually embodied spirit being.

A different definition gradually crept into LDS scripture, assuming final form in 1921. The 'Holy Ghost creep' stemmed from a talk Joseph delivered on April 2, 1843. The note-takers who were present during that talk bequeathed an altered definition of the Holy Ghost. Their notes reflected what they believed they heard from Joseph. However, Brigham Young and Jedediah Grant approved a change from the notes in 1854, which then underwent a round of punctuation changes in 1858. A final version of the embodied Holy Ghost doctrine was approved by Heber J. Grant and a committee of six members of the twelve in 1921 (the same time they deleted the *Lectures on Faith* from scripture). The addition of the embodied Holy Ghost to LDS scripture created a doctrinal conflict with *Lecture Fifth*, and something had to give. So the *Lectures* were deleted. Whatever else this process illustrates, it confirms there was confusion stemming from Joseph's comments in April 1843, and therefore Mormon beliefs remained unstable while Joseph was alive.

Mormonism's canon of scripture was still unsettled when Joseph died in 1844. Different Mormon sects rely on different canons as their sacred texts. Joseph retranslated the Bible, which is commonly referred to as the Joseph Smith Translation. He called this endeavor "the fullness of the scriptures" and it was only the Joseph Smith Translation that was used throughout *Lectures on Faith*. Joseph prophesied that the church would fail if the fullness of the scriptures was not completed. Though finished, Joseph never published the text. Upon his death, it became the property of Emma Smith. She bequeathed it to the RLDS Church,

and they subsequently published it. Excerpts are now in the LDS Bible in footnotes and an appendix but not the entirety of the fullness that Joseph said was critical.

This canonical disparity between Mormonisms is only possible because a completed authoritative canon was still expanding during Joseph's life. Ironically, the canonical exposition Joseph personally edited and vouched for, *Lectures on Faith*, has been discarded by every Mormon sect.

Originally, like the Book of Mormon, the church had elders, priests and teachers. The term "apostle" began to be used. But the term "apostle" did not mean the same thing then that it does today. A quorum of twelve apostles did not exist in Mormonism until February 1835. Prior to that, many individuals were identified as "apostles." The term meant someone sent with a message from God. The term was originally used to identify all the missionaries sent to preach the Book of Mormon. The revelations given through Joseph Smith specifically identified the following men as "apostles" in the following dates:

-Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer in June 1829

-Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in April 1830

-Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt and Leman Copley in March 1831 — in fact, if you go to the D&C and check the heading date of everything that refers to an "apostle" if it comes before February 1835 then it has no relevance to or limitation of the term "apostle" to a quorum of twelve. It simply meant, "those sent with a message."

A series of revelations referred to "apostles" and included admonitions, instructions, and commandments to different audiences composed of "apostles" before the organization of a quorum of twelve in 1835. Even after that the Seventy were regarded as "apostles." It was not until 1835 that the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, were asked by Joseph Smith to choose the first twelve members of the newly announced quorum of the twelve. The Three Witnesses made their choices at a meeting on February 14, 1835. And while they didn't preserve the order in which they were ordained, assuming that they were ordained in the same order as the Three Witnesses are listed, it was Martin Harris who would have ordained Brigham Young.

Joseph Smith took an inconsistent path identifying the center of power and influence in Mormonism. On the day the church was organized, a revelation identified Joseph as the church's "prophet, seer and revelator." Five months later in September 1830, another revelation limited all revelations and commandments for the church to those coming through Joseph Smith. David Whitmer thought Joseph Smith was led into error by pride when he assumed the role of "prophet, seer and revelator."

Despite the revelations making Joseph the primary revelator of commandments for the church, he never presumed to be the exclusive revelator. To the contrary, others were expected to receive them, and he was pleased when others received visions, he believed them to be authentic, and he recorded them. The year after a revelation conferred status on Joseph as the primary revelator, another revelation empowered everyone holding

priesthood with the authority to reveal the mind of God: “they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost & whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be Scripture shall be the will of the Lord shall be the mind of the Lord shall be the voice of the Lord & shall be the power of God unto Salvation[.]”

From October, 1838 to April, 1839, Joseph spent 173 days jailed in Missouri. Just prior to his release he penned a letter to the saints. The most remarkable part of the letter addresses abuse of the priesthood. It is noteworthy; this occupied his thoughts while in prison, instead of state and political abuse. He wrote:

...Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson--that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handed only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood, or the authority of that man. Behold! ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks; to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God.

We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile...

Early in the restoration, power and influence had been consolidated into Joseph's hands alone. He began to erode that power by the following year. But in the meditative confines of Liberty Jail, Joseph saw the wisdom of destroying all power and influence by virtue of the priesthood alone.

Two months following Joseph's release from the Liberty Jail, Joseph condemned the highest levels of church leadership, warning them against self-sufficiency, self righteousness and self-importance. He was alarmed by the idea leaders would think themselves better than church members, and would rise up in judgment, calling themselves more righteous than those they led. His warning to leaders included the following. This is an audience composed of the Twelve and the Seventy, not of any common members:

I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church,¹ saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy, and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as god lives.

This caution has been turned on its head by the many Mormonisms of today. Hierarchies uniformly regard themselves as “righteous” even claiming that they cannot lead their churches astray. They presume to condemn and find fault with the church’s members, saying the members are out of the way while the leaders are righteous. In short, the fears that began to arise in Joseph’s heart in the mid-1830s crystallized in the Liberty Jail, and in the July 1839 sermon he denounced the very conditions that have now come to pass.

In 1842 he lamented the Saints were depending too much on the prophet, darkened in their minds and neglecting the duties devolving on themselves.

Whatever authority may have been claimed early on, by the end, Mormonism’s priestly domination was diminished, if not altogether gone. It is impossible to reconcile the most virulent form of priestly power found in correlated LDS Mormonism with the Liberty Jail edict that “no power or influence can, or ought, to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood.” Joseph Smith’s meditations on learning from sad experience that men abused even “supposed” power has been forgotten in modern Mormonisms. Fortunately, anyone can be a servant, kneeling to wash others’ feet as the Master showed in His example, whether they are ordained or not. So too can anyone persuade using gentleness and pure knowledge, women and men, young and old, black and white, rich or poor.

In 1836, sacred rites were introduced in the Kirtland Temple. In 1843 different rites were contemplated, even partially celebrated. The new and improved temple rites were to be completed and housed in a new temple then under construction. A partial “endowment” was added to the already existing washings and anointings. The expanded rites also contemplated sealing marriages and adoption, or man-to-man sealings, all of which remained ill defined at the time of Joseph’s death.

Joseph’s original instruction about sealing dealt with connecting the living faithful to the “fathers” in heaven, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The connection was to be accomplished through adoption sealings, not genealogy. Joseph was connected to the “fathers” through his priesthood. He and his brother Hyrum were to become ‘fathers’ of all who would live after them. Just read Abraham chapter 1 verse 2. Families were originally organized under Joseph as the father of the righteous in this dispensation. Accordingly, men were sealed to Joseph Smith as their father, and they as his sons. This was referred to as ‘adoption’ because the family organization was not biological, but priestly, according to the law of God. As soon as Joseph died, the doctrine began to erode, ultimately replaced by the

¹ The Church, meaning church members.

substitute practice of sealing genealogical lines together. In between the original adoptive sealing to Joseph and the current practice of tracking genealogical or biological lines, there was an intermediate step when families were tracked back as far as research permitted, then the line was sealed to Joseph Smith. That practice is now forgotten, and is certainly no longer practiced by any denomination within Mormonism.

When Joseph died, any understanding of the practice of “adoption” was quickly lost. Confusion over this subject once again confirms both the ever-changing nature of Mormonism and its failure to become complete during Joseph Smith’s lifetime.

In developing man’s role in the cosmos, things began rather Protestant-like. Joseph eventually taught plainly that men could become gods. Further, he asserted that God was once a man that had progressed to godhood. LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley commenting on this topic said, “I don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it. I haven’t heard it discussed for a long time in public discourses. I don’t know. I don’t know all the circumstances under which that statement was made. I understand the philosophical background behind it. But I don’t know a lot about it and I don’t know that others know a lot about it.” President Hinckley was right, of course. The idea crept into Mormonism late in Joseph’s life, and never had an opportunity to be fully developed. So Mormons do not know a lot about it.

Joseph Smith’s ‘Magnum Opus,’ the King Follett Discourse, seems more like an introduction to something new than an established, fully developed theology, though the idea that man could progress to be like God had been disclosed earlier. The idea that God was once a man and also learned His salvation was clearly something new, that was first revealed in this talk. Joseph’s April 1844 sermon finally closed an idea opened nine years earlier in the 1835 *Lectures on Faith*.

We ask then where is the prototype, or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question, ... that it is Christ: all will agree in this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation; or, in other words, that he is a saved being.

He goes on to explain that any saved being must be precisely what Christ is or else not be saved.

The 1835 *Lectures* was just a prelude, left un-clarified and unexplained. The implications of this teaching escaped believers. Mormons were surprised to learn Christ did what His Father did when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Like God the Father, Christ “laid down His life and took it up again” or, in other words, attained to the resurrection of the dead. These ideas were consistent with earlier revelations, translations and writings, but King Follett signaled a whole new level of harmonizing ideas and adding upon the restoration.

Because Joseph was killed less than three months later, the talk was left as the introduction of something much grander to follow. But like the Nauvoo Temple and the temple rites, this fresh teaching was left undeveloped; a reminder of how great a loss one encounters when God takes an authentic prophet out of the community.

Mormonism failed to reach a finish line while Joseph was alive. God seems quite willing to give people what they want, even if it displeases Him. The first missionaries were sent among the Lamanites but never arrived. Along the path westward they stopped in Kirtland, Ohio and converted over 200 Campbellites, including Sidney Rigdon. The early eager Campbellite converts steered Joseph's inquiries, and over the following decade the restoration focused on organizing a restored, New Testament, Primitive Christian church with all the original offices, teachings and practices. In the background of this preoccupation with New Testament Christianity, however, God pointed Joseph, and in turn us, toward something more ancient. God was attempting to return to the earth the original faith taught to Adam in the beginning.

The religion of Adam was the objective of Mormonism. Joseph Smith was unable to fully restore that first religion of man. Joseph predicted the religion would include a future gathering in the "everlasting hills," (in all probability the Rocky Mountains) where returning tribes would be "crowned" with glory in a New Jerusalem to be God's last [days] Zion. The returning tribes did not gather in Kirtland, Jackson County, Far West, or Nauvoo, and Joseph was dead before the trip westward to Salt Lake. Even the most ardent defender of the LDS version of Mormonism must concede that things expected, even promised and prophesied to happen, that were left unrealized when Joseph died.

The LDS and RLDS organizations disagree on many subjects, but four in particular separate them: Polygamy, succession in the presidency, plurality of Gods, and secret temple rites including baptism for the dead. Depending on which part of the history was considered most important the outcome favors one over the other. One writer explained the disagreements this way, "I realized that as long as the focus was on Kirtland, the prairie Mormons [RLDS] held the advantage, but whenever the debate turned to Nauvoo, the mountain Mormons [LDS] would win." The morphing faith under Joseph Smith was responsible for allowing this outcome. Anywhere along the timeline of his life as church leader, if there was a line drawn, what followed was different from before. Nothing was abandoned, but expansions sometimes so transformed the earlier ideas, rites or practices that the new developments seemed to revolutionize the religion.

Because of the instability of Mormonism during Joseph's life, it is reasonable to conclude if there was an original, it cannot be defined by searching the teachings, practices, features, rites, or organization of the period from 1820 to 1844. One must look elsewhere to define an "original." Perhaps the best and only, way to identify an "original" Mormonism is to look at the aspirations for a religion that embraces all truth. If the goal of the original is considered, one can get much closer to defining it than by reassembling bits from its beginning. It is Mormonism's destiny that best tells us what Mormonism was, is, and is to come. Anything else fails to meet the scriptural definition of truth.

If the original Mormonism needed to recover the fullness that was lost, then to revive an original, it will require a recovery of what was lost, and more. If recovered, believers will be able to receive a holy spot, accepted and defended by God. In that place the religion of Adam will be taught. The promised original religion includes the revelation of everything, “nothing shall be withheld.” Today’s Mormonism has a great deal withheld, but the religion of Abraham (and therefore the religion of Adam) included “a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers.” The original Mormonism must grow in ancient knowledge and understanding until their understanding reaches into heaven. Not just spiritual understanding, but also physical understanding of the layout of the universe. The placement of the lights in the firmament was for “signs” to man, and therefore were deliberately placed and contain information originally understood by Adam.

Because of prophecies made to the patriarchal fathers, the right to found this future city of peace descends from a specific ancient line. There will be an heir descended from both Jesse and Joseph who will accomplish it. Occupants of the community will likewise have lineal qualification. The last-day’s Zion is an accomplishment promised earlier to the patriarchal fathers and it is through their descendants God intends to vindicate the promises. The result of this alignment will be a priestly city of Zion that will “return to that power which she had lost.”

The original iteration of Mormonism was apocalyptic. But it was oddly practical about the apocalypse, assuming there were things that could be done to prepare. Not in haste, which was condemned, but it was a physical and spiritual enterprise to be accomplished by the hard effort of those interested in welcoming the Lord’s return.

(Okay, read the paper. I find that topic relentlessly boring. My guess is that a male in puberty could keep his attention focused on that topic for a decade. Just read the paper.)

Joseph was the only one who could appoint a successor. He first designated David Whitmer. In 1835 Joseph organized the complementary presidency in Zion. The president was David Whitmer, with counselors W.W. Phelps and John Whitmer. This made David Whitmer the backup church president if Joseph died. Four days after organizing the Missouri Zion presidency, Joseph explained, “if he should now be taken away that he had accomplished the great work which the Lord had laid before him[.]”

He wrote in his journal the following year, 1835, that the church’s permanent foundation was assured because of the Missouri president, who would take over if he, Joseph, were taken. Unfortunately, in 1838 Whitmer resigned as president in Zion, joined the dissenters and contributed to the agitation that resulted in the Mormon War. Whitmer later organized his own competing church. Presumably an active dissenter who refused to participate in the church for six years was disqualified as Joseph’s successor when Joseph was killed.

A second successor was appointed in 1841. Hyrum Smith was given the same status as Joseph by revelation. Although Hyrum was faithful, he died moments before Joseph and that left the “successor” unidentified. This was all the more unfortunate because Joseph alone had the power to appoint a successor.

If there was an original Mormonism it had an inclusiveness to it that welcomed all truth. Diverse, even opposing views held in good faith, were welcomed and expected. The original would have welcomed Paul Toscano and Boyd Packer (and it is doubtful Packer would have had authority to forcibly exclude Toscano). The original would have welcomed the insights of both Kate Kelly and Dallin Oaks, and allowed their opposing views to be resolved only by persuasion and long suffering. The original would have allowed D. Michael Quinn to have continued access to the Historical Department archives to mine and publish the sins and excesses of the past. Confessing sins is good for the individual, but it is even better for an institution. An original would not have leaders seeking to hide their sins or gratify their pride, or whose vain ambitions attempt through control, dominion and compulsion to reign with intimidation over a flock that is only kept from the truth because they are not allowed to find it.

The general conferences of an original would look a lot more like a Sunstone Symposium than the uniform and predictable April and October meetings. (While in law school we dubbed the droning cadence of General Conference “General Authoritic Pentameter.” It’s produced by using a screened read without any sonorous meter. [Any cadence] would qualify as long as it kept attention away from the jarring and discordant words that separate us now from what Joseph was doing.)

We have lost the original. But we do not need to abandon it forever. After all, repentance means to turn to face God again. He is quite willing to speak still.

If James 1:5 were true for Joseph Smith, it should be true for us. We can ask God with real intent, and obtain a like measure of wisdom from on high. Mormonism may have been a briefly lit candle whose flame expired on June 27, 1844. But it left behind a smoldering spark that only needs another generation to breathe enough of the breath of life to reignite the flame. The breath of the spirit gave life to man originally. It can still restore life, even to a religion that has somehow departed its way.

Mormonism is (or ought to be) a very big religion. Such a faith as that always attracts adherents. We won’t get there unless our attitude returns to something like Joseph’s in the original Mormonism. Here is what he wrote in a letter from Liberty Jail about how broadly tolerant we ought to be in our religious views:

[W]e ought always to be aware of those prejudices which sometimes so strangely present themselves, and are so congenial to human nature, against our friends, neighbors, and brethren of the world, who choose to differ from us in opinion and in matters of faith. Our religion is between us and our God. Their religion is between them and their God.

Joseph died with a clear conscience. Few Mormons since him have done likewise. Somehow Mormonism has tolerated marital misconduct, adultery, concealing criminal misconduct by “lying for the Lord” to evade Federal investigations, aggregating wealth while neglecting the poor, exercising control to abrogate follower’s consciences under the claim it is the right of church leaders to do so. It has abandoned adoptions, denounced eternal progression, de-canonized *Lectures on Faith* (without a vote of its members), and concealed church finances. It recently has stretched LDS “sustaining” into an oath-like obligation binding on us. LDS Mormonism has determined that truth can be sometimes “unhelpful” to it. These deviations have happened as modern Mormonism yet claims Joseph as its founder. Modern Mormonism isn’t. It is something far deviant from the original, and as this Sunstone Conference shows, its deviations are metastasizing.

Joseph dreamt while in Carthage Jail, the night before his murder, the following:

I was back in Kirtland, Ohio, and thought I would take a walk out by myself, and view my old farm, which I found grown up with weeds and brambles, and altogether bearing evidence of neglect and want of culture. I went into the barn, which I found without floor or doors, with the weather-boarding off, and was altogether in keeping with the farm.

While I viewed the desolation around me, and was contemplating how it might be recovered from the curse upon it, there came rushing into the barn a company of furious men, who commenced to pick a quarrel with me.

The leader of the party ordered me to leave the barn and farm, stating it was none of mine, and that I must give up all hope of ever possessing it.

I told him the farm was given me, and although I had not had any use of it for some time back, still I had not sold it, and according to the righteous principles it belonged to me.

He then grew furious and began to rail upon me, and threaten me, and said it never did belong to me.

I then told him that I did not think it worth contending about, that I had no desire to live upon it in its present state, and if thought he had a better right I would not quarrel with him about it but leave; but my assurance that I would not trouble him at present did not seem to satisfy him, and he seemed determined to quarrel with me, and threatened me with the destruction of my body.

While he was thus engaged, pouring out his bitter words upon me, a rabble rushed in and nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel

among themselves for the premises, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud.

While I was a little distance from the barn, I heard them screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as it appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the vision ended.

Of course we now can see the fulfillment of Joseph's vision about his "farm." The original is lost and can only be recovered in the same way it began: By God's direct involvement. If an "original" returns, it will add elements that recover, finish, fulfill—not just add upon, but greatly expand, and yet remain entirely consistent with, the original.

In the current environment of "Many Mormonisms," an original will likely be unnoticed, or dismissed as merely another schismatic breakaway from the party of angry men now occupying "Joseph's farm." But if the original Mormonism was founded on God's voice, then God's voice is abundant enough to recreate what is yet to be fully created. That is, of course, assuming there will ever again someone foolish enough to hear and heed His voice.

The paper upon which this talk was based is available as a PDF on my website but I printed about thirty copies of it and I'm going to leave them up front and at least thirty of you can pick up a copy there. I intentionally reserved enough time for questions and wondered if anyone had a question that they wanted to come up to the mike and voice.

Facilitator: Come on up here to the mike if you would, in the center aisle up front.

Question 1A: I'm formulating this question as I'm standing here talking already. My opinion is that the church under Joseph Smith never would have survived as long as it did doing what he did, unless he were a charismatic and he were open-minded enough to accept all walks of life into the church. If you were much more hard line till like Brigham Young was, let's say, more of a business man, I don't think the church would have had its metamorphosis that we see...

Denver Snuffer: But remember, Brigham Young had the advantage of isolation in the wilderness where it was difficult to flee.

Question 1B: Very important. That's what happens when you cultivate a desert wasteland. My point would be, from a skeptical perspective, it seems like almost the wrong question to say, "Was there an original church," because it was constantly morphing and changing. Trying to nail down a point, you can say April 6, 1830 but that was divorced from what he and Oliver Cowdery were doing in 1829 together. My question would be, would it be better to ask, what can be gleaned when we compare what we see as maybe an original, to today's? Would it be better to examine the differences and say, what can we understand about it as a whole, instead of saying, we should try and follow whatever the original was?

Denver Snuffer: I guess the way that you approach it: was Mormonism originally something, and if something, what was that thing? The closer you look at the issue of what it was the less it appears to be an organization, an institution, a body, and the more it appears to be a window into heaven in which individuals encounter it and are transformed by it. As the ordinance development went along, one of the things that distracted people – it's the perniciousness of the vocabulary that substitutes one for the other. It's when you introduce the idea of being sealed up and you introduce the idea of an ordinance in which something cosmic occurs, that people become distracted from the fact that Mormonism was trying to get you... At the end of this long ceremonial thing, you come and you encounter at the veil a symbolic presence of the Lord with whom you communicate through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence, at which point you render an accounting. It's a mechanical process of keys, signs, and tokens. People think, "oh well if I got them then I can give all the passwords and I can get by the angels that stand as sentry, because that's the way that Brigham described the endowment. If that's the case then let's all go to Gerald and Sandra Tanner's website, let's get those keys, signs, and tokens and go get drunk and have a frickin' orgy and enjoy ourselves cuz we can get past the sentinels. We got em!" Unless of course they are purely symbolic, intending to communicate to the heart and mind the idea that you must represent by the life, the tangible life you lived, you must represent a life that has been devoted to obedience and sacrifice.

The Lord will come into contact with you to confirm that your life has been so, because He is the keeper of the gate and He employeth no servant there. He can tell at a glance if you have lived your life in accordance with the gospel, consecration, fidelity. He can tell that, and then allow you to enter into His presence and thereby be redeemed from the fall. All of that mystical journey was a process of substituting symbols for truth. The testimony to the truth being...

I do think that when Joseph Smith had the First Vision he pretty well describes the initial reaction that he had to it. He went home, he leans against the fireplace and he tells Mother Smith, "I've learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." That's about as far as it went. But as the religion began to roll out it assumed a cosmic significance precisely because it began to dawn on Joseph that the religion was intended for all men, all mankind to be redeemed from the fall. At the end of the whole thing, when you get all the way to the end, you can take Mormonism and go all the way back to James 1:5 and say, all Joseph is doing is saying that James 1:5 is true and it works. Therefore, you ought to attempt it. Take all the ordinances, take all of the promises, take everything that has been delivered and realize that all of that is simply God cheerleading you to reconnect with Him, and have an authentic experience. When that happens then the religion is alive. Then it matters. But it's living in you, it's not living in some chapel, it's not living in some temple, it's living in you. That's the objective of the original.

Question 2A: *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was a primary catalyst to my own paradigm shift and faith transition a few years ago, so thank you for that journey.

Denver Snuffer: Don't thank me.

Question 2B: So much of what you have written since then has really resonated with me but something that I come up against, that is a stumbling block for me – and I’m not a 12-year-old boy and I will read the paper – is the insistence that Joseph Smith did not practice polygamy despite all of the even contemporaneous evidence to the contrary. How would it harm your argument to say that he did? Why couldn’t he have been the prophet of the restoration and have made this huge mistake with polygamy?

Denver Snuffer: That’s a fair question and it’s a great question, actually. I understand why people of good faith believe all of the propaganda that began upon Joseph’s death and are confident that there is truth there. In fact, in D&C 132 we know something got read to the Nauvoo High Council and that something that got read dealt with the topic that the current iteration of D&C 132 contains. I’m not denying any of that.

Here’s the problem: If you start with the beginning, and I take the position that whatever was revealed was first revealed in 1829. I think that it came during the translation of Jacob chapter 2. Just like reading about baptism in the Book of Mormon, they pray about baptism and John the Baptist appeared. I believe it was Jacob chapter 2 and not the Old Testament translation. In fact, there’s plenty of reason to suspect that. Start with 1829 and look at everything that exists up until June 27, 1844 and end your inquiry there. Just stop it at that moment and ask yourself, is there any proof that Joseph was involved in the way that people characterize his involvement?

If you have an ordinance identified, and D&C 132 identifies an ordinance. It’s only one. It’s the old cliché, to a man with a hammer the whole world looks like a nail. If the only ordinance you have is marriage, and that’s the mechanism by which you are going to preserve families into eternity, and you want to preserve another family into eternity, how are you going to accomplish that? The only way in which it is possible to do so is through marriage.

Some time – and understand, it was so late, we’re talking a period of a few months, it’s some time very late in the process – Joseph Smith began to do adoptions. We don’t even have language for what it was that Joseph was doing. Brigham Young attempted to mimic that. In fact, that section that Brigham Young wrote in the D&C about captains of tens and captains of fifties, substitute the word “father” because he organized the companies according to adoption principles.

When Brigham Young got through in the valley and he was migrating back, and he was going to Winter Quarters and he encountered John Taylor and Parley Pratt and their company, the reason he blew a gasket, the reason why he went back and he wanted to become the president, was because he had organized that company according to the priesthood. He went back and was ranting and raving. When you read that it makes no sense at all unless you substitute in their the fact that he had organized them in an adopted family, and he viewed what Parley Pratt and John Taylor had done as an offence against the priesthood itself, and that’s why he wanted to be elected president. He got himself elected

president, and one of the first things he said was, he can hardly wait to get back to the Salt Lake Valley and have Parley Pratt and John Taylor confess that they aren't Brigham Young, because he's the big dog now, and no one can seal anyone to anything without him and his word alone because he substituted.

Joseph was up to something. But as soon as you get to 1852 the well of history is poisoned and everyone who advocates the continuity of polygamy dating back to Brigham Young, every one of them necessarily argues that fraud, deceit, lying, false testifying is an integral part of the religion in order to conceal the "sacred principle" of what they were up to.

You look at Joseph Smith. The way that they have parsed the language to try and make it appear that Joseph was dishonest, is to distinguish between celestial marriage or the principle, and polygamy or plural wives or whatever else language got used. I see no such fine tuning in the talks that Joseph gave, in the conduct that he manifest. Your choice is that Joseph Smith was a calculated two-faced deceiver, or he said what he meant, he meant what he said, and that the subsequent amalgamation of historical proofs are insufficient.

I dealt with that Fanny Alger thing, and the incident in the barn. We have two sources. We have only two sources for that, and they are decades after the fact. And when you put them both together the incident in the barn was Levi Hancock reciting the ceremony that Joseph gave to him in order to perform it, and that's what Emma saw through the barn. There was even a conference in Provo. I think FAIR sponsored the conference. It was a woman that gave the talk. She got up and said the reason that Emma Smith was upset about Fanny Alger, [it] didn't have anything to do with leaving sexual conduct with her husband, it was because she regarded the sealing as being more important than Fanny Alger did, and Emma actually believed in the eternity of the covenant.

Look, there is too much post 1852 retrospective accounts to ever say it is impossible for the story to be cleaned up. There's too much that is contrary. The way in which I have tried to get a handle on it is to stop the inquiry on June 27, 1844 and look at what happened before.

Unfortunately, in the Joseph Smith Papers there are letters that are exchanged between Joseph and Emma, and the way I read the relationship is very different from the way in which others read it. She was the stronger personality. Her personality was stronger than Joseph and he needed her, he depended on her, and he had enormous respect for her, and he loved her and she loved him. Their relationship was not some... They did some practical planning in light of what was going on, in light of what happened. I think Joseph Smith's reliance upon, affection for, and respect, for Emma Smith as his wife was far greater than most people have fathomed. Read their letters to one another. If they were unequally yoked, Emma had the advantage. She was better educated than him and he valued her opinion. This idea that he was some... Well, it's like *Rough Stone Rolling* pointed out, if he was a lothario, where the crap are the children? There aren't any. In fact, Joseph Smith's statements, teachings, letters, communications with women seem very respectful. I would suggest that he was more of a shy nerd as to women than he was some predatory guy in a smoking jacket with a gold chain on his chest.

Question 3: Could you please tell us, are you or are you not the reincarnation of B.H. Roberts? If you would like to table that, I could also ask if you give much credence to the theory that Brigham Young and his cousin, Willard Richards, orchestrated the death of both Hyrum, Joseph, and then their younger brother, Samuel Smith, shortly after Carthage?

Denver Snuffer: The records don't let us rule it in and something that dramatic probably ought not be ruled in without proof. It's like, on some matters the burden of proof ought to be high enough that we have to reach a conclusion. When the historical record is a jumble... Brigham Young and Willard Richards were definitely propagandists willing to change the historical record in order to accomplish something. Brigham Young's ambition to run Mormonism knew no bounds. He had an agenda, and his agenda could not be served by cooperating with others. He needed to have control. He saw Joseph had it and he wanted it. Aspiring men have always been a problem in Mormonism and they continue to be a problem today.

Question 4: If you compare the first few years of Mormonism to the first few years of Moses it seems that Moses received more. It was as if God wanted this to happen more because of snakes and fire from heaven, getting rid of competition, the evil people. Why do you think that didn't happen in Mormonism? It seemed that whether it was the Kirtland Safety Society or the Mormon War, or John C. Bennett, or William Law, whoever it was, prevented it. It was as if God didn't want Mormonism to reach Zion in the 1840s but that he wanted it to be pushed out into the wilderness and receive what we have today.

Denver Snuffer: It's an interesting thought and I would agree with the idea that Mormonism was never intended to reach the finish line while Joseph was here, but I don't know that that was a line drawn by God because He refused to permit it. I would think it would rather be a line drawn by that generation because they were unprepared to permit it. I also think that if it had not been for the establishment of what was done in Joseph's lifetime, you can't make it to the finish line in any generation. It had to be done in stages. It had to be done incrementally. The first increment or the first installment necessarily involved preparing the ground, much like Martin Luther prepared ground that ultimately lead to religious refugees coming to this country and founding a nation that has religious freedom.

Martin Luther was a necessary prerequisite to Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. Joseph Smith was a necessary prerequisite. All of the shortcomings and ills that you see in Kirtland, and in Independence and in Far West and Nauvoo and Salt Lake, all of them should inform us. That would make us better adept. We ought to be able to make our own new and different mistakes rather than repeating the same old ones. If you are going to do the same thing that was done before you should expect the outcome to eventually be the same thing: the aggregation of a lot of political and economic and social capital in the hands of a hierarchy who will abuse you and abuse the privileges. The best way is to have someone that believes the religion, strip themselves of power exactly as Christ, the prototype of the saved man did.

Question 5: The inclusiveness you were talking about, when you were talking about revelation, that revelation from God can come from any source, and I guess our responsibility would be to be able to identify that. Which would make us have to think a lot more and ponder, I guess. How would you, any keys you would give, not to bring up that, keys have a loaded... Any suggestions? That inclusiveness is quite broad because wherever we look we would have to be able to consider whoever we're talking to, could have something from God for us, right?

Denver Snuffer: That's true. Some people who absolutely despise me say some very intelligent things that make me think. Some of what they have to say is true and ought to be respected and help make you a better person.

The way to recognize the truth is to live your life consistent with whatever truth it is that you have. If you're faithful to what you know to be the truth, none of us will have all of the truth initially but it will grow brighter and brighter as you show respect to the truth. In fact, the more consistently you show respect to the truth you already have, the more your life becomes in conflict with everything that there is down here that pulls in an opposite direction. Hence, the saying that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things cannot produce the faith necessary for salvation, which means that if you're remaining loyal to the truth and an entire church stands up to condemn you.

I don't think it was easy for Martin Luther. I don't think it was easy for Joseph Smith. The adversaries that Joseph Smith confronted initially were ministers of other faiths but later were ministers of Mormonism.

Imagine – the gal that asked the question, I guess it's now politically correct from a Democrat – the girl that asked the question about polygamy. Imagine if you will that Joseph Smith didn't practice it and was opposed to it, and put him back in his historical setting with that problem, with that attitude, and he's opposed to it. There's nothing he could have done other than what he did do in the steps that he took that ultimately lead to arrest, imprisonment, and death. Which is why, given the vagaries of the historical record I am not eager to reach a conclusion. I know that people think that I have ruled it out altogether. All I've done is said, wait a minute, there's a whole lot in the historical record that ought to create doubt in your minds. I'm saying that if there's enough doubt in your mind then stop short of reaching the conclusion that Joseph Smith did and taught and was what the histories say he was. It is possible that he was a man of virtue, a man of innocence, and a man who lived his life consistent with the truth as he understood it. If you do the same the light within you will grow and you'll be able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is error, and what is of God and what is not.

Thank you all very much. We are out of time.

[End Transcript – Kiyoko Ball v. 1.1]