

The Religion of the Fathers

Aravada Springs, NV

March 27, 2021

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I have to say: As time goes on, you folks look more and more eccentric. (That's just from up here, looking out.)

I want to thank the organizers for putting it together, and I want to thank them for the invite to come talk. I also want to say before I begin that there's no reason to think that I am implying anything apart from what is explicitly stated in the talk.

The name "Jesus Christ" is Greek. An Anglicized Hebrew version of the name is "Joshua the Messiah" or, more phonetically correct, "Yeshua the Mashiach." God promised Adam there would be a Messiah or Christ sent to save his (Adam's) descendants. Angels preached the gospel of the promised Messiah to righteous men and women beginning with Father Adam. Abraham was taught **that** same gospel. Jesus the Messiah was born in Bethlehem, lived as a mortal, and fulfilled God's Messianic promises. He was **not** an innovator. Instead, He restored that gospel originally revealed to the Patriarchal Fathers.

This talk is about understanding the worship of our Messiah. An 1833 revelation promised further information to be given the faithful who obeyed God's commandments:

*I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know **how** to worship, and know **what** you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness, for if you keep my commandments, you shall **receive** of his fullness and be glorified in me as I am glorified in the Father. Therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace. (T&C 93:7, emphasis added)*

A prophecy of Malachi is recorded in **every** volume of Scripture: Old Covenants, New Covenants, Book of Mormon, and Teachings and Commandments. The prophecy promises that before the great and dreadful day of the Lord the hearts of the children will turn to the Fathers or (as stated in the JST Old Covenants): *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall **seal** the heart of the Fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 1:12 RE, emphasis added).*

Nephi quoted it to Joseph Smith a little differently: *And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall **turn** to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be **utterly wasted** at his coming (Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE, emphasis added).*

Two **versions** of Malachi's prophecy have the very same interesting wording. Both the Old Covenants and the Book of Mormon twice use the word "**heart**" in the singular, but "**fathers**" and "**children**" are plural. It's a small change but an important and revealing one.

The Fathers are of **one heart**, and to the extent there are to be children sealed to them, the children will also be of one (and the same) heart.

In this talk, I hope to clarify and identify who the “fathers” are. It’s not your immediate ancestors from the last 20 or so generations; all of them who died without the required knowledge and acceptance of fullness of the gospel are in spirit prison. Therefore, they are damned and cannot progress until preparations are made to improve their resurrection.

Our hearts must become one. United hearts seem to be in a distant latitude from where **we** are now. Even then, before any attempt at “sealing” begins, the first question is the identity of the “fathers” to whom our singular heart must be sealed to avoid being “cursed”—or as Christ warned, “utterly wasted at his coming.”

There is a **true** religion; it was revealed first to Adam. Adam not only received and practiced that true religion, it is through **him** that **every subsequent** dispensation of the gospel has been revealed. Joseph Smith taught:

*Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the Ancient of Days, or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great grand progenitor, of whom it is said in another place, He is Michael, because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but he was the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ **has been** revealed from Heaven and will continue **to be** revealed from henceforth. **Adam** holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed.*

*...that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the **preceding** dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus.*

*Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set **Adam** to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. (T&C 140:3,5-6; emphasis added)*

God gave to Adam the right of “dominion” over the Earth and everything (correspondingly, **everyone**) on the Earth. That was part of the original true religion. When the true religion was combined with the right to hold dominion or preside as a High Priest, it was called the “Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God.” This was shortened to “Holy Order.” It has also been called the Melchizedek Priesthood. Because of the too frequent use of the term “Melchizedek Priesthood” by the LDS Church and resulting confusion about the meaning of

the term, I've redefined "priesthood" and avoid making use of that term without clarification. In this talk, the term "Holy Order" is used to mean the original priestly position conferred on Adam and thereafter passed on to the one eldest, worthy descendant in each subsequent generation, and the religion then taught by that holder was correct and held salvation.

The Patriarchal Fathers are Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem (or Melchizedek), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These 15 generational heads stood, **like Adam**, as God's Patriarchal Father and High Priest at the head of God's family on Earth. There were many others who believed in the religion taught by Adam and the Patriarchal Fathers, but the Holy Order given to Adam was always held in its fullness by the eldest worthy descendant in each subsequent generation until—skipping generations to—Abraham.

Abraham was the first precedent for "**sealing**" into the Order, tying a descendant separated by generations into the position of patriarchal successor to Shem (or Melchizedek). This precedent helps explain Joseph Smith's later practice of sealing others to him. Given the examples of Abraham and Joseph Smith, it becomes clear that the Holy Order does not have to be exclusively dynastic (passing in one family line) but can branch out to include any other worthy member of the line, however distant or separated by generations.

The Patriarchal head of the Holy Order is the shepherd for the faithful, husbandman for the Creation, and teacher responsible for dispensing Divine knowledge. It is more than competent gospel teaching; it is authoritatively dispensing a message from a position established and recognized by God, hence Joseph Smith's observation that *there are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers* (T&C 139:12). When the Holy Order is active, these obligations attach to the position in every generation.

The first or Patriarchal Fathers learned the true religion from Adam and practiced it under his direction. Adam taught the first eight patriarchs born after him. Their religion was Adam's religion, and their understanding reached back to the Garden of Eden.

The majority of Adam's family abandoned the truth. From the time of Adam, most people who have been given the opportunity to receive the gospel in their respective dispensations have dwindled in unbelief. The Book of Mormon repeatedly describes people **dwindling** in unbelief. An angel foretold to Nephi (the first prophet-writer in the first book of the Book of Mormon) that **all** his descendants **and** his brothers' descendants would dwindle in unbelief.

Dwindling happens whenever light and truth are neglected, forgotten, or rejected. The term "unbelief" applies not when people cease believing, but when they hold **false** beliefs. Those false beliefs include incomplete, unfinished, or incorrect ideas. Unbelief comes as much from rejecting Scripture as from deleting or changing ordinances.

The truth has dwindled, and there are not accurate enough Scriptures available to know all that has been lost. Upheavals in history have produced a barrier keeping the first religion

away from us. Margaret Barker has spent a lifetime studying ancient Israel, largely pursuing the First Temple religion of Israel. Her goal is modest. She's trying to reconstruct the Old Testament era from Solomon to Ezra. **We** are trying to reach back to Adam. Even with her more modest aim, she has concluded it is impossible for us to know what really took place. She calls the present state of all our understanding nothing more than "supposition":

The exile in Babylon is a formidable barrier to anyone wanting to reconstruct the religious beliefs and practices of ancient Jerusalem. If we are to discover any possible reason for the distinction between the sons of El/Elyon and the sons of Yahweh it is a barrier, which has to be acknowledged. Enormous developments took place in the wake of enormous destruction, and these two factors make certainty quite impossible. They make *all* certainty impossible, and this too must be acknowledged, for the customary descriptions of ancient Israel's religion are themselves no more than supposition. (Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*, p.12, citations omitted, italics in original)

Belief is only possible by receiving the truth. It is important to have the truth in order to acquire belief. The Lord commanded Joseph Smith to revise the Bible in order to permit "belief" (or "correct understanding"). One of the corrections Joseph made was to the exchange between Jesus and the lawyers. Luke was revised to now read: *Woe unto you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scriptures. You enter not in yourselves into the kingdom, and those who were entering in, you hindered* (Luke 8:17 RE). Without the "fullness of the scriptures," it is impossible to have belief. Truth is the key of knowledge.

Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible was designed to restore the Bible to read: *Even as they are in [God's] own bosom, to the salvation of [God's] elect* (T&C 18:6). From the command to commence the corrected Bible project until the command to publish it, Joseph's inspired revision was referred to in **14** revelations. The revised Bible was quoted exclusively in Lectures on Faith. The Bible revision was essential for people to have belief. Without it, the saints would dwindle in unbelief because they lacked the truths God intended to be known and accepted by His followers. Joseph Smith knew this and warned about how crucial it was for the revised Bible (which he called the "fullness of the scriptures") to be published for believers. In an October 1831 Conference, he taught the saints: "God had often sealed up the Heavens because of covetousness in the church. Said the Lord would cut his work short in righteousness and except the church receive the fullness of the scriptures they would yet fall" (*Joseph Smith Papers* [hereafter *JSP*], *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831-January 1833*, p.85).

The fullness of the Scriptures was never published in Joseph Smith's lifetime—**or ever by any church**. The RLDS Church published an incomplete and altered version that excluded revisions made by Joseph Smith and included revisions made by a committee. A significant part of the work accomplished by Joseph Smith has been neglected by the LDS or altered by the RLDS (now the Community of Christ), and **both** of those groups have dwindled in unbelief. Because they have incomplete Scriptures, having rejected part of what the Lord has as "scriptures in His own bosom" (see T&C 18:6), it **cannot** be otherwise. All of the

break-off groups that have separated from the LDS or RLDS have similarly dwindled in unbelief.

The Restoration has not been able to advance until recently when a penitent group of believers repented and endeavored to recover and reclaim what was discarded. In the inspired "Prayer for Covenant," these past failures are acknowledged, and the Lord was asked to accept our repentance. Here are some excerpts from that prayer:

*We are mindful that in 1832 the gentile saints were condemned for vanity and unbelief because they treated lightly the things they had received, and they were warned by you that they would remain under condemnation **until** they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, not only to say, but to do. You commanded the gentiles that they bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom, and if they failed to do so, there remained a scourge and [a] judgment to be poured out upon those who claimed to be the children of Zion. They **failed** to bring forth the required fruit, and were judged and scourged, and then violently driven out of Jackson County, Missouri.*

*...Even today the gentile saints justify lying to others as part of their religion, believing you will vindicate them in their dishonesty. They seek deep to hide their counsel from others, and now deny your judgments against their ancestors, claiming you have never rejected them. They have, as you [have] foretold, spoken both good and evil of your prophet Joseph. They ascribe many of their wicked practices **to** Joseph, who correctly told their ancestors that **they never knew him** — for indeed, the gentile saints have grown distant from you because of their willful rebellion, pride, foolishness, and blindness. We acknowledge that **we** must distinguish ourselves from **them**, admit the errors of the past, and in the depths of humility, seek to be reclaimed as yours.*

*The neglect and rebellion of the saints during Joseph's day and thereafter included how they have treated the scriptures, **carelessly** inserting numerous errors and [the] transcription problems into the Book of Mormon and other commandments and revelations. The original Book of Mormon translation manuscript was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House where water and mold destroyed over 70% of the text. This was a similitude to the restoration provided by you through Joseph. Just as the original manuscript was allowed to decay, with only approximately 28% surviving, so likewise the Restoration has also decayed.*

...The other revelations given through Joseph Smith have also not been maintained and transmitted to us in their purity.

*...We ask to be corrected in anything we have gathered and ask to be instructed by you to discard what ought to be discarded, and inspired to keep only those things which should be kept. We were not responsible for neglecting your warnings, for treating lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments, nor for failing to do as you asked, but **have inherited** that legacy and acknowledge that we also suffer under your condemnation as our inheritance.*

...Though only a remnant of the original faith you established through Joseph has likewise survived, we ask to be reconnected as a people to you by covenant, to make us yours, connected to a living vine, restored as a people, and numbered with Israel. We seek as a people to honor you and...keep your commandments so that a living body of your disciples may again exist on the earth. We desire that we may rise up through your grace and mercy so that you will perform your oath and vindicate your promises to the fathers concerning a faithful latter-day body of gentiles to be numbered with the remnant of Jacob, that your kingdom may come and your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

...We ask that you accept these books as yours so that people of faith may then rely upon this work as your word to this generation, ...a standard for governing ourselves, as a law, and as a covenant, to establish a rule for our faith, and as the expression of our religion, so we may have correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth. If this body of writings are not acceptable, we ask that you guide us further so we may correct, remove, or add whatever you would require for the writings to become acceptable for a covenant and [a] law, a rule of faith, as a correct expression of the religion that honors you, so [that] we may be in possession of correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth. (T&C 156:2,7-8,10-11,15,17; emphasis added)

The prayer and the effort to recover the fullness of the Scriptures pleased the Lord. He answered by commending the recovery and **accepting** the Scriptures. His “Answer to Prayer for Covenant” states, in part:

(And I’m gonna add: We asked Him to tell us if something ought be deleted and to tell us if something ought be added, and He did both of those things. Things were deleted and things then were added in response to the prayer.)

But His answer included these:

The records in the form you have of the Old Covenants, given from Adam until Moses and from Moses to John, are of great worth and can serve my purposes, and are acceptable for this time.

The records of my apostles containing my New Covenants were to contain the fullness of my gospel, but during the formation of the great and abominable church, many parts were discarded and other parts were altered. False brethren who did not fear me intended to corrupt and to pervert the right way, to blind the eyes and harden the hearts of others, in order to obtain power and authority over them.

Conspiracies have corrupted the records, beginning among the Jews, and again following the time of my apostles, and yet again following the time of Joseph and Hyrum. As you have labored with the records you have witnessed the alterations and insertions, and your effort to recover them pleases me and is of great worth. (T&C 157:13-15)

Ours are the only Scriptures approved by God as *sufficient for the labor[s] now underway* (T&C 177:2). However, the Lord stopped short of endorsing them as without flaws.

The records you have gathered as scriptures yet lack many of my words, have errors throughout, and contain things that are not of me, because the records you used in your labors have not been maintained nor guarded against the cunning plans of false brethren who have been deceived by Satan. (T&C 157:12)

The Lord explained:

What you have gathered as scriptures are acceptable to me for this time and contain many plain and precious things. Nevertheless, whoso is enlightened by the spirit shall obtain the greater benefit, because you need not think they contain all my words nor that more will not be given, for there are [yet] many things...to be restored unto my people.

...There will yet be records restored from all the tribes, that will be gathered [together] again [in] one, and also as I have said, there is some truth in the Apocrypha, including the Pseudepigrapha and scrolls recovered at Nag Hammadi, and other New Testament texts uncovered since the time of Joseph Smith, and findings at Qumran, and there are other records yet to be recovered; [and] whoso is enlightened by the spirit shall obtain benefit by their careful study. (Ibid. vs. 44,47)

We have the best available, but they're to be understood through the power of the spirit. In another revelation, the Lord explained this about our scriptures:

These scriptures are sent forth to be my warning to the world, my comfort to the faithful, my counsel to the meek, my reproof to the proud, my rebuke to the contentious, and my condemnation of the wicked. They are my invitation to all mankind to flee from corruption, repent and be baptized in my name, and prepare for the coming judgment. (T&C 177:3)

Our Scriptures will do no good if they're not read or studied. We, like all other Restoration churches and groups, can **also** dwindle in unbelief.

Unlike the many existing and past Restoration believers, **we** must fight against falling into unbelief. Nephi warned **us** about the churches of the Restoration:

*Yea, they have **all** gone out of the way, they have become corrupted; because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride, they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing, and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart because in their pride [they're] puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads, yea, ...because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have **all** gone astray, save it be a*

few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because [they're] taught by the precepts of men. (2 Nephi 12:2 RE, emphasis added)

We have no fine sanctuaries, and until commanded and instructed to do so, we do not anticipate building anything other than a single temple. We do not rob the poor, because our tithes are used only to aid the poor. We do not regard one above another, and we have no hierarchy in a position to lead anyone astray. Nevertheless, **we** can still be proud, rob the poor by our overindulgence, and participate in abominations and whoredoms. Some foolish people among us have done these things. They must repent, or they cannot be gathered.

We have little reason to be unguarded. We can fail to study the recovered Scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern our daily walk. We can fail to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant and to use the Scriptures to correct ourselves and guide our words, thoughts, and deeds. We can let the lusts of the flesh to control us. And when we do, we choose to dwindle in unbelief.

You have the new Scriptures. The leather-bound copies will be shortly distributed. Use them. Study them. Show appreciation to the Lord by refusing to dwindle in unbelief.

Joseph Smith was able to revise the Bible through God's inspiration. It is important to prize the corrected Bible and do better than the saints of Joseph's day.

Despite nearly universal apostasy and rebellion against God **while Adam lived**, the line of Patriarchal Fathers **preserved** the true religion. Noah had a father who knew and was taught by Adam. Noah's living grandfather, great-grandfather, and ancestors for seven generations knew and were taught by Adam. Learning about God from His messengers and priests was (and still is) necessary to avoid dwindling in unbelief and falling into apostasy. The "angels" who ministered **included mortals** who were given Divine knowledge to teach.

Noah preserved the original religion of God through the cataclysm of the flood. Three of the sons of Noah were taught it, and Noah's most faithful son inherited the right. The fullness of the Holy Order was conferred upon Shem (who received the title "Melchizedek"). A descendant of Ham falsely claimed he held the Holy Order, but he could only institute an imitation of the Order.

After Melchizedek, an apostasy lasted until Abraham. Although he was raised by an idolater and lamented that his fathers offered sacrifices to idols, Abraham searched for the true God of Heaven. Abraham **found** God, and the covenant of the first Fathers was renewed and conferred upon him by Melchizedek. Generations of apostates were excluded from the Holy Order, but Abraham was adopted into the line by Melchizedek, thereby restoring continuity **back** to Adam.

Abraham represents the key Patriarchal Father prophesied of in Malachi. Abraham not only renews the covenant of "the fathers" (**including** Noah and Enoch), but also through the Abrahamic covenant, God established Abraham as the new head of the family of God on

Earth. God told Abraham: *As many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (Abraham 3:1 RE). For us, connecting to Abraham is akin to the original Patriarchs' connection to Adam. Turning the heart of the children to the Fathers is a required part of the gospel. And after God's covenant with him, salvation for all subsequent generations is dependent on being accounted Abraham's seed.

The covenant with Abraham was renewed with Isaac, who also became the Patriarchal head and husbandman-father of the faithful. Believers thereafter likewise are numbered as Isaac's "seed" through the renewal and extension of the covenant. God renewed it again with Jacob. The covenantal relationship of these three Patriarchs in three successive generations is the reason the Scriptures use "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob" as **one name** for **Deity**.

Accordingly, the more we can know of Abraham, the more we can know of the covenant with the Fathers spoken of by Malachi. Any book written by Abraham should be priceless to us.

The Book of Abraham translated by Joseph Smith has become a battleground **because it is so important** to our salvation. On one side are those who hope Joseph has made it possible to be sealed to the Fathers. Opposing them are those who cannot believe Joseph supplied a text of any value for salvation. The fight over the Book of Abraham is now aimed at the entire Restoration and Joseph's Divine calling. Because of that controversy, I need to address the authenticity of the Book of Abraham in order to discuss God's covenant with the Fathers.

There are several threads of thought to be drawn together. The first one involves understanding the different eras of written language used at the time of Abraham.

Most scholars believe Abraham lived around 2100 BC during the 9th Dynasty of Egypt. Moses lived around 1400 BC. (700 years later, Moses lived.) Egyptian texts date back to before 3400 BC. A written Hebrew language was not developed until 900 BC, a half-millennium **after** Moses. Accordingly, since Moses composed the first five books of the Old Covenants, he would have used Egyptian characters. Hence, the Scriptures written on the plates of brass recovered from Laban and used by the Nephites were written in Egyptian.

The Hebrew language developed as a spoken language first and a written language added sometime later. The Book of Mormon confirms that although the Nephites spoke Hebrew, they used Egyptian characters to write their records. As Moroni finished his record his father started, Moroni explained what they used for the small, neatly carved characters on the Nephite records:

*We have written this record according to our knowledge, in the **characters** which are **called** among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us according to **our** manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we*

*should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been **altered by us also.***
(Mormon 4:11 RE, emphasis added)

The Nephites used only Egyptian “characters” for their writing and, apparently, not Egyptian language (at least not in the same way as would an Egyptian). This is at best an ambiguous point. How are we to understand it? Egyptian characters are not alphabet equivalent. A single character can mean many words, and their written form compresses language. We do not have **anything** equivalent to this in our common experience to make a meaningful analogy. Perhaps Pitman Shorthand would give an idea of it.

One other idea that may help is to think of Romance languages. All Romance languages use a common set of written characters but employ them for entirely different languages; the “reformed Egyptian” used “characters” to write a different quasi-Hebrew language.

For a comparison: Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian are all different languages that descended from Latin. They all use the Latin alphabet. But the words they write and the meanings of those words are different from one another. Occasionally, the different languages use identical letters for different words. In English (a non-Romance language), “mesa” means “an isolated, flat-topped hill with steep slopes.” But in Spanish, it means “table.”

The English language descended from German. So did Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, and Scots. These languages also use the Latin alphabet shared with the Latin-descended Romance language. But try to imagine another language that employs pictographic and short-hand figures to convey both words and sentences. If you’re moving information from such a language into any of the Latin alphabet languages, the result would be a far larger volume of translated text from the original text.

The Book of Mormon used Egyptian “characters” to write a non-Egyptian form of language to compress the material. How the Nephites achieved this over a millennium of “reforming” their written language was not clarified. However, if the actual plates of the Book of Mormon were to be examined by a modern Egyptian scholar, they would not be able to make any sense of it.

Hebrew is written and read from right to left. English is written from left to right. When I began learning Hebrew alphabet, to help me remember the sounds I would write my name using Hebrew characters in a left-to-right English format. “Dalet-Vav-Resh” was close enough, since vowels did not exist in Old Testament Hebrew. Since Hebrew would read these letters in reverse order, it would be read “Vav-Dalet” and pronounced something like “Ervid” and would mean “rod.” And that’s not my name.

Then when I began learning the Greek alphabet, to help me remember the sounds, I would also write my name using Greek characters. But I added the letter “v” because it was the only way I could think of to make it work: “Delta-Epsilon-Nu-V-Epsilon-Rho.” Because “v” is English, it would not be used by a Greek speaker to figure the word out. Therefore, it would

be pronounced something like “Dener” and would mean “steward.” That’s also not my name.

When you use only characters borrowed from another language’s alphabet but write things for your own native language, the result is a hybrid that requires an explanation. Hence, Moroni’s explanation that the Nephites only employed the Egyptian “characters” (and not the Egyptian language) in etching the record. This idea will figure in later in this talk.

Also significant is the assignment given to Joseph Smith to reform the Bible text. Joseph Smith began working on a revised Bible in June 1830. Joseph used the King James Version as his source text to accomplish the revision. There were few (if any) Greek or Hebrew materials used. Nothing was rendered from one language into another. The work was based on revelation, inspiration, and insight given to Joseph Smith by the Lord. The LDS Historian’s Office has correctly called the work a “revision” of the Bible. **However technically inappropriate** we may think it is to use the word “translation” for Joseph’s work, it is **always called** a “translation” by the Lord in numerous revelations to Joseph.

By November the material about Adam, Cain, Abel, and the first murderer had been finished. The work advanced to include the Enoch material in December, and on 7 December 1830, Sidney Rigdon was commanded to act as scribe to “write for him.” The project included correcting the Bible, as well as numerous additions. It was undertaken so that the Bible would be rewritten and, according to the Lord, to become *even as they are in [God’s] own bosom* (T&C 18:6). The work of restoring Genesis advanced quickly. By February ~~1832~~ [1831], Genesis 1:1 through 5:12 was finished. These are eight chapters of the Book of Moses (as published in the Pearl of Great Price by the LDS Church). In these early materials, there are notable additions made regarding:

- Moses,
- The Creation of this world,
- An explanation of Satan’s pre-Earth existence and history,
- The fall of man,
- Adam and Eve, and
- Enoch (among many others).

So much material involving Enoch was added to chapter 4 of Genesis that it’s become referred to as the “Book of Enoch.”

When the Genesis account got to Melchizedek, a flood of new material was provided. In the new Melchizedek materials, we received clarifying information about the Holy Order:

*Now Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness. And when a child, he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained a high priest after the Order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, it being after the Order of the Son of God, which Order came not by man, nor the will of men, neither by father nor mother, neither by beginning of days nor end of years, **but of God**. And it was delivered unto men by the*

calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.

For God, having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself that everyone being ordained after this Order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course, to put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God, to do all things according to his will, according to his command subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world. (Genesis 7:18-19 RE, emphasis added)

From this addition, we learn that faith—not priesthood—is the power that stops the mouths of lions and quenches the violence of fire. Also, ordination to the Holy Order comes from the voice of God and is conferred according to God’s will. That will of God is predicated on two things:

- Belief on the name of God in **this** world, **and**
- The will of the Son of God **before the foundation** of this world.

Despite the **many** additions and corrections to the Genesis text, **very little** was added in the Joseph Smith Bible revisions about **Abraham**. Given the importance of Abraham as a pivotal covenant Father, **not** adding an expanded account of his life to Genesis is a **significant** omission. The Lord told Abraham: *For as many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (Abraham 3:1 RE). Given Abraham’s importance, we should expect that any revision of Genesis would add as much about him as Genesis added about Adam and Enoch and Melchizedek. But the JST Bible does not do so.

If the Book of Abraham materials were added to the Genesis text, it would replace and expand the text from Genesis chapter 6, midway in verse 8, through chapter 7, midway through verse 4. The Book of Abraham supplies the missing important details we need to know that were omitted from the Genesis account of the Inspired Version of the Bible.

It appears that the foreknowledge of God made it unnecessary for a JST expansion of Genesis materials about Abraham. When Michael Chandler later sold four mummies, two papyrus scrolls, and some papyrus fragments (in July 1835) to buyers in Kirtland, events were set in motion that resulted in adding Abrahamic details to our Scriptures. Three parties (one of whom was Joseph Smith) paid the \$2,400 sale price. The Book of Abraham was then produced after Joseph Smith got access to the papyri. Instead of being part of the JST Bible, it is called a “translation” of a papyrus scroll.

The “translation” began in Kirtland from July to November 1835 and produced the text from Abraham 1:1 through first half of 4:2 in the Restoration Edition of Scriptures. (In the LDS scriptures it’s Abraham 1:1 through 2:18.) There are three different copies of the

translation made in Kirtland in existence. These have been identified as Book of Abraham Manuscript A, B, and C.

- Manuscript A is in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams.
- Manuscript B is in the handwriting of Warren Parrish.
- Manuscript C is in the handwriting of Warren Parrish and William W. Phelps.

None of the Kirtland era translations of the Book of Abraham include the introduction to the book. That introduction attributes the text to a papyrus written “by the hand of Abraham.” That statement has been the focus of a great deal of controversy. It states: “A translation of some ancient records that have fallen into our hands, from the catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called “The Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus.” Those words are in the handwriting of Willard Richards, and there is no existing source to explain why he added them to the publication of the Book of Abraham in the *Times & Seasons* in March 1842 (see *JSP, Revelations and Translations, Volume 4: Book of Abraham and Related Manuscripts*, p. 245).

A small library of material has been written on the relationship (or lack of relationship) between the remaining Joseph Smith Egyptian papyri fragments and the Book of Abraham. It’s an understatement to say that subject is controversial. But given the importance of Abraham’s status as the “Father of the righteous,” it is important to discuss the controversy.

If one is objective, the text of the Book of Abraham presents insurmountable problems if it must satisfy the current scholarly understanding of the Egyptian papyri purchased from Michael Chandler. If the authenticity of the Book of Abraham must be based on that, it’s very problematic. That is not to say that the scholar’s approach to this controversy is without its weaknesses.

The Egyptian language had two earliest forms; the first to develop was hieroglyphic and dates from before 4000 BC. At about 390 BC... Oh, excuse me: At about 390 AD, Byzantine Emperor Theodosius I closed all religious temples that he regarded as pagan throughout his empire. Because of this, hieroglyphs were no longer used. Egypt was inside his empire. Therefore, the Egyptian temples closed, and the hieroglyphic language was neglected and ultimately abandoned altogether. For 1500 years, the language was lost. Egyptian monuments remained, but no one had a clue what the hieroglyphs meant.

After being lost for a millennium-and-a-half, hieroglyphic interpretation has been recovered only in a small part through work based on the Rosetta Stone. In July 1799, French soldiers were rebuilding a fort near the town of Rosetta and discovered a stone inscribed with three scripts: hieroglyphs in the top register, Greek at the bottom, and a script later identified as “Demotic” in the middle. Demotic was a still later form of Egyptian writing and was the common form spoken at the time the Rosetta Stone was originally carved.

Using the Greek from the Rosetta Stone as a guide to decipher the hieroglyphs, an attempt has been made to understand hieroglyphic Egyptian. The Rosetta stone contains a decree

from Ptolemy V (dates from 196 BC). This is at the very end of a dying Egyptian culture, religion, language, and history. This era is known as the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Greeks controlled Egypt after Alexander the Great's conquest in 332 BC. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided between four generals. At that time, General Ptolemy assumed control over Egypt. The likelihood that the form of Egyptian hieroglyphic language dating from 196 BC is an accurate guide for understanding the way the language was understood **millennia** earlier is at best doubtful. If we accept the dating of 2100 BC for Abraham's life, there would have been **two millennia** of time separating the language of Abraham from the language of the Rosetta Stone.

The most basic linguistic problem is to understand how language changes with time.

Imagine you had a time machine. If you are like me, there would be many times and places that you would like to visit. In most of them, however, no one spoke English. If you could not afford the Six-Month-Immersion Trip to, say, ancient Egypt, you would have to limit yourself to a time and place where you could speak the language. Consider, perhaps, a trip to England. How far back in time could you go and still be understood? Say we go to London in the year 1400...

As you emerge from the time machine, a good first line to speak, something reassuring and recognizable, might be the opening line of the Lord's Prayer. The first line in a conservative, old-fashioned version of the Modern Standard English would be, "*Our Father, who is in heaven, blessed be your name.*" In the English of 1400, as spoken by Chaucer, you would say, "*Oure fadir that art in heunes, halwid be thy name.*" Now turn the dial back another four hundred years to 1000 CE, and in Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, you would say, "*Faeader, ure thu the eart on heofonum, si thin nama gehalgod.*" A chat with Alfred the Great would be out of the question.

Most normal spoken languages over the course of a thousand years undergo enough change that speakers at either end of the millennium, attempting a conversation, would have difficulty understanding [one another]. (David W. Anthony, *The Horse, The Wheel and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World*, p.22, footnotes omitted, italics in original)

Consequently, it would be surprising—bordering on miraculous—if the way Egyptian hieroglyphs were understood at the time [of] the Rosetta Stone proves identical to the way that they were understood two-thousand years earlier in the lifetime of Abraham.

That having been said, Egyptologists believe they have fragments of the Joseph Smith papyri translated by him to compose the Book of Abraham. They rely on their ability to interpret these fragments using reconstructed Ptolemaic Egyptian. Using their skill-set, they are confident that the fragments do not contain a Book of Abraham but are, instead, an Egyptian Book of Breathings (a sen-sen papyri). They conclude Joseph Smith was unable to "translate" the source document.

There are multiple ways apologists have dealt with this problem:

- One approach, including Hugh Nibley's analysis, is that there was an Egyptian papyri source but dispute that the papyrus fragments we have are the actual text Joseph translated. This group of apologists assume what Joseph actually translated was destroyed in the Chicago fire. The approach accepts Willard Richards' *Times & Seasons* introduction explaining that it is a translation of records from the catacombs of Egypt, originating with Abraham.
- A second apologetic approach is to claim there never was a source papyrus for the Book of Abraham. This position ignores Willard Richards' *Times & Seasons* introduction. This approach claims the source for the Book of Abraham was entirely revelation from Heaven. The LDS Church now seems to accept this view.
- A third apologetic approach is that the Michael Chandler papyri were indeed the source for the Book of Abraham, and the text can actually be recovered using the Joseph Smith Papyri. These advocates make a full-throated defense of Willard Richards' *Times & Seasons* introduction. Until the scholarly understanding of Egyptology challenged Mormons, this was the overwhelming position of those who accepted the Book of Abraham as Scripture. In this arena of argument, there is a belief that the hieroglyphs contained hidden, esoteric meaning encoded in their form. As Dan Vogel describes it, "...other, more spiritual, mystical, and theologically powerful messages were encoded in their pictographic etymologies" (*Book of Abraham Apologetics: A Review and Critique*, p.67). Vogel rejects that idea.

There are other approaches. All of them address the issue of what perspective should be used to explain Joseph's translation.

- Should we assume the illustrations were original to Abraham? If so, then to interpret them, maybe we should look to how Egyptians in Abraham's day, or Abraham himself, would have understood them.
- Or should we assume the illustrations were original to Abraham but modified over time for other uses by the ancient Egyptians?
- Or do we assume the illustrations were connected to the Book of Abraham when the Joseph Smith papyri were created in the Ptolemaic period?
- Do we need to consider what Egyptians of that time thought of these drawings to represent?
- Or should we assume the illustrations were connected to the Book of Abraham for the first time in the Ptolemaic period, but to interpret them we ought to look at what Egyptian priests integrating Jewish, Greek, and Mesopotamian religious practices into native Egyptian practices would have thought about them?
- Or should we instead look at how Jews of that area would have understood them?
- Or were the illustrations never part of an ancient Book of Abraham but instead adapted by Joseph Smith to depict the ancient text he revealed and translated?

Well, in the give-and-take following deciphering the Rosetta Stone and the research done to develop some understanding of the Egyptian languages, the apologists who think the Book

of Abraham was directly translated from the Joseph Smith papyri appear to hold the weaker position. However, that's not the end of the matter.

In every case in which he has produced a translation, Joseph Smith has made it clear that his inspiration is by no means bound to any ancient text but is free to take wings at any time. To insist, as the critics do, that "translation" may be understood only in the sense in which they choose to understand it, while the Prophet **clearly** demonstrates that he intends it to be taken in a very **different** sense, is to make up the rules of the game one is playing as well as being the umpire. (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, p. 4, emphasis added)

Since Joseph Smith did not explain how the text was "translated," that issue is left to conjecture. The entire debate between Egyptian scholars and apologists centers on the translation process. However, Joseph Smith **did not** use the term "translation" as would a scholar. One example illustrates the difference:

While Oliver Cowdery was the scribe during the Book of Mormon translation, he and Joseph discussed whether the Apostle John died or continued on Earth. The question was answered by a revelation. The written account in our Scripture about the answer includes this explanation: *A revelation given to Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery in Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829, when they desired to know whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried on earth. **Translated from** [a] parchment, written and hid up by himself* (Joseph Smith History 13:17, emphasis added). Joseph did not have the parchment. Therefore, there was no parchment source for the revelation. It came as Joseph Smith received it from God through *the Urim and Thummim* (Ibid.).

Sidney Rigdon arrived in Fayette (during December 1830) as the Bible revision was then underway. The project involved editing and correcting the Bible. That project was also **consistently referred** to as a "translation" of the Bible, even though it would be more correctly called an "inspired revision." On December 7th, 1830, the commandment was given to Sidney: *You shall write for him, and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in my own bosom, to the salvation of [mine] own elect...* (T&C 18:6). This helped explain what the term "translated" meant for the Bible revision project. It clearly refers to something different than how the term is generally used and understood.

When Enoch's City was taken to Heaven, it is described as being "translated" or a "translation." For Enoch, "translated" meant moving someone from Earth into Heaven and changing him or her so they could survive there. This meaning can also be understood and used for the "translation" of the parchment of John. It means taking something recorded and preserved in Heaven and moving it back to Earth where it had been lost.

I think that the word "translated" as it refers to the Book of Abraham should be understood in **this sense**: It was something recorded in Heaven and was moved back to the Earth where it had been lost. Regardless of whether or not conveying Abraham's testimony from Heaven back to Earth required a surviving papyrus scroll, that question is not as important as the accuracy and truthfulness of the Book of Abraham account that originated with

Father Abraham. Only if the text is true, accurate, and legitimately Abraham's would it be worthy for canonizing as Scripture. **Joseph Smith clearly intended for the Book of Abraham to be Scripture.**

Apart from using the word "translation," the content of the material bears all the indicia of an ancient record from the time of Father Abraham. The account in the Book of Abraham can be compared with Abraham's history in Genesis. The comparison shows there are over a dozen details added through the Book of Abraham account that are **missing** from Genesis. For example:

- The famine in the homeland of Ur,
- Haran['s] (Abraham's brother) death in the famine,
- Terah (Abraham's father) repenting of his idolatry,
- Terah's return to idolatry,
- Believers becoming the "seed of Abraham" and inherit the blessings through him,
- Abraham held the priesthood,
- Abraham earnestly sought God,
- An angel of the Lord was sent to rescue Abraham,
- Abraham was familiar with Egyptian gods,
- Abraham was 62 years old (not 75, as in Genesis) when he left Haran,
- Abraham made converts while in Haran,
- Abraham prayed for God to end the famine in Chaldea, and
- The Lord instructed ~~Abraham~~ [Abram] to say that Sarai was his sister.

All these differences (related to Abraham) can be found in ancient sources recorded in **non-biblical** texts. If ancient sources confirm events set out in the Book of Abraham **did happen** in Abraham's life, it's hard to simply dismiss the validity of the book as inauthentic. It only makes the most sense to consider... The most important thing to consider is the text itself when deciding the validity of the Book of Abraham.

One might dismiss a single element found in a nonbiblical tradition that parallels the Book of Abraham as mere coincidence. However, when a large number of such elements come together from diverse times and places, they overwhelmingly support the Book of Abraham as an ancient text. There are far too many references to Terah as an idolator, Abraham as a sacrificial victim, Abraham as an astronomer, and Abraham as a missionary to lightly dismiss their antiquity. In addition, many other distinctive elements found in these traditions, though not repeated frequently, add to the overall strength of the unique elements found in the Book of Abraham. (Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, p. xxxv)

Facsimile 3 includes the comment that the scene depicts *Abraham...reasoning upon the principles of astronomy in the king's court*. This echoes the account by Josephus that (to the Egyptians) Abraham, "...confuted the reasonings they made use of, every one for their own practices, demonstrating that such reasonings were vain and void of truth; whereupon he was admired by them in those conferences as a very wise man, and one of great sagacity, when he discoursed on any subject..." (*The Antiquity of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 2, ¶ 2).

Josephus explained that Abraham, "...communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy..." (*Ibid.*).

The oldest written Egyptian material is the *Pyramid Texts* and date from the 5th and 6th Dynasties. At the time of those writings, the original Pharaonic imitative religion was already approximately a thousand years old. There is no way to know how well the religion was preserved between the first Pharaoh's initial imitation and a millennium later when the *Pyramid Texts* were written.

Egypt has a **complicated** theological development that morphed over time. The Horus stellar religion is very early. The Osirian religion (sometimes linked to lunar theology) does not arise until nearly a thousand years after the *Pyramid Texts* at Saqqara and, arguably, most reflects the religion of the New Kingdom. That theology differs from the beliefs of the Old Kingdom religion. It was the Old Kingdom theology that is closer to that of Adam. ~~It was the Old Kingdom...~~ (Oh, excuse me.) Finally, the Memphite religion of Ra apparently begins in the late Old Kingdom. However, Ra (as the sun god) is syncretized to Ahmon (the god of light). The figure of Ahmon is present in both the star cult and the sun cult. As Egyptian religion changed at the time of the New Kingdom, nothing remained of the star cult.

The Book of Abraham's exposition on the sun, earth, planets, and stars fits neatly into the cosmological issues perplexing the rulers of the 9th Dynasty. (And by the way, the Joseph Smith rendering of the word "planets" is criticized by a number of scholars as being not a term that was understood at the time. But the word "planets" means "a star that wanders." So, you had fixed stars, and you had stars that wandered. "Planets" simply is referring to the stars that move in the sky overhead. And so, calling them "planets" is not at all problematic. It's just someone chafing to find an argument to throw at Joseph and at the Book of Abraham. And like so many of those things, as soon as you breathe on them, the house of cards falls over.)

There are many connections between the language of Egypt and the Restoration. The hieroglyphic form of Egyptian was used primarily to record religious texts and was the more formal or sacred form of the writing. A second, less formal form developed early in Egyptian language evolution, and it's called "hieratic." This second form was cursive and was the more likely form used on the Brass Plates. It's arrogant to assume that Ptolemaic era writing is a sound basis for cipherring backward over 2,000 years to decode Egyptian hieroglyphs. In the end, the question must be asked: Do **you** trust scholar's attempt to reconstruct antiquity using a partial record from 196 BC when it **conflicts with** the revelation given to Joseph Smith claiming to be a prophet, seer, and translator? Or do you believe God could inspire a prophet to recover a lost record from an ancient patriarch? It's one or the other.

It is significant that Joseph Smith claimed that the Old Testament written on the Brass Plates, as well as the record of the Nephites, were written in Egyptian. At the time and under the circumstances, Joseph Smith had little reason to make such a claim. With what we know now, it would be an error to claim otherwise. The choice is between Joseph being prescient or prophetic.

Joseph revealed that Adam and his immediate posterity wrote the first records of God dealing with mankind. It was called “a book of remembrance” (see Genesis 3:14 RE). That record was written in *a language which was pure and undefiled* (Ibid.). We know these records existed during Abraham’s life (thousands of years later): *The records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, ...the Lord, my God, preserved in my own hands* (Abraham 2:4 RE).

By the time of **Moses**, however, the original records were lost. Moses had to restore the record of the Creation based on the revelation he received directly from the Lord. Moses was commanded:

You shall write the things which I shall speak. And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught, and take many of them from the book which you shall write, behold, I will raise up another like unto you, and they shall be had again among the children of men, among even as many as shall believe. (Genesis 1:7 RE)

Pharaoh’s daughter raised Moses from birth. **She** named him and treated him as “her son” (see Exodus 1:5 RE). Accordingly, when Moses was commanded to write the record revealed to him by the Lord, he would have recorded it in the language he understood: the language his adopted mother taught him, which was Egyptian. This detail is exactly what the Book of Mormon explains about the Brass Plates. Moses replaced the lost records of the Fathers by revelation from God. That record is described in the Book of Mormon as *the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass* and were composed *in the language of the Egyptians* (Mosiah 1:1 RE). **Ask yourself** the likelihood of a New England farm boy in 1829 choosing to claim the Old Testament was recorded in the Egyptian language? It’s a remarkable bulls-eye detail, unlikely to have occurred to a youthful swindler. (But of course, Joseph was an actual prophet, and therefore, God revealed to him the truths he recounted.)

Since Joseph translated over 500 pages of what was likely derived from Hieratic Egyptian for the Book of Mormon, he read and understood one version of that language better than any scholar, including all who have lived since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. Because I accept Joseph’s claims of being a prophet, seer, and translator at face value, it’s easy for me to resolve conflicts over Egyptian texts in favor of Joseph and against the scholarly critics.

Joseph Smith Papers, Volume 4 of the Revelations and Translations has copies of Egyptian Alphabet materials produced by Joseph’s scribes: Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, and Warren Parrish. Teryl Givens has taken the position that these texts prove, “The Book of Abraham manuscripts, unlike their Book of Mormon counterpart, bear clear evidence of reworking, revising, and editing. This was no spontaneous channeling of a finished product by any stretch...” (*The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism’s Most Controversial Scripture*, p.201). He interprets these as proof that Joseph engaged in a very complex deciphering process to produce the Book of Abraham using the hieroglyphs in the Book of Breathing.

When I first saw the Egyptian Alphabet materials, it appeared to me to be an attempt to reverse engineer Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham by using the Book of ~~Abraham~~ [Breathing] papyrus. Recall that Oliver Cowdery had attempted to translate the

Book of Mormon and failed in that attempt. When he failed, the Lord explained his failure to him, stating:

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But behold, I say unto you that you must study it out in your mind, then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right, [then] I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. (Joseph Smith History 13:26 RE)

Two of the three Egyptian Alphabet studies (A and B) were in whole (or in major part) the study of Oliver Cowdery. It appears that these were the result of Oliver's attempts to follow the Lord's guidance after his failure to successfully translate the Book of Mormon. When he failed in 1829, the Lord said there were *other records have I that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate* (Ibid. vs. 24). It seems apparent that the Egyptian Alphabet study in late 1835 was Oliver's (and the other scribes') attempt to validate the translation process and act on the earlier promise to Oliver.

Teryl Givens' speculation that the Egyptian Alphabet is Joseph Smith's study of the papyrus is refuted by John S. Thompson in his article, "We May Not Understand Our Words': The Book of Abraham and the Concept of Translation in The Pearl of ~~Great~~ [Greatest] Price." Thompson shows from contemporaneous sources that Joseph's translation was accomplished quickly and before the Egyptian Alphabet documents were created. It's clear from an examination of the historical record that the scribes did their deciphering work of the Egyptian characters **after** the translation of the Book of Abraham had been done. Accordingly, using the Egyptian Alphabet materials to try to understand the translation process is not likely to help us understand what Joseph did (but much more likely to help us understand his scribes' attempt to understand Joseph's translating work).

It is not possible to resolve this question. Those directly involved **were never asked**, and they failed to leave a clear account of **what** the Egyptian Alphabet documents were, **why** they were produced, and **how** they relate to the translation of the Book of Abraham. This has resulted in debate between scholar-critics and scholar-apologists.

The latest writer to weigh in on the subject, Dan Vogel, deals with the absence of hard answers by arguing the meaning and import of ambiguous details. As a lawyer, I appreciate his argumentation. However, since I care about the subject and would like to know the truth, the arguments from implication in the absence of proof cannot be fully convincing. The souls of men must not be trifled with (see T&C 138:18).

In arguing from the absence of hard historical evidence, Vogel urges his belief that:

...what is required in any treatment of the Book of Abraham is not fluency in [hieroglyphs] or a belief in Joseph Smith's prophetic calling, but a firm, clear-headed understanding of the methods of history and of the relevant nineteenth-century historical sources. Anything else is counterproductive. (Book of Abraham Apologetics: A Review and Critique, p. xviii)

He makes the argument that the Kirtland Egyptian Papers were not created after the translation but were used to create and translate the Book of Abraham. His arguments are somewhat persuasive.

However, his analysis is **advocacy**, and his writings betrays the **assumptions necessary** for his conclusions. The book necessarily reflects a scholar's caution in the absence of certainty. Although his work is interesting, well written, and attempts to make reasonable points, the information we have available does not let us resolve **anything** about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. Everything is arguable. Vogel's arguments clearly belong in the debate, but in the end is only argument (like so much else involving the Book of Abraham). A few examples of how he supports his arguments are (these are quotes):

- "implies a process of translation" (p. 1)
- "This clearly implies" (p. 12)
- "implies that" (p. 14)
- "more careful analysis shows" (p. 17)
- "the simplest way to explain" (p. 17)
- "This suggests" (p. 18)
- "most reasonably explained as" (p. 18)
- "was likely due to" (p. 18)
- "may have dictated" (p. 19)
- "The details of Smith's participation in the creation of his own history are not...well known, but apparently" (p. 39)
- "were likely the result of" (p. 39)
- "Apparently, there was some hesitation" (p. 50)
- "is instructive, although piecing together what was intended is not always clear and necessitates some conjecture" (p. 54)
- "possibly from" (p. 55)
- "may have taken from" (p. 55)
- "is probably more than coincidence" (p. 56)
- "This is a problem from the theory" (p. 57)
- (and so on)

Whether I agree or disagree with his interpretation does not give me the actual historical certitude that would answer the most important questions about the Book of Abraham's creation (or "translation," as the term was used and understood by Joseph Smith). There are debaters on both sides. They all make arguments to support their desired conclusion. Familiarity with the Egyptian language (insofar as the Ptolemaic period Rosetta Stone material permits the language to be resurrected) causes the Egyptologists to be dogmatic. They speak in firm declaratives. **But** Joseph Smith saw God the Father, His Son, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Peter, James, and John, and a host of angels who declared their dispensations, keys, rights, and honors. Joseph also spoke in firm declaratives. They line up on opposite sides; **we** must choose between them.

The best evidence of translation authenticity is the text itself. As Hugh Nibley put it, "...it is the Book of Abraham that['s] on trial, not Joseph Smith as an Egyptologist, nor the claims and counterclaims to scholarly recognition by squabbling publicity seekers..." (*Abraham in Egypt*, p. 3). The text of the Book of Abraham is compelling and adds important theological information I believe to be vital to understanding the religion I accept and Abraham's role in God's plan for this Creation. More importantly, I accept the idea that it adds information **vital to salvation**.

I believe it is also important that Joseph Smith intended the Book of Abraham **as Scripture**. He wrote on March 1, 1842:

In future. I design to furnish much original matter, which will be found of enestimable advantage to the saints,— &...all who— desire a knowledge of the kingdom of God.— and as it is not practicable to bring forth the new translation. of...Scriptures. & varioes records of ancint date. & great worth to this gen[e]ration in...<the usual> form. by books. I shall prenit [print] specimens of the same in the Times & Seasons as fast. as time & space will admit. so that the honest in heart may be cheerd & comforted and go on their way rejoic[ing].— as their souls become exp[an]ded.— & their undestandig [understanding] enlightend, by a knowledg of what Gods work through the fathers. in former days, as well as what He is about to do in Latter Days— To fulfil the words of the fathers.—

In the penst [present] no. will be found the Commencmet of the Records discoverd in Egypt. some time since. as penend by the hand. of Father Abraham. which I shall contin[u]e to translate & publish as fast as possible till the whole is completed. (*JSP Documents, Volume 9, p. 206-7*)

That accompanied what got published. He wrote, and the first installment of the Book of Abraham in the *Times and Seasons* followed.

If Joseph Smith regarded the Book of Abraham as Scripture, I do not want to dismiss it because an Egyptologist cannot read it in the remaining papyrus fragments some claim as the source for the book.

It is not at all clear that Egyptology is **even relevant** to an analysis of the Book of Abraham. The narrative text begins in a location named **Ur** of the Chaldeans. The book states **32 times it does not cover events in Egypt**. There are 13 times the location is Ur. Another 16 times the events happen in Haran, Jershon, Sechem, Morah, or Canaan. Then before ending, it clarifies **3 times** the account is not about events **in Egypt**. Here is a brief review of the many times it clarifies it is **NOT** an account from Egypt:

- Facsimile No. 1 illustrates an event that took place in Ur, not in Egypt.
- Abraham's record begins: *In the land of the Chaldeans* (Abraham 1:1 RE).
- When Abraham was bound and put on the altar to be sacrificed—as illustrated in Facsimile 1—it was upon *the altar which was built in the land of the Chaldeans* (Ibid. vs. 3).

- It was constructed *after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans* (Ibid. vs. 4). The record is silent about whether Egyptians had any similar altar. Scholarly critics explain the Egyptian funerary practice associated with the Chaldean altar with the customary lion-headed funerary bier on which embalming—not human sacrifice—is typically depicted by any similar Egyptian hieroglyphic. Again, however, that is not particularly helpful to understanding what happened in Ur of the Chaldeans. Nor does that criticism address Chaldean behavior, religious rites, or altar design.
- The Book of Abraham does not give us any Egyptian names but explains Chaldean (not Egyptian) terminology is used.
- The book explains that Facsimile No. 1 shows *the figures at the beginning, which manner of the figures is called by the Chaldeans Kahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics* (Ibid.). This word is what the Chaldeans would call the vignette, not what an Egyptian would. The explanation is provided because the Chaldean word is different from the Egyptian word. On this point, an Egyptologist’s criticism is of little help to authenticate or refute the Book of Abraham.

To the eye of an Egyptologist, the four figures under the lion couch in Facsimile No. 1 are canopic jars. They are the four receptacles used in Egyptian embalming practice for the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines. The liver jar is, to the Egyptians, the human-headed Imseti. The lung jar is to them the baboon-headed Hapi. The stomach jar is the jackal-headed Duamutef. The intestine jar is the falcon-headed Qebehsnuef. **None** of the Egyptian names are used in the Book of Abraham by the Chaldeans.

But then again, the text is not about Egypt but about the local practice of those living in Ur of the Chaldeans. In **that** place, **nothing** Abraham understood about the four figures suggests they were jars. Instead, Abraham understood they were Chaldean idols before which human sacrifices were performed. The names of these idols in the land of the Chaldeans were Elkenah, Zibnah, Mahmackrah, and Koash. Abraham’s account is not about the gods of Egypt. It’s about the gods of the Chaldeans.

Egyptologists criticize the account that Abraham (as well as three virgins before him) was offered as a human sacrifice. Many scholars dispute Egyptians **offered** human sacrifices. To an Egyptologist, the mention of human sacrifice is evidence the Book of Abraham is **not** credible. But the book is not set in Egypt. Human sacrifice is **known** to have taken place in the land of the Chaldeans where the Abrahamic account is actually based. **Newsweek** reported the following:

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that at least 11 children and young people were killed as a result of ritualistic sacrifice between 3100 and 2800 B.C.E. Their research was published Wednesday in the journal *Antiquity*. ...Some remains show [the]...stab wounds, but researchers aren’t sure how all of the individuals lost their lives. One male had violent injuries to his hip and head, similar to wounds reconstructed from other Mesopotamian ritual sacrifices. ...“It is unlikely that these children and young people were killed in a massacre or conflict,” the London Natural History Museum’s Brenna Hassett said in a statement. “The careful positioning of the

bodies and the evidence of violent death suggest that these burials fit the same pattern of human sacrifice seen at other [locations] in the region.” (Katherine Hignett, *Newsweek*, “Ancient Mesopotamia: Ritual Child Sacrifice Uncovered in Bronze Age Turkey”)

This discovery puts Chaldean human sacrifice occurring at or near the conventional dating of Abraham’s life.

The *New York Times* reported on human sacrifices at an ancient location named “**Ur**” located in Iraq:

A new examination of skulls from the royal cemetery at Ur, discovered in Iraq almost a century ago, appears to support a more grisly interpretation than before of human sacrifices associated with elite burials in ancient Mesopotamia, archaeologists say.

Palace attendants, as part of royal mortuary [practices], were not dosed with poison to meet a rather serene death. Instead, a sharp instrument, a pike perhaps, was driven into their heads. (John Noble Wilford, *New York Times*, “At Ur, Ritual Deaths That Were Anything but Serene”)

(And he goes on from there. It’ll be in the published version of this.)

According to the Book of Abraham, **none** of the names of Chaldean gods—or **any** of the religious practices Abraham witnessed and experienced—were Egyptian. They were cultic practices and may have been entirely conducted in a locality that imitated their own incorrect understanding of the religion of Egypt. Chaldea’s Ur was populated by ‘Egyptophiles’ who were apparently imitating and practiced a local corruption of an ancient Egyptian religion. They clearly got some things about the Egyptian religion wrong (and may have gotten very many things wrong).

Robert Ritner’s book includes a chapter written by Christopher Woods addressing the location of Ur. The chapter is titled, “The Practice of Egyptian Religion at ‘Ur of the Chaldees’?” (Dude, you can tell from the title that this is laced with condescension and arrogance. Congratulations, Christopher Woods. You’ve proven your ego won’t fit into a normal human form.) The chapter begins by acknowledging that, “The location of ‘Ur of the Chaldees’...remains open for debate.” He explains, “Cuneiform sources attest a number of settlements bearing the name of Ur (or a name phonetically similar) in northern Syria, southeastern Turkey, and northern Mesopotamia, mostly small villages, and so making for unlikely candidates for biblical Ur...” (see Ritner, Robert K., *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition*, pp. 73-74).

A discovery of an ancient library of **thousands** of cuneiform tablets in 1975 raised another possibility for Abraham’s Ur, this new one being located in ancient **Haran** rather than a thousand miles away, as previously thought.

Since Ritner's book is a collection of scholarly criticism of the Book of Abraham, the author does not leave it open-ended. Instead, he speculates Ur may have been at a specific Babylonian location. Based on that **assumption**, he concludes, "If we are correct in identifying Abraham's Ur with Babylonian Ur, this poses **grave difficulties** for the account given in the Book of Abraham" (*Ibid.*). **Obviously**, if the author is not correct, the **inverse** is also true: If we are incorrect in identifying Abraham's Ur with Babylonian Ur, then we don't know anything about the matter, and it poses no justifiable difficulty for the account in the Book of Abraham.

Hugh Nibley discusses Ur in *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* from pages 424 to 428. He writes on page 427:

What leaves the door wide open to discussion is the existence in western Asia of a number of different Urs. Ur in the south was a great trade center... and since Abraham was a merchant, one should expect to find him there. But on the other hand that same Ur had founded merchant colonies far to the north and west at an early date, and some of those settlements, as was the custom, bore the name of the mother city.

The angel of God rescued Abraham from being sacrificed on the altar. The angel killed the priest attempting to sacrifice Abraham. This resulted in *great mourning in Chaldea...* (Abraham 2:1 RE). Following this, *a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea* (*Ibid.* vs. 4). During the famine in Ur of Chaldea, the Lord commanded Abraham to leave, and the events in the Book of Abraham **finally** move **from** Ur: *Now the Lord had said unto me, [Abraham], get yourself out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you. Therefore, I left the land of Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of **Canaan*** (*Ibid.* vs. 5, emphasis added). The story moves but is still not in **Egypt**—nor is Abraham **heading** to Egypt in the account.

The next location must have been comparatively uninhabited when Abraham's family arrived. They name the location after Abraham's deceased brother, Haran. Abraham explains his family went *unto the land which **we** denominated Haran* (*Ibid.*, emphasis added). It apparently had no name before their arrival, since they denominated (or named) the place. We have no way to identify the location but only know that it was away from the earlier (also unknown) location called Ur.

At Haran, there is no mention of famine. Abraham's father, Terah, had repented of his idolatry in Ur, but in Haran, he returned to it. When God later told Abraham, "Depart from Haran," Terah remained behind.

Abraham's journey then takes him through Jershon in the land of Canaan. There—**still not in Egypt**—Abraham built an altar. Moving on again, he arrives in Sechem, *situated in the plains of Moreh* at a place described as *[on] the borders of the land of the Canaanites* (Abraham 4:2 RE). He is **still** not in Egypt. In that location the Lord promised Abraham, *unto thy seed I will give **this** land* (*Ibid.*). Abraham was **not** given Egypt.

Famine is mentioned again in the land given to Abraham's seed, and as a consequence of that, Abraham reports: *I, Abraham, concluded to **go down into Egypt**, to sojourn there, for the famine became very grievous* (Ibid. vs. 3, emphasis added). Abraham's conclusion to go down into Egypt confirms for us that he had not yet reached Egypt during **any part** of his account to that point.

Abraham received a great revelation about the stars, the heavens, events among the pre-existent spirits of mankind, the fall of Satan, and the creation of the world. This great revelation comprises the remainder of Abraham's account in his book. **However**, the account clearly states that God told Abraham: *I show these things unto you, **before** you go into Egypt* (Abraham 5:4 RE, emphasis added). Accordingly, **nothing** in the Book of Abraham took place in Egypt. When it is added to the Genesis account, what happened following the conclusion of the Book of Abraham text is: *And it came to pass that when [Abraham] had come into Egypt...* (in Genesis [7:4 RE]) and goes on from there to explain about Sarai being accosted.

Willard Richards' introduction that claims the book is "purporting to be the writings of Abraham **while he was in Egypt**" is **demonstrably** wrong from the text itself—32 times the Book of Abraham states otherwise. When **nothing** in the text reckons from Egypt, it is questionable how useful criticism of the Book of Abraham from an Egyptological vantage point is. We should expect there to be some deviations from Egyptian religion, language, or culture in the book. The account only covers events among an ancient people, in an uncertain location called "Ur," located somewhere in Chaldea. Those people were only imitative of Egypt. They were not Egyptians. And the events in the book did not happen "while [Abraham] was in Egypt."

One **hieroglyph** appears in all **three** Facsimiles:

- It is figure 10 in Facsimile 1,
- At the bottom and adjacent to the figure 2 in Facsimile 2, and
- Figure 3 in Facsimile 3.

The hieroglyph is used to represent "Abraham in Egypt." The figure is a libation table (or "traditional offering stand") on which drink and food were offered. Since Abraham concluded to travel to Egypt because of famine, a **symbol** of drink and food for Abraham in Egypt would be altogether apt. But the table figure shows a lotus flower atop it. The lotus was a symbol of **ascent** to the throne of God. **That** concept is most clearly referenced in the explanation of panel 2 in Facsimile 2. It is **at least thought-provoking** that Joseph identified the food and drink offering stand and a symbol of ascending to God to be representing Abraham's presence in Egypt.

To be clear, because nothing in the Book of Abraham happened in Egypt, it is questionable how useful anything authentically Egyptian (**if** we're able to determine **that**) is to understand or to question the text. The names and practices Abraham encountered imitated—but did not correctly replicate—the religion of 9th Dynasty Egypt. The text explains that the place where Abraham was offered as human sacrifice is an unknown

village located somewhere under Chaldean influence named “Ur.” However, Ur could have been in **any** Mesopotamian location across thousands of square miles from Turkey, northern Syria, into Iraq, or Iran. There are **many** known villages contemporary with Abraham known to have been named “Ur.” Of course, there may have been many others unknown to us with the same or similar name. The text ends before Abraham enters Egypt, and therefore, the continuation of an account involving Abraham picks up in Genesis. This begins halfway through Genesis 4 [7:4]. The account deals only briefly with the “princes” bringing Sarai to Pharaoh who was then plagued because of Sarai’s presence. Pharaoh then returns Sarai to ~~Abraham~~ [Abram], at which point ~~Abraham~~ [Abram] and Sarai were sent away.

Because nothing in the Book of Abraham or Genesis gives **any** detail about Abraham’s experiences **in** Egypt, we have no narrative account to help us give context to the facsimiles. We do not know if Facsimile No. 3—like Facsimile No. 1—is a scene that took place outside of Egypt. The footnotes explaining the scene end with this clarification: *Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of astronomy in the king’s court.* It is unclear which “king’s court” is being referenced. Clearly, the people of Ur involved in Abraham’s experience imitated Egypt. They sought to imitate the Egyptian’s “earnest imitation.” Therefore, we cannot be certain if Facsimile No. 3 is reporting an event that took place among people who imitated Egyptian religious rites or if they instead happened in Egypt. If it’s the former, it’s consistent with the rest of the text where nothing else has happened in Egypt.

The Book of Abraham explains the Egyptian Pharaoh could only imitate the Holy Order but had no right to claim that priestly position. In context, this exposes the Chaldean’s error in looking to Egypt for Divine guidance. These Ur residents even anointed for themselves a “priest of Pharaoh” who practiced human sacrifice. Was this an innovation by Ur or imitative of an Egyptian rite? We do not know anything certain. But we know that it was distant from (and only imitating) an Egyptian imitation of the religion of the Fathers. We only have Abraham’s understanding of what these people were up to.

It is clear from the text that “before” his journey “into Egypt,” Abraham was shown a great revelation about the pre-existence, Creation, and organization of the stars. It raises the question of where Abraham tried to clear up people’s understanding in Facsimile No. 3.

The Book of Abraham clarifies many “mysteries” that are not otherwise to be found in Scripture. But Scriptures tell us there are many important truths that are withheld from us. Even if they are unknown to us, there are “mysteries” that are still part of the true religion first revealed to Adam.

We learn of God’s promise to the righteous in T&C 69:2:

Unto them will I reveal all my mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom. From days of old and for ages to come will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will, concerning all things to come. Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I shew them, even the things of many generations. Their wisdom shall be great and their understanding reach to Heaven, and before them the

wisdom of the wise shall perish and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught. For by my spirit will I enlighten them and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will, yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

We're told in Alma 9:3 [RE] that those who give heed and are diligent are rewarded with understanding:

[It's] given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, [they're] laid under a strict command that they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give....therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. ...He that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full.

While Christ was among the Nephites, the greatest part of what He taught them is withheld from our record. We read in 3 Nephi 9:5 [RE]:

He went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father, and tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear, and do bear record, and their hearts were open, and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed.

There are many other references in Scripture to important things that are left out of our canon. The true religion contains many “mysteries” that are important, not yet known or taught, but which were to be restored to the faithful in the future.

The Book of Abraham helps us uncover some of the missing information about the religion of the first Fathers. The first verse of the Book of Abraham includes these remarkable words:

I sought for the blessings of the Fathers and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same. Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and...possess a greater knowledge, and to be a Father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. It was conferred upon me from the Fathers: it came down from the Fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning (or before the foundations of the earth) to the present time, even the right of the firstborn (or the first man — who is Adam — or [the] first Father) through the Fathers unto me. I sought for [mine] appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the Fathers concerning the seed. (Abraham 1:1 RE)

Abraham begins by explaining he “sought for the blessings of the Fathers,” the very thing Malachi prophesies will return before the great and dreadful return of the Lord. Abraham **obtained** what will be available again. Those blessings of the Fathers **will be** administered again before the end.

At the beginning of his record, Abraham mentions some of the specific things that are part of “the blessings of the Fathers.” This identifies Abraham, **not Joseph Smith**, as the writer of the book.

When the Holy Order is established in its fullness, there is one Patriarchal head appointed to stand as the husbandman-father, occupying the position of the first Father or Adam. When God set Adam at the head, “The tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature: caring for sacred space. In ancient thinking, caring for sacred space was a way of upholding creation. By preserving order, non-order was held at bay” (John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 106). This priestly responsibility was what Abraham sought. He explained that he wanted to *possess a greater knowledge, and to be a Father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers* (Abraham 1:1 RE). The Lord offered to return this lost fullness in Joseph Smith’s day, but the required conditions were not met. Therefore, the fullness was not “restored again” and remains unrestored.

Abraham knew more about the Holy Order in **his** day than Joseph in 1842. After all, Abraham had the records of the Fathers. Much of what Joseph learned about the Holy Order (or as he termed it, the “fullness of the priesthood”) appears to have come as a result of him translating the Book of Abraham.

Abraham knew Adam was the Father of many nations. Likewise, the first Patriarchs all expected to have numerous posterity and to be Fathers of many nations. The line of the Patriarchs named in Scriptures is a list of those through whom the Holy Order descended and **does not name** all of the righteous. The residue of the righteous was also blessed. The original Holy Order meeting at Adam-Ondi-Ahman is described in Scripture:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. (T&C 154:19)

Those names, listed in order from Adam, were the first to hold the presiding Patriarchal priesthood from the oldest to the youngest holding that right.

The Holy Order in its fullness is a right of government or right of dominion. Anciently, it was always held in a line of descent. Abraham marks the first time that non-direct lineal descendant was sealed in the Holy Order to hold it in its fullness. Once sealed, Abraham became entitled to be a “Father of many nations, a rightful heir, holding the right belonging to the Fathers.”

This right **is not worldly**. Abraham's record gives us a perfect vantage point to understand the difference between worldly government and the government of God. At the time of Abraham, **any** earthly king **did not have** the right to make that claim. The Pharaoh of Abraham's day feigned to hold it, **claiming** it descended to him through Noah. Abraham explained the conflict:

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. Now Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry. (Abraham 2:3 RE)

Pharaoh was "righteous" but still descended from a line that could not claim legitimate rule. He modeled his kingdom after the order established by the first Fathers, but it could only be an imitation. He claimed a lineal connection with Noah, which was true enough, but his ancestry gave him no heavenly acknowledgment for his rule. And because he descended from a line that usurped authority not given to them by God, all those who submitted to his earthly rule practiced idolatry.

Abraham, on the other hand, **was** given dominion, the right to rule over nations, Patriarchal status, and the rights belonging to the Fathers. But Abraham **made no attempt** to displace the Pharaoh. They were rivals, to be sure, but Abraham was content to hold the right, receive instructions, be a diligent follower of righteousness, be one who possessed great knowledge, be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge. He was content to teach his followers the path of righteousness. Unlike Pharaoh, he did **not** assert authority over others. Abraham was interested in eternity, not earthly recognition and control. Hugh Nibley described the circumstance:

The Book of Abraham brings out the main points of rivalry between the patriarch and the pharaoh in high relief: Each claims to possess the only true priesthood and with it the only true kingship. The earliest legends of Egypt and Mesopotamia introduce us to a scene repeated over and over again in apocalypses and testaments of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of a great and terrible monarch who feels his divinity threatened and his dominion challenged by an emissary of the true God. (Abraham in Egypt, p. 254)

Nibley has observed that "Pharaoh was always unsure of his authority over his own people" (*Ibid.* p. 233). There were many Pharaohs in later dynasties who investigated their claim to authority.

Of particular interest are those devout and sincere pharaohs who spent their days in the archives engaging in the constant search of Egyptian rulers for divine authority,

such men as King Neferhotep in the Thirteenth Dynasty, [and] the great Amenophis I, “a wise and inspired man,” according to Manetho, who yearned to see the gods but feared to risk any force or trickery to get his wish, or Ptolemy the son of Glaucias, “the recluse of the Serapeum,” spending all his days in the library, as does the hero of the Khamuas story, searching in the House of Life for the book that bestows the knowledge of divine dominion and authority.

The trouble was that they lacked revelation. In Egypt, Henri Frankfort observed, “The actions of individuals lacked divine guidance altogether.” (*Ibid.*)

Egypt’s claims may seem arrogant after the Exodus of Israel. However, their civilization attempted to preserve something precious. As one writer put it, “Ancient Egyptians inherited their great wisdom from a much earlier Elder culture which was able to pass on the flame of knowledge before its own apparent demise” (*Gods of Eden*, p. 17).

God has declared His intent to assert control over His Creation and overthrow all governments. The Christmas 1832 revelation states:

And thus with the sword and by bloodshed, the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn. And with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed has made a full end of all nations, that the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of [the] Sabaoth from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies. (T&C 85:3)

All nations, other than the Holy Order family-government ordained by God, will be brought to a full end. Or in the various iterations of the prophecy of Malachi, God *will smite the earth with a curse* (Malachi 1:12 RE), or *the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming* (Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE)—doesn't mean universal death. It means universal disillusion into chaos, with no governance possible apart from the one that **He** intends to establish, that **will** provide revelation, guidance, order, and preserve His people. The **only** surviving rule or dominion at that time will be the one tied to the Fathers. It will be the people whose one heart is like the one heart of the Fathers. They will possess the promises made to the Fathers, or in other words, they will have been **sealed** to the Fathers. It is phrased differently in different versions of Malachi’s prophecy, but they all mean the same thing. Occasionally, God describes the same thing in different words. The purpose is to help us grasp His meaning.

There are many obstacles to overcome before the Lord returns in glory. Recovering the religion of the Fathers, becoming of one heart **with** the Fathers, and fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi are directly connected to Abraham. In a very real sense, it will not happen without a connection to Abraham.

Holding the promises made to Abraham is not just a covenant. It also involves knowledge. Joseph Smith was required to recover the “fullness of the scriptures” (or translate the Bible

as it was in the bosom of the Lord) into a volume for the faithful to study. Joseph warned the Latter-day Saints they would fail without the fullness. Until the publication of the Restoration Edition of the Scriptures, there was no version of the fullness of the Scriptures available. Of course, they do not accomplish anything if they're not read and studied.

Repenting and reclaiming the fullness of the Scriptures was a required first step of repentance for the Restoration to continue. When that step was taken, there was a covenant. If people are faithful to the covenant, the Restoration will continue.

Abraham was not content with knowledge. He wanted to obtain greater knowledge. The purpose of pursuing knowledge was to receive and obey commandments. Greater knowledge facilitates greater obedience. Knowledge is not the **goal**, it is the desirable **effect** that knowledge has on the heart and mind of a righteous soul.

Knowledge about the Holy Order can be misused. Even **understanding** its rights has inspired envy, jealousy, and anger. Cain murdered Abel because Cain understood the importance of standing at the head of the Holy Order. As he contemplated the possibility of it slipping away from him, Satan tempted him to usurp the right by murdering the more worthy heir. The account of that attempted overthrow is succinct:

*Satan [said] unto Cain, Swear unto me by your throat, and if you tell it, you shall die. And swear your brethren by their heads and by the living God that they tell it not, for if they tell it, they shall surely die — and this that your father may not know it. And this day I will deliver your brother Abel into your hands. And Satan swore unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret. And Cain says, Truly I am Mahon, the master of this great secret — that I may murder and get gain; wherefore, Cain was called Master Mahon. And he gloried in his wickedness. And Cain went into the field and Cain talked with Abel his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying, I am free; surely the **flocks** of my brother fall into my hands. (Genesis 3:9 RE, emphasis added)*

The “flocks of my brother” were not sheep; they were posterity. Abel was to become Adam’s successor and stand as the Father of many nations. By displacing Abel, Cain hoped to be the next in the line of Patriarchal Fathers.

Ether chapter 4 shows how the envy of “kingship” results in generations of murderers obtaining power through bloodshed. The Holy Order is **not** a worldly thing. It **cannot** be severed from the Powers of Heaven or the Heavenly Council. The presiding Patriarch of the Holy Order is a representative of the Heavenly Council who lives as a mortal on Earth. This is why the Patriarchal head of the Holy Order is the shepherd for the faithful, husbandman for the Creation, and the teacher responsible for dispensing Divine knowledge. That was who **Adam was** and what **Abraham became**.

The Holy Order is approved for practice in a proper, functioning temple belonging to God. As Walton put it:

When we consider the Garden of Eden in its ancient context, we find that it is more sacred space than green space. It is the center of order, not perfection, and its significance has more to do with divine presence than human paradise.

...We did not lose paradise as much as we forfeited sacred space and the relationship it offered, thereby damaging our ability to be in relationship with God and marring his creation with our own under-developed ability to bring order on our own in our own wisdom. (*The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 116, 145)

What records that remain do not give a full picture of how much was anciently included in God's temple. For example, Margaret Barker's investigation has uncovered an ancient presence of the Divine Mother who was identified as "Wisdom." She explained that Josiah's reform changed the First Temple by **removing, rejecting, and deducting**:

Wisdom was eliminated, even though her presence was never forgotten, the heavenly ascent and the vision of God were abandoned, the hosts of heaven, the angels, were declared to be unfit for the chosen people, the ark (and the presence of Yahweh which it represented) was removed, and the role of the high priest was altered in that he was no longer anointed. All of these features of the older cult were to appear in Christianity. (*The Great Angel*, p. 15)

Later Christianity, like Josiah's reforms, also abandoned these parts of the religion. Joseph Smith never had the opportunity to finish restoring them. How oft would God have gathered people together under the arms of the Holy Order, but mankind has not been willing or even interested (see 3 Nephi 4:9 RE).

When the Powers of Heaven are offended and the spirit is grieved, the Powers withdraw and the Holy Order rites are either not restored or, if restored, come to an end. Cain's ambition could not be accomplished through any degree of unrighteousness. It was doomed from the time the plan was suggested by Satan. Yet Abel was murdered, and a conspiracy to seize power by blood and horror began while Adam was alive. Mankind is no less ambitious today. That impulse to exercise control, dominion, and compulsion persists **and can be seen everywhere**: in business, churches, governments, and schools.

The reason so little is understood about the Holy Order is because weak men aspire to honors. Once they learn about the Order, they want control over it. Therefore, it is withdrawn...

(I circled one of the footnotes. What I'm reading you is omitting 390 footnotes. But I've circled this one and I'm... Once they learn about the Holy Order they want control over it. "Too often when men learn some great truth and recognize it by the spirit, they then assume that confers upon them some authority or right to act. Nothing could be further from the truth. There[']s a great gulf between learning and recognizing and authority to act" (footnote 207). People tend to do that. "Oh, my heart burned within me while I heard

it, therefore God gave it to me.” That didn’t happen. It just means that God told you something and you recognized the truth. How you get it is based upon the order of heaven.)

Therefore, it is withdrawn from mortal men from time to time. When not active among men, it only remains present through John the Beloved. John was translated, acting thereafter only as an angelic minister. Because of this, he’s not free to **openly** preside. The Lord explained to Peter concerning John: *I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel. He shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on...earth...* (Joseph Smith History 13:19 RE). John has ministered only “as a flaming fire and a ministering angel,” which circumscribes **how** and to **whom** his ministry is extended. He ministers “for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth,” or (as Moroni explained by quoting his father):

*The office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that **they** may bear testimony of him; and by so doing, the Lord...prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the holy ghost may have place in their hearts....* (Moroni 7:6 RE, emphasis added)

[Unknown comment from audience]

Okay, yeah, I get what you’re saying, but according to my pocket watch...

Is anyone hungry? Yeah... Look, this is not the breaking spot. See that red sheet there? [Holding up his notebook] That’s the breaking spot. So, we’ll eat and come back and resume this later, and those that have heard enough, you can go do something else. And I don’t know how long the movie’s gonna be shown to the kids, but you might want to check that out.

Anyway, we haven’t really gotten to the important stuff. (There—that’ll get you back.)

So, we’ll break for dinner, apparently, and resume again at some point.

We’ve cobbled together a light that reflects, I think, the same sort of motif as the “redneck Rameumptom” (as they’ve named it). And I can actually see this!

Look, just a couple comments while people are still settling in. In order to talk about the subject I want to talk about, it’s necessary to rely upon content in the Book of Abraham. But the Book of Abraham has been under assault by critics for a **long** time. I was satisfied about the reliability, authenticity, and scriptural value of the Book of Abraham long ago, but after being satisfied I quit buying and reading the exchange that’s gone on back and forth. So, as this subject was something that I intended to talk on, I really needed about eight years’ worth of material to catch up on the give and take between the arguments that have gone

back and forth. So, I had to buy a new “last eight years” library supplements to all of the Book of Abraham: bitching and moaning and defending and parading and... Went and picked up a copy of Ritner’s book, that I’ve referred to...

MAN: Sorry [referring to the light on the podium].

DENVER: Well, that’s fine. It’s like a lighthouse—none of you in a boat are gonna hit shore with **that** up here as your beacon.

I didn’t know anything except this guy had been interviewed on Mormon Stories... I think he was jointly interviewed by (what does Corbin call himself?)... Radiofree Mormon and John Dehlin did a joint interview with him. So, I had to go buy his book. I went and bought his book, and when I got home I... Used a credit card; I didn’t realize how much the infernal thing was. It’s a **really, really** expensive book!

Well, as I got to the end and I read everything (all the way through the back matter), I found out that it’s a **very** limited printing, and I bought the last one that this local book dealer had of the thing. So, I guess I’ve got a... I marked it all up. I’ve hemorrhaged all over it. I’ve interlineated. And it would have been a collector item, and I would have auctioned it off tonight, except I’ve wrecked it by all my interlineations.

So... But what I’ve been doing is catching up on the arguments involving the Book of Abraham so that if someone reads this paper or listens to this talk at some point in the future and they see I’m referring to the Book of Abraham, they know that I’ve not done that without showing the courtesy to the polemics and the apologists for their give and take. I’m not just talking; I’ve read the stuff, and I’ve cited in the footnotes, and I’m not going off without having paid attention to the ongoing dialogue.

But as you’ve already heard, I think the overwhelming majority of the dialogue that has been invested in the give and take in the Book of Abraham is **completely** off-point and has **no value** in trying to determine the authenticity of the book. The **last** one to weigh in is a book that came out last Wednesday, so I had to spend last weekend reading Dan Vogel’s book (that I read you a few of the quotes from) in order to let whoever got the last word to actually have **my** ear in expressing their last word. But if you’re interested in the library of material, the footnotes in this talk will reference it, which will be up on my website tomorrow evening. We’ll get home and get it up.

Angels, including John, minister to chosen vessels. It’s the responsibility of **mortal** ministers to preach the message. The message must be accepted and acted on for faith in Christ. The Holy Order must be held **again** by mortals and must be returned voluntarily back to Christ in a **second** Adam-ondi-Ahman. That is the arrangement made before the foundation of the Earth. God gave dominion over the Earth to Adam, and Christ will receive back the right of dominion before His return in glory.

All knowledge can be misused. The more the Holy Order is understood, the more sobering it becomes. Greater knowledge is being employed today to abuse, control, and subjugate

people. The Scriptures warn of *evils and designs which will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days* (T&C 89:2). Any advantage one individual holds over another can be improperly used to subjugate, oppress, and exploit. Therefore, the hidden mysteries that reach into the highest heaven and contemplate the darkest abyss will include knowledge capable of misuse. Mysteries are guarded, cloaked in sacred ritual, confined to a qualified group of trusted and proven initiates.

The Holy Order will return lost knowledge to the Earth. The specifics have been withheld from Scripture, but the scope of that knowledge has been referred to **often**. Abraham had the records of the first Patriarchs, and he described **some** of what was included in the sacred texts:

*But the records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord, my God, preserved in my own hands. **Therefore**, a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, [as] also of the planets and...the stars, as they were made known unto the Fathers, have I kept...unto this day....* (Abraham 2:4 RE, emphasis added)

Knowledge to be revealed through the Holy Order will include information about the beginning of **this** Creation. At the beginning, “The order that God brought focused on people in his image to join with him in the continuing process of bringing order, but more importantly on the ordering of the cosmos as sacred space” (*The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 150). We disturb this Creation because we are disorderly. We’re the opposite of what God intended for us.

...human sin has blocked God’s purposes for the whole creation; but God hasn’t gone back on his creational purpose, which was and is to [bring] in his creation through human beings, his image-bearers. In his true image-bearer, Jesus the Messiah, he has rescued humans from their sin and death in order to reinscribe his original purposes, which include the extension of sacred space into all [of] creation, until the earth is indeed full of God’s knowledge and [the] glory as the waters cover the sea. God will be present in and with his whole creation; the whole creation will be like a glorious extension of the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple in Jerusalem. (*Ibid.* pg. 176)

Restoring the Holy Order will add knowledge about the religious significance of the planets and stars. They were ordained as “signs” to establish “seasons.” That does not mean times of the year but also means times of dispensations, ministries, and judgments.

The gospel of Christ and the mysteries of His kingdom are **vast**. The **doctrine** of Christ is succinct. The entire doctrine of Christ is set out in one paragraph of Third Nephi. Christ was **emphatic** that His brief statement of His doctrine is solely and exclusively **all** of it; there can be nothing added to it. He warns us:

Whoso[ever] shall declare more or less than this, and [establish] it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil and is not built upon my rock, but he buildeth upon a sandy

foundation, and the gates of hell standeth open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Nephi 5:9 RE)

But the records of the first Patriarchs handed down to Abraham include the Creation, the discussion of planets and stars, and “greater knowledge.” The reason so much more was ~~reserved~~ [revealed] and preserved in the records of the Fathers is because the gospel of Christ **includes all truth**.

From the Scriptures, it is clear many of those involved with the Holy Order—as well as dispensation heads and prophets—were taught truth far beyond the doctrine of Christ.

Enoch, for example, was given seership by the Lord and through it uncovered hidden things:

*And the Lord spoke unto Enoch, and said unto him, Anoint your eyes with clay and wash them, and you shall see. And he did so. And he beheld the spirits that God had created, and he beheld also things which were not visible. And from that point forward came the saying abroad in the land, A **seer** has the Lord raised up unto his people...*

Enoch was shown all eternity by the Lord:

The Lord spoke unto Enoch and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men. Wherefore, Enoch knew and looked upon their wickedness and their misery, and wept, and stretched forth his arms. And he beheld eternity, and his bowels yearned, and all eternity shook. (Genesis 4:3,18 RE, emphasis added)

The Lord showed Moses everything about this world:

*And it came to pass that Moses looked and beheld the world upon which **he** was created. And...Moses beheld the world, and the ends thereof, and all the children of men who are [or] who were created, of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. (Genesis 1:2 RE, emphasis added)*

The Brother of Jared saw everything through the ends of the earth:

He shewed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also...that would be. And the Lord withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth. For the Lord had said unto him in times before that if he would believe in him, that he could shew unto him all things, it should be shewn unto him. Therefore, the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could shew him all things. (Ether 1:15 RE)

From these few Scriptures, we learn that Enoch, Moses, the Brother of Jared, and Abraham learned and experienced:

- Knowledge about the spirits God created,
- Things not visible to the eye of mankind,

- All the doings of mankind,
- Beholding eternity,
- The creation of this world and the end thereof,
- All the inhabitants of the world past, present, and future, and
- All things.

Others had many “mysteries” revealed to them. Remember that *knowledge of the mysteries of godliness is obtained only through **obedience** to God* (T&C 159:31). That’s why Abraham’s desire to get additional knowledge was so he could receive instructions and keep God’s commandments. **Obedience** earns more knowledge, and more knowledge requires greater obedience. They move together in one eternal round.

In one sense, the religion of the Fathers is based on a direct connection to God. Reduced to one thought, it is that as long as God is speaking directly to a body of people, giving them commandments, they have the most essential element of the religion of the Fathers. If they remain true to that connection, all things can be restored to them.

Commandments given to others belong to them, and only commandments God gives to us belong to **us**. Joseph Smith explained this matter, after referring to the New Testament:

[Al]though we cannot claim these promises which were made to the ancients for they are not our property, merely because they were made to the ancient Saints, yet if we are the children of the Most High, and are called with the same calling with which **they** were called, and embrace the same covenant that they embraced, and are faithful to the testimony of our Lord as they were, **we** can approach the Father, in the name of Christ as they approached Him, and for ourselves obtain the same promises. These promises, when obtained, if ever by us, will not be because Peter, John, and the other Apostles...walked in the fear of God and had power and faith to prevail and obtain them; but it will be because **we, ourselves**, have faith and approach God in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, even as they did; and when these promises are obtained, they will be promises **directly to us**, or they will do us no good. They will be communicated for **our** benefit, being our own property (through the gift of God), earned by our own diligence in keeping His commandments, and walking uprightly before Him. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 66, emphasis added)

This is affirmed in our Scriptures:

*I admit that by reading the scriptures, of truth, the saints in the days of Paul could learn, beyond the power of contradiction, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had the promise of eternal life confirmed to them by an oath of the Lord; but that promise or oath was no assurance to them of their salvation, but they could, by walking in the footsteps and continuing in the faith of their **fathers**, obtain for **themselves** an oath for confirmation that they were meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.*

*If the saints in the days of the apostles were privileged to take the ancients for examples, and lay hold of the **same** promises, and attain to the **same** exalted privilege of knowing that **their** names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that **they** were sealed there as a perpetual memorial before the face of the Most High, will not the same faithfulness, the same purity of heart and the same faith bring the same assurance of eternal life, and that in the same manner, to the children of men now in this age of the world?*

*I have no doubt but that the holy prophets and apostles and saints in ancient days were saved in the kingdom of God; neither do I doubt but that they held converse and communion with him while they were in the flesh, as Paul said to his Corinthian brethren that the Lord Jesus showed himself to above five hundred saints at one time after his resurrection. Job said that he knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should see him in the flesh in the latter days. I may believe that Enoch walked with God and by faith was translated. I may believe that Noah was a perfect man in his generation and also walked with God. I may believe that Abraham communed with God and conversed with angels. I may believe that Isaac obtained a renewal of the covenant made to Abraham by the direct voice of the Lord. I may believe that Jacob conversed with holy angels, and heard the voice of his Maker, that he wrestled with the angel until he prevailed and obtained the blessing. I may believe that Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire with fiery horses. I may believe that the saints saw the Lord and conversed with him face to face after his resurrection. I may believe that the Hebrew church came to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. I may believe that they looked into eternity and saw the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. But will all this purchase an assurance for **me**, and waft **me** to the regions of eternal day, and seat **me** down in the presence of the King of kings with my garments spotless, pure, and white?*

***Or must I not rather obtain for myself**, by my own faith and diligence in keeping the commandments of the Lord, an assurance of salvation **for myself**? And have I not an equal privilege with the ancient saints? And will not the Lord hear **my** prayers and listen to **my** cries as soon as he ever did to theirs, if I come to him in the manner they did? (T&C 99:14-17, emphasis added)*

Whatever the status of other believers may be today, there **are** promises that have been given by God directly to us. There is now more revelation and more commandments than at any other time. Beginning with the "Answer to the Prayer for Covenant" and the accompanying Covenant, God has given new commandments. If they are followed, the promises made to this people will increase in light and truth until the perfect day. We are not reading the promises made by God to other people because we have God's commandments and promises given to us.

The commandments given directly by God include, but are not limited to, the following:

- God's will is to have us love one another, but we lack the ability to respectfully disagree among each other. The Lord compares us to Paul and Peter whose disagreements resulted in jarring and sharp contentions. We have been commanded to do better.
- Wisdom counsels us to align our words with our hearts, but we refuse to take counsel from Wisdom. There have been sharp disputes between us that should have been avoided.
- Satan is a title and means accuser, opponent, and adversary; hence, once he fell, Lucifer became or, in other words, was "called" Satan because he accuses others and opposes the Father. The Lord rebuked Peter and called **him** Satan because he was wrong in opposing the Father's will, and Peter understood and repented. We sometimes act as Satan: accusing one another, wounding hearts, and causing jarring, contention, and strife through accusations. Rather than loving one another, some have dealt unkindly—as if they **were** the opponents, accusers, and adversaries. In this, we've been wrong, and the Lord has rebuked us for our error.
- We have the duty to bind the spirit of the accuser (Satan) within us so that we give no heed to accuse others. It's not enough to say we love God; we must also love our fellow man. Nor is it enough to say we love our fellow man while we—as Satan—divide, contend, and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do God's will.
- We've been warned that even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of the Lord's people. All must **equally** walk in God's path, not only to profess but to **do** as professed.
- We've scarred one another by our unkind treatment of each other; we bear the scars on our countenances, from the soles of our feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Our visages have been so marred that our hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward our fellow man bear outward witness of our inner self; we cannot hide it. When the Lord appears to us, instead of confidence, we feel shame. We fear and withdraw from the Lord because we bear the blood and sins of the treatment of our brothers and sisters. We're commanded to come to our Lord, and He will make sins as scarlet become white as snow and will make us stand boldly before Him, confident of His love.
- We're commanded to forgive one another, to be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need—for the Lord has redeemed us from being orphaned and taken us that we are no longer a widowed people. We're told to rejoice in the Lord and rejoice with our brethren and sisters and to be one.
- We've been commanded to measure our words before giving voice to them and to consider the hearts of others. Although a man **may** err in understanding concerning **many** things, if we regard one another with charity, then our brother's error in understanding will not divide us.
- We're commanded to study to learn how to respect our brothers and sisters and to come together by **precept, reason, and persuasion**, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. God warns us to take care how we invoke His name.

- God's cautioned us that a greater work remains yet to be done. His covenant requires that we abide in it (not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention, and backbiting caused anger, broke hearts, and hardened the souls of those claiming to be His saints during Joseph Smith's life), but we're commanded to receive it in spirit, in meekness, and in truth.
- We cannot be at peace with one another if we take offense when none is intended. We're commanded to not judge others except by the rule we want used to weigh ourselves.
- We're to let our pride and our envy and our fears depart from us.
- He's asked us to covenant with Him to cease to do evil and to seek to continually do good.
- God's covenant with us requires we receive the Scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern us in our daily walk in life, for us to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the Scriptures to correct ourselves and to guide our words, thoughts, and deeds.
- God has asked us, by covenant, to seek to become of one heart with those who seek the Lord to establish His righteousness.
- We're commanded to teach our children to honor the Lord and to seek to recover His lost sheep and to teach them of the Lord's ways, to walk in them.
- We've been instructed that tithes of this people are to be used for the poor.
- God instructed us to trust His words and proceed always in faith, believing that **with Him** all things **are** possible.
- We've been commanded to stop murmuring and complaining against all who labor, because the Lord is pleased with all those who are grateful and merciful who will have Him to be their God. (See T&C 157 and 158.)

Consider the question posed by the Lord to us: *What have you learned? What ought you to have learned?* (T&C 176:2,12). The Lord's question **is still pending**. It seems apparent to me that these questions are **designed to make us talk to one another**.

There's a gulf between knowledge and wisdom. We may have access to greater knowledge, but we often display very little wisdom. Knowledge can be arrogant. Wisdom is humble. Knowledge inflates our pride, but wisdom cautions us that we are still very far from being godly people.

Great spiritual development by individuals in isolation will never equip the individual to fit into a spiritually developed society. Alone, we seek connection to God. God represents the highest ideal in compassion, acceptance, and kindness. It's **easy** to make a place for God in our hearts. But other people are not always compassionate, easy to accept, or kind. God is pure, and mankind is not. When called "good" by the rich young man, Christ responded, *Why do you call me good? None is good save one, that is God* (Luke 10:9 RE). **If Christ would not allow Himself to be called "good,"** then there is little reason to call one another "good."

Individual spiritual development and group spiritual development are two **very different challenges**. Recent revelations **focus** on the development of a **group**. Everything points to

God's desire to have His **people** turn to Him and live in **harmony** with **one another**. It is clear the Lord's objective is Zion and not merely to make **us** better individuals.

There's a Buddhist story about an enlightened monk who lived near a city having difficulties and conflicts. People from the town asked the monk to come into town to guide them so they could resolve their conflicts, but he refused. He preferred living alone and meditating. The town sent more representatives to ask again, and the monk refused again. Finally, a great crowd of people went to ask the monk for his help because, without it, they said they could never reach peace. At last, he relented. On the way back to town, in the joyful crowd, an old woman stumbled into the monk, pushing him to the ground. This made him **very** angry.

It's far easier for a hermit to live in quiet meditation than to live in harmony in a community. We are called into a dispensation with **more expected than individual salvation and enlightenment**. For the salvation of souls today, the **primary** focus of God's religion is to **gather a community**. God's purpose for the end times is focused on making people of one heart and one mind.

God's spirit is withdrawing from the world. In the Covenant of Christ Conference in September 3rd, 2017, we were told:

Those who have entered faithfully into [this] covenant this day are going to notice some things. The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly more angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. There is increasing anger and resentment of gentiles. In political terms, it's rejection of white privilege.

Language of [scripture] gives a description of the events now underway and calls it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process with the spirit withdrawing, will end on this continent, as it did with two prior civilizations in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as that light becomes eclipsed, the coldness of men's [heart] is going to result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked.

The covenant, if it is kept, will prevent you from losing light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. The time will come when you will be **astonished** at the gulf between the light and truth **you** will comprehend and the darkness of mind of the world. ("Closing Remarks," Covenant of Christ Conference, September 3, 2017, p. 1, emphasis added)

We have seen **astonishing** increases since September 3rd, 2017 of darkness, lies, deceit, and conflict. Lies imprison people. The chain Enoch saw that Satan had over the world was constructed of lies. The "chains of darkness" that hold men in prison after death are **also lies**. Today those chains of darkness hold fast many people, and their numbers are growing. *Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter* (Isaiah 1:17 RE). Confusion over what

is light and what is dark and the difference between sweet and bitter comes from widespread lies being accepted as truth.

As the light of Heaven withdraws, it is all the more important for us to keep it within us. But we also have many “thinking errors.” Recent revelations from God make it clear we are **being challenged to be fit to live in peace with one another**. The Scriptures tell us we should see God **in** our fellow man.

*On His way to Jerusalem to be sacrificed, Jesus was asked by a rich young man, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is: Listen, and hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. **This** is the first commandment. And the **second** is like [it]: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 5:44 RE, emphasis added)*

Why would love of your neighbor as yourself be compared to the commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, might, and mind? It is **because** God is **in** every person you will ever meet. All life is a gift from God. God loans us the **breath** of life:

God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted [unto you] that [you] should live in peace [with one] another — ...ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and art preserving you from day to day by lending you breath that ye may live, and move, and do according to your own will, ...even supporting you from one moment to another.... (Mosiah 1:8 RE)

God sustains us **all** from moment to moment. Through His power, we live and move. If God is sustaining every living person from one moment to another, then God **is** within all of us. If He loves them enough to support them, lend them breath, give them power to move and do according to their will, sustaining their life continuously, how can we hate them?

There are sincere people who pray and ask God questions, and they get answers. Often the answers given to one might be different than the answer given to another. Both believe they have intelligence from God and desire to stay true to the answer they’ve received. In these circumstances, are conflicts inevitable? Well, of course. But does that mean that harmony is impossible? Of course not.

This conflict is like another Buddhist story about a monk who accompanied a great teacher to learn how to help others. Throughout the day, the monk listened to the teacher as he gave answers to those who came for help. At the end of the day, the monk was disappointed and told the teacher his answers contradicted one another. The teacher had told one to do the opposite of what another was told. It made no sense to the monk. The teacher replied that there is only one road, but those who depart to the left must be guided back to the right. And those who departed to the right must be guided back to the left. The road does

not change, but finding [it] after it has been lost depends on where the individual has wandered away.

What does it mean for us when there is a contradiction between God's answer to one prayerful soul and His answer to another prayerful soul? If discussion is warranted, it means that by talking through their disagreements, they may both be guided back to the one path to be followed. Sometimes that discussion will take time, experience, and careful, solemn thoughts. Even if the communicating takes a great while, why rush through a process that is designed to bring greater understanding? What if conversation does not produce an agreement? There's nothing wrong with tabling a discussion that has not reached everyone's approval and then resuming the discussion another day. Why the rush?

In legal disputes, there's a conflict resolution process called "mediation." Mediation involves a third-party mediator who helps the parties reach a settlement. The overwhelming majority of mediated cases reach settlement. However, I've seen many cases fail to reach a resolution, and the parties walk away from the mediation table still in conflict. But later, after the parties have taken time to reflect on the mediation, most of those unresolved cases will eventually settle as well.

I think the "Answer to the Prayer for Covenant" is the Lord **pleading with us** to take the time to **talk through our differences**. There is **nothing** in those words of counsel that require us to quickly resolve matters. Quite the opposite. The "Answer" is filled with instruction to us about the **process**, leaving the result to be obtained eventually—through a respectful process, no matter how much time may be needed. To the extent the Lord cares about time at all, He warns us against "haste."

The "recommended means" to reach harmony are *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...* (T&C 139:6, emphasis added).

During the Scriptures project, there were many conflicts and differences to resolve. These conflict's resolutions delayed the project **far** beyond what any of us thought it would take. When the two independent groups were first combined, both groups thought their respective project was complete (or nearly so). But it was quickly apparent that the projects differed, and there were issues to resolve. It took months, and when all believed the end was approaching again, new source materials and new research was uncovered that required more than half of the project to **begin again**.

More than a year after expected conclusion, the project continued. At one point, I sent an email expressing my view of how I hoped to conduct myself:

I would rather submit to the decision of the group than insist that my view be followed. For me, harmony between brethren is more important than getting what I think best to be followed. I believe harmony can lead to much greater things than can merely enforcement of even a correct view. I know how difficult it is to have a correct view,

because of how often [I've] been corrected by the Lord. Sometimes [I'm] humiliated by my foolishness when the Lord reproves me. Humiliation can lead to humility, but my experience is that the humiliation is accompanied by shame, whereas humility can proceed with a clear conscience.

*My experience with others leads me to conclude that if we can have one **heart** first, eventually we can likewise come to have one mind. But if we insist on having one mind at the outset, we may never obtain one heart together. (Teachings and Commandments—Epigraph, emphasis added)*

A friend sent me a Facebook rant from a man who wants to teach others and very much demands attention and respect. His angry rant ended by telling those who were insufficiently respectful of his great writings that they were “hypocrites and pollutions, and unless you fall down before God in humility, you will suffer horrors you can’t imagine. ...The greater the reasons you resist, the more you will be damned.” The approach reminded me of the enlightened hermit monk who became angry once jostled. Zion cannot be established in solitary meditation. It requires a community. And community requires us to see God in one another. It requires we listen to and understand one another. That cannot happen if we do not talk with each other about even **difficult subjects** and **serious disagreements**. **The sharper the disagreement, the more we need to learn!** As the Lord explained, *There have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided. I speak these words to **reprove** you that you may **learn**, not to upbraid you so that you mourn. I want my people to have understanding* (T&C 157:3, emphasis added). Those may be some of the greatest words God has ever condescended to give to any people, at any time—and we treat them as if they’re a rebuke for someone else and not ourselves, as if we needn’t heed them.

Also, we’ve been taught:

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me, I will tell you my part. (Ibid. vs. 54)

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Lord has, in His mercy, chosen to speak again. God has renewed His covenant and provided commandments. But His instructions and commandments are to guide a **community** into godly harmony. It is only possible to rise up and become **that** community by following the instructions of God.

I’m ashamed of every conflict I’ve caused. I regret any discourtesy I’ve shown to another. But I do not recall ever demanding someone submit to me. At every turn, I have intended only to persuade and invite, not demand and insist. I am **no one’s** commander, president, or

church authority. **You** cannot make me anything more than your equal, because I refuse to rise above anyone else. We are all fellow-servants (and often, unprofitable ones, at that).

It is important to God that the Book of Mormon has been accepted as a covenant. It's a bond between God and man. God has made for Himself a people and "**numbered** us among the House of Israel" (see T&C 156:15,48; 158:10, emphasis added). But remember that Israel has a long history of rebellion, disobedience, and rejection. Those who remain faithful and obedient to God are those who will vindicate His prophecies, covenants, and promises. Among other things, the people who keep His covenant will be called upon to build the tabernacle where He will take up His abode on Earth in the New Jerusalem. On July 14, 2017, He gave this revelation:

*Whenever I have people who are mine, I command them to build a house, a holy habitation, a sacred place where my presence can dwell or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister, because it is in such a place that it has been ordained to recover you, establish by my word and my oath your marriages, and endow my people with knowledge from on high that will unfold to you the mysteries of godliness, instruct you in my ways, that you may walk in my path. And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will end; Ephraim will not **envy** Judah and Judah will not **provoke** Ephraim. (T&C 157:41, emphasis added)*

Knowledge that will unfold the mysteries of godliness and instruct in God's path is designed to be embedded in the House of God. At this point, the prophecy waiting to be fulfilled states:

...when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law.... (Isaiah 1:5 RE)

The first Fathers had teachings and beliefs that included much more than what has been preserved from Joseph's day. We should expect greater information to be passed along to us. But knowledge without the tempering presence of wisdom will prove to be dangerous. Aspiring and ambitious men are unwise. They cannot be trusted.

There are those who think circumcision originated with Abraham through his covenant with God. That was a **restoration** of circumcision, **not the origination** of it. In the beginning, when a son of Adam and a daughter of Eve covenanted to marry, the son of Adam shed blood by circumcision in order to seal the marriage covenant. Once healed, the marriage was consummated, at which point the virgin daughter of Eve shed blood to complete the sealing of the marriage covenant. Inasmuch as Abraham and Sarah had been married for **many** years prior to the covenant, it was ordained that circumcision for all of Abraham's descendants would take place at the eighth day. Because of the restoration of the covenant—and God **adapting** it for Abraham and all the faithful who would follow him as

their Father—circumcision was expected to be done at birth. This **remains an obligation** for all the righteous.

The much later Law of Moses perpetuated the Abrahamic practice of circumcision at eight days. Even non-Israelites who wanted to observe the Passover were **required** to be circumcised to participate in the Paschal meal. Although the Law of Moses is no longer in effect, restoring circumcision through Abraham **pre-dates** Moses by nearly seven centuries and is still in effect. Fulfilling and ending the Law of Moses did **nothing** to change the **earlier** covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

There were other practices known to the first Fathers that have been lost. We should expect to learn the earliest worship was not limited to a “Father in Heaven” but included a Divine Family. I’ve already addressed this subject in “Our Divine Parents.” The first Patriarchs understood there to be a Father, Mother, and a Divine Son who were all recognized as Divine. There was also a Heavenly Council or Divine Counsel who were among a recognized “hosts of heaven” who also held positions of authority.

In addition to a Sabbath day of rest, the first Fathers were given three Divinely appointed religious festivals or holidays (more correctly, “Holy Days”) that were to be observed yearly. These were tied to the Creation to remind mankind of God’s wisdom and mercy in organizing this world for mankind.

Because of apostasy, **numerous** other festivals or religious observances have been added by men. For example, the Jews added Hanukkah, Purim, and Yom HaShoah. Christians added Lent, Ash Wednesday, and Christmas (among others). When the original religion returns, the original religious festivals—**always** centered in a sacred site or temple—will also return.

I mentioned ~~before that Abraham entered Egypt~~ before he entered Egypt, he received a great revelation about the stars, the heavens, events among the pre-existent spirits of mankind, the fall of Satan, and the Creation of this world. This list summarizes part of the knowledge associated with the Holy Order; God wanted the husbandman, shepherd, and High Priest to comprehend:

- **Why** this Creation was organized,
- Man’s position in the **cosmos**,
- **Who** the “hosts of heaven” were,
- That there was a cosmic rebellion in the heavens,
- That a cosmic covenant was established that **framed** the Creation, **established** conditions for mankind to gain experience, and through which mankind could progress,
- That all things in nature—including the light of the sun, moon, planets, and stars—were **purposefully organized** and governed by a **covenant** with God.

Abraham, like Adam (at the beginning) and his descendant, Enoch, were caught up into Heaven and received a tutorial endowment from God. The purpose was simple enough:

helping each of them to understand what **came before** and what **comes after** this life. This was to help rescue them from death and hell. In a very real sense, the curriculum of the Holy Order is designed to give both a **personal** and a **cosmic context to Christ**. The Holy One of Israel is the redeeming Messiah who has been our **constant Protector, Example, and Guide** from the foundation of Creation.

The Messiah was the central figure **in** the Creation. The Messiah was the foremost figure opposing the rebellion in the Heavens. The Messiah came to save the Creation by His self-sacrifice. Man's universal death is reversed by their universal resurrection, made possible by the Messiah. And it will be the Messiah who judges mankind and will assign them to various conditions following mortality. It is the Messiah who occupies the central position in **all** the mysteries of godliness. The members of the Holy Order understood this best and, therefore, were most trusted to preach, teach, testify, minister, and watch over the posterity of Adam (and later, the posterity of Abraham).

The most useful and obedient servants of the Lord have been those who have been exposed to the greatest understanding of **His eternal** role. The opening paragraph of Abraham's book is a direct statement of the relationship between knowledge and obedience.

From the first generation, the Patriarchs used **ritual** to convey a great body of information (a theatrical revelation) to initiates. The Book of Abraham **itself** appears to be a ritual text.

...the book of Abraham, far from being merely a diverting or edifying history, is a discourse on divine authority, which also is the theme of the three facsimiles. The [explanation] to the three plates make it perfectly clear that they are meant as diagrammatic or formulaic aids to an understanding of the subject of priesthood on earth. (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, p. 178)

Enoch's account (now in Genesis of the Restoration Edition of Scriptures) **also** appears to be a ritual text. Hugh Nibley calls Enoch,

...the great initiate who becomes the great initiator..

He adds:

His is the independent intelligence always seeking further light and knowledge. He is the great observer and recorder of all things in heaven and earth, of which God grants him perfect knowledge. The great learner, he is also the great teacher: Enoch the Initiator into the higher mysteries of...faith and secrets of the universe; Enoch the Scribe, keeper of the records, instructor in the ordinances, aware of all times and places, studying and transmitting the record of the race with intimate concern for all generations to come. He offers the faithful their greatest treasure of knowledge. He is the seer who conveys to men the mind and will of the Lord. (*Enoch the Prophet*, p. 19, 21)

The religion of the Fathers cannot be adequately conveyed if it is separated from ritualized knowledge. By using symbol, movement, gesture, dress, architecture, sound, orientation, and setting, it is possible to embed light and truth in a way to engage the mind, spirit, and heart of mankind. The temple can **be** the house in which it is possible to stretch the mind of man both upward and downward by the things presented there. “The temple itself was but a copy of the heavenly temple, the liturgy on earth a shadow of the worship of the angels” (Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 118). It is through covenant-forming ordinances—including rituals—that the power of Godliness has been manifested to mankind. *The order of the House of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally roll into the Celestial Kingdom of God and enjoy it forever* (T&C 117:4).

When writing from a dungeon in Missouri, Joseph Smith’s reflection on what is needed to save souls clarifies the function of a temple:

...because the things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of eternal expanse. You must commune with God. ...None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world, to hold the keys of the [mystery] of those things that have been kept hid from the foundation until now, of which some have tasted a little, and which many of them are to be poured [out] from Heaven upon the heads of babes, yea, the weak, obscure, and despicable ones of this earth. (T&C 138:18-19)

Accordingly, there is always going to be a temple when the Holy Order is present in its fullest manifestation. Abraham also is directly associated with temple ritual. As Nibley explained, “There is a wealth of tradition now being zealously studied to show that the temple ordinances really go back to the beginning, as Joseph Smith declared. The four names associated with the tradition are those of Adam, Enoch, Abraham, and Elijah” (*Temple and Cosmos*, p. 78).

To return a complete Restoration, a temple will be required. As the Lord revealed to Joseph, a temple is always required of God’s people:

For your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments [in]...beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, and honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (T&C 141:12)

The required temple in Nauvoo was **not** built. The fullness was **not** restored during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Instead of blessings, the saints were cursed. Not only did the January 1841 revelation warn of cursings—including forcible expulsion from Nauvoo—but 22 months following that revelation (in an editorial on October 1, 1842), Joseph Smith **pled** for renewed focus on the temple. He wrote:

Perhaps [we've] said enough on this subject, but we feel the importance of it and therefore speak plainly. It is for you, brethren, to say whether the work shall stand or progress; one thing is certain, that unless that is done all our efforts to aggrandize or enrich ourselves will be vain and futile. We may build splendid houses but we shall not inhabit them; we may cultivate farms but we shall not enjoy them; we may plant orchards, or vineyards, but we shall not eat the fruit of them. The word of the Lord is build my house, and until that command is fulfilled we stand responsible to the great Jehovah for the fulfilment of it, and if [it is] not done in due time we may have to share the same fate that we have heretofore done in Missouri. (*JSP, Documents, Volume 11*, p. 127)

Joseph's warning **did not** inspire the saints. Their neglect and disobedience changed the warning into prophecy. They suffered the same fate as before in Missouri, even though the Lord wanted (and expected) better of them. There's no reason to repeat their failure, because the Lord does not reward the disobedient. He offers blessings, and it is up to His people to receive them through obedience. But if His offer is rejected, there are no secured promises.

In the "Answer to Prayer for Covenant," the Lord assures us that if we are faithful, we will be given His temple:

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need...say, Know ye the Lord, for you [shall all] know me, from the least to the greatest. I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven. (T&C 158:15-16)

The first and most complete religion belonged to Adam and Eve. They lived with God, and after being cast out, they retained a memory of living in God's presence. The first Fathers were taught they could talk with God, receive answers from Him, and return to His presence. The experience of Enoch—seven generations after Adam—records that direct contact between mankind and God was part of the true religion. After the fall of mankind, the process of the ascent of man into Heaven to commune with God has remained the **heart** of the religion. That process will reverse, and contact between mankind and God at the end will involve the **descent** of God from Heaven to visit His tabernacle:

And Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father, and he called unto the Lord, saying, Will you not come again upon the earth? For inasmuch as you are God, and I know you, and you have sworn unto me and commanded me that I should ask in

*the name of your Only Begotten, you have made me, and given unto me a right to your throne, and not of myself, but through your own grace. Wherefore, I ask you if you will not come again on the earth. And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so **will** I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people will I preserve**. And **righteousness** will I send down out of Heaven. **Truth** will I send forth out of the earth to bear testimony of [mine] Only Begotten, his resurrection from the dead, yea, and also the resurrection of all men. And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [mine] own elect from the four quarters of the earth unto a place which I shall prepare, a holy city, that my people may gird up their loins and be looking forth for the time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and...your city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom. And they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; and there shall be my abode. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)*

So that there are no false assumptions, the Scriptures explain that God's covenant with Enoch includes an **actual** temple to be **built today**. And the Lord has reiterated in His Covenant: *I will come **to** my tabernacle and dwell **with** my people in Zion, and **none will overtake** it* (T&C 157:64, emphasis added).

The religion of the Fathers involved direct communion, contact, and connection between mankind and God. The Holy Order is an important part of the return of that direct association. The original religion of the Patriarchs enabled the faithful to hear directly from the Lord **His** promise of eternal life. God would seal them by covenant into His Heavenly Family. We can, if faithful, obtain all that the original Fathers received from God at the beginning:

What I, the Lord, have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself. And though the heaven[s] and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by my own voice or by the voice of my servants [it's] the same. For behold and lo, the Lord is God and the spirit bears record, and the record is true, and the truth abides for ever and ever. Amen. (T&C 54:7)

As a servant of God, I say with **His** authority that these promises are true, and He intends to fulfill them for His covenant people Israel. In the beginning, mankind was placed in a family. The first commandment to Father Adam and Mother Eve was to multiply and replenish the Earth. The first man and woman were married. Their union produced the family of mankind. **Every** soul born into this Creation came from parents and were all intended to be in a family.

The plan of salvation is covenantal and familial. The government of God is a family. If a family is established by covenant with God, it will be the only order that can survive death. In a very real sense, the salvation of mankind now comes only through the family of Abraham. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob covenanted with these three successive generations that they would stand at the head of all who would be saved after them. The God of Israel requires **some** part of mankind—however small—to be sealed into that line or be utterly wasted at His coming.

God has explained in Scripture how He intends to identify covenant Israel in the last days. After the death of King Solomon, Israel divided into two kingdoms:

- The first was the Northern Kingdom. After the division, they were sometimes called “Ephraim” or the “Ten Tribes” or “Israel” (in the Old Covenants).
- The second was the Southern Kingdom, called “Judah” and, later, “the Jews.”

The Northern Kingdom was conquered, taken captive, and removed from their land by Assyria in 722 BC. When freed by Assyria years later, they crossed the Euphrates River and disappeared from **our records** into a far land. They were only lost to **our** limited record of history.

The Southern Kingdom was conquered in 598 BC by Babylon, taken captive, and removed from **their** land. When Cyrus allowed their return in 538 BC, **only a remnant** returned.

Because of these two great exiles, the Ten Tribes were scattered and lost to our history, and the returning Jews were reduced to a small remnant of their original population. Today’s Jews descended from that small remnant. The greater part of Israelite blood is in the Middle East. These descendants of the exiled Israelites remained, intermarried, and today are among the ancestors of Iranians, Iraqis, Syrians, Turks, Jordanians, and Arabians. Israelites were also scattered into northern Europe and Asia among Europeans, Russians, and Scandinavians. As God promised to Abraham: Over the centuries, intermarriage and migrations has sent his Israelite descendants **into “all nations.”** Today, almost **all** Israelite blood runs through the veins of people regarded as Gentiles because, after being scattered, they assimilated and lost their original identity.

Today’s Jews are only a tiny fraction of the original Israelites. Their history has been marked by continual persecution. Their perseverance has been heroic. They are a people of destiny and prophecy. However, many of the prophecies concerning Israel **do not involve the Jews**. In addition, Jews do not know the record of the Nephites. They have not been taught the prophecies of Joseph Smith. They are unaware of the covenant God renewed in 2017. Accordingly, many prophecies are unknown to and will not be fulfilled through the Jews.

It will only be through Israel that we can be sealed by a covenant with God to Heavenly Parents through the Fathers. Salvation is **still** through Israel. The question is: Where are we to **find** the prophesied latter-day Israel now?

The Book of Mormon relates how religious identities are changed by God. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, prophesied that *the gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel* (2 Nephi 7:4 RE). His brother prophesied: *As many of the gentiles as will repent **are** the covenant people of the Lord...* (2 Nephi 12:11 RE, emphasis added). Therefore, God promised to number Gentiles as people of Israel **by covenant**. That promise was realized in 2017 when He ordained a covenant for the Gentiles to re-establish them **as** His people.

The Jews are **still** a remnant of covenant people. However, they can **forfeit** their status if they reject the covenant offered by the Lord in 2017: *As many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off. For the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel* (Ibid.).

How we respond to God affects our covenant status. When the resurrected Messiah visited the branch of Israel in the Americas, He quoted His **Father** about future covenantal realignment of identities. Covenant-status is now based on how individuals respond to the Holy One of Israel. *But if the gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the **Father**, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel* (3 Nephi 7:6 RE, emphasis added).

The Messiah explained the process for a Gentile change of their identity:

*The gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, **that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel** — and when these things [shall] come to pass, that thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto them that they may know...the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are...the house of Israel.* (3 Nephi 9:11 RE, emphasis added)

The Messiah quoted a prophecy from Isaiah to confirm it was always God's plan to change Gentiles into Israelites:

*And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; **for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife** [Children of the desolate are the Gentiles; the married wife was Israel] saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy **seed shall inherit the gentiles** and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* (3 Nephi 10:2, quoting from Isaiah 19:4, both RE, emphasis added)

As Moroni finished his father's abridged record, he added his own prophecy of the last-days' New Jerusalem to be built on the American continent. The occupants of that holy city are described in his prophecy: *And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who [shall] dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the*

Lamb; and they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel (Ether 6:3 RE, emphasis added). "Numbered among." Numbered among: Covenantal.

The New Jerusalem will be built by covenant Israel. The group whom the Lord regards as His Israel is covenant-dependent. But a covenant must be kept.

There are two identifiable remnants of previous covenant people. One group is Native Americans who descend biologically from the Israelite-Nephite covenant people. The other is the Jews. Both are biologically connected to Israel, but they will be "cast off" if they reject the covenant now offered by God. And Gentiles may or may not be biologically connected to Israel but are **numbered** with Israel if they accept the covenant.

The New Jerusalem is to be built by a remnant of Israel, or to be more precise, it will be built by a remnant the Lord regards **as** covenant Israel. The Lord's "Answer to the Prayer for Covenant" accepted a body of believing Gentiles as His people of Israel. God's promises and prophecies about Israel in the last days began to be fulfilled in 2017 when the covenant He offered was accepted. The Lord said to those people:

***I will number you** among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and **you** will inherit the promises of Israel. **You** shall be my people and **I** will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And [to] those who will receive [more will] be given, until they know the mysteries of God in full. ...I have redeemed you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. (T&C 157:50, emphasis added)*

The Gentiles who accepted the Lord's Covenant have been promised that they:

...are now numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel...

God's Answer goes on to assure covenant Israel:

And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you.

*I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need...say, Know ye the Lord, for you [shall **all**] know me, from the least to the greatest.*

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest.

*And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will **pass over you** as my peculiar treasure... (T&C 158:10,12-18, emphasis added)*

...a second **literal** Passover.

The Lord's "strange act" is approaching completion. The promises made to the Fathers are **being** vindicated. The Restoration has recommenced, and if we're faithful, it will not be paused or interrupted again. Although Israel's numbers are few, there have never been great numbers willing to sacrifice everything for God. One requirement for faith has always been the same: *A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation* (Lectures on Faith 6:7 RE). The Lord has said this about our day: *I tell you that [I] will come, and when [I do] come, [I] will avenge my saints speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall [I] find faith on the earth?* (Luke 10:6 RE).

There are two groups God has (or will) covenant to preserve against the coming harvest.

- The first are those who made and keep the covenant the Lord offered in 2017. It changed all those who accepted it into covenant Israel. **They** have the right to inherit this land and will be preserved. As stated in His "Answer to Prayer for Covenant": *And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure* (T&C 158:18).
- The second are those who will become part of the Holy Order and receive and practice the religion of the Fathers. God alone will decide **how many** and **who** will be invited into **that** order. We have no control over it. We have no right to decide who is worthy or unworthy to receive it. It is entirely the Lord's choice because we are **rarely** able to determine other people's hearts. The Lord told Joseph Smith **bluntly** that he was unable to tell the righteous from the wicked. We are in no better position than was Joseph. Therefore, we should leave it with the Lord to determine whether or not to invite men and women and, if so, **who** and **how many**. The Holy Order is as much—or more—a burden as a blessing.

As Hyrum Smith explained, God imposes restrictions:

For the mysteries of God are not given to all men; and [to] those to whom they are given they are placed under restrictions to impart only such as God will command them, and the residue is to be kept in a faithful breast, otherwise he will be brought

under condemnation. By this God will prove his faithful servants, who will be called and numbered with the chosen. (T&C 152:2)

The Egyptian imitation of the Patriarchal religion kept hidden the most important parts of their religion away from public disclosure. Hugh Nibley explained:

Bleeker duly notes that “certain parts of temples were inaccessible to ordinary people” and that “the Egyptian temple was not meant to let the masses of the people participate in the religious services.” (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, p. 86, citing CJ Bleeker)

This was because:

The rites, “revealed to men by Osiris, the first mortal to be resurrected,” were nothing less than the “Great Secret” of how mortals may become gods, taught in the temple “the place of the great secret.” (*Ibid.* p. 88, citing A Moret)

Margaret Barker explained the Christian tradition of restricting information available **even to the faithful**. She likened the early Christian practice of concealing some truths from believers by referring to Origen’s *Homily 5 on Numbers*, explaining:

...the secrets of the temple which were guarded by the priests. Commenting on Numbers 4, the instructions for transporting the tabernacle through the desert, he emphasized that the family of Kohath were only permitted to carry the sacred objects but were not permitted to see what was in the holy place; then they had to cover the sacred objects with veils before handling them to others, who were only permitted to carry them. The mysteries of the Church were similar.... (*The Great High Priest*, pp.76-77)

Clement of Rome recorded that Peter quoted an unwritten teaching of Christ that admonished: “Keep the mysteries/secrets for me and the sons of my house” (*Clementine Homilies* 19:20). The resurrected Messiah taught His closest peers things that were **not** told to other believers.

Knowing God’s plans does not always produce immediate joy. Solomon made this comment after a life of learning: *In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow* (Ecclesiastes 1:3 RE). We should not be surprised to learn that initiation into God’s mysteries can be troubling, disquieting, and even a burden.

If asked to carry a burden by God, do it willingly. If not asked, do not envy. Remember Alma’s statement: *Behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish, for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me* (Alma 15:12 RE). It is our common enemy who stirs us up to jealousy and envy rather than patience and meekness. Great works of God **fail because mankind will not wait on the Lord**.

*Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are [so set] 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 handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. ...when we undertake to cover our sins or...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. (T&C 139:5, emphasis added)*

The more God gives, the greater the peril. Weaknesses of appetites, ambitions, passions, and covetousness is akin to trying to navigate through a narrow pass, guarded by a great beast, pitiless and cruel, that destroys **all** those whose zeal and impatience brings them into the reach of the beast (see T&C 163). God has provided to us guidance on how to reach Zion. It requires self-discipline and meekness to follow the Lord rather than racing ahead of Him to destruction.

Our first Fathers experienced visions, ascended into Heaven, obtained promises of exaltation, and were transformed by their experiences **from men into angels of God**. Joseph Smith attempted to bring this back as part of the Restoration. Margaret Barker has written about the use of the term “angel” anciently **to identify those who had encountered God’s presence**. She also explains a Dead Sea Scroll text foretelling a return of that religion: “The Qumran Melchizedek text has a possible reading about people in the last days whose teachers have been kept hidden and secret; perhaps they have been preserving the older ways” (*The Great High Priest*, p. 79). The return of that religion will more likely be through a last-days’ restoration rather than through a preservation. But she is correct to anticipate its return.

The Book of Mormon has account after account of prophets receiving an audience with God the Father and His Only Begotten Son. This **is** the older, heavenly ascent religion that began with Adam in the Garden.

Joseph was called to become a minister of salvation when he saw the heavens open. He taught the idea of direct association with Christ as the promised Second Comforter during a visit to Ramus, Illinois on April 2nd, 1843. After quoting Christ’s promises to not leave His followers comfortless because He and His Father would come to them and **take up their abode with them**, Joseph explained, “Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself.... When any man obtains this last Comforter he **will have** the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him or [to] appear unto him from time to time” (*TPJS*, pp. 150-151, emphasis added). *The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and...Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false* (LDS D&C 130:3; originally found in *JSP, Journals, Volume 2*, pp. 323-6, emphasis added). This appearing of the Father and the Son began with Adam and was intended to continue **in every generation**.

Although the teaching of Christ as the Second Comforter was taught by Joseph Smith and believed by LDS Mormons, it is now **one** of the teachings that has dwindled from LDS teaching. In a Boise LDS meeting, church apostle Dallin Oaks denounced the teaching of mortals needing to see the Lord as “a tactic of the adversary” (“Boise Rescue,” June 13, 2015). Following that, the LDS Church removed a footnote from their King James Version John 14:16, which **previously** referred to Jesus Christ and **replaced** it with a reference to the “Holy Ghost.” At the time I wrote the book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*, in 2006, **the text explained orthodox LDS belief**. Since then, however, **that** sect has abandoned the teaching. If that book were written today by a faithful member of **that** church, it would have to be revised to reflect the church’s changed view. By leaving the text unchanged, it provides a current example of **continuing dwindling in unbelief**. Changing belief into unbelief happens **very** quickly. *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil* was published in 2006, and the doctrine was denounced as a “tactic of the adversary” by an LDS apostle in an official church meeting in 2015—**only nine** years later.

Joseph Smith’s mission was to recover and restore. He may have seemed every bit an innovator and revolutionary, but the truth is that he was the **greatest religious reactionary** since Jesus Christ. The recovery through Joseph ended with his and Hyrum’s murder, after which dwindling began. Dwindling in unbelief continued until a group repented and the Lord removed His condemnation in 2017. Now **we** hope to continue faithful. Christ commanded in the Sermon on the Mount: *Wherefore, seek not the things of this world, but [first seek] to build up the kingdom of God and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matthew 3:39 RE).

There is a chapter in a Hugh Nibley book, *Temple and Cosmos*, entitled “One Eternal Round: The Hermetic Tradition.” That chapter goes from page 379 through 433, and it is worth reading in its entirety. However, I am going to lift a few quotes from his explanation of history that should seem familiar:

In each dispensation the world went bad while the prophets united in futile protest, as in the days of Samuel, Hezekiah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. In the powerful phrase of Ether, “the prophets mourned and withdrew from among the people.” ...When not preaching it was their custom to keep a low profile, or simply to depart from the scene in the time-honored manner of the Rechabites, a pattern we find repeated over and over again in the Book of Mormon and vividly depicted in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The holy outcasts would form with their followers a community of saints, a church, waiting and working for Zion. Zion itself is a model of such a retreat from the world: “And from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.” In their retreat the righteous refugees take particular pains to preserve the sacred records—we think of Moses, of John, of Ether, of Moroni, etc., preserving studying,...editing the sacred writings by special command.

...the esoteric community was limited to those who understood and could be trusted with the deeper meaning of...doctrine.

...Throughout the Book of Mormon the church itself regularly splits into a worldly society, notably the religion of the Nehors, and others consisting of “a few...humble followers of Christ” to whom special gifts and revelations were given.

...The gospel that the retreating wise men take with them into hiding is guarded as a secret, and that by express command. Why seek it? The jealousy and envy of others can be dangerous; they resent being shut out from something great and mysterious, like boys excluded from the club tree house. They usually take out their wrath and frustration by wrecking the place.

...[True worshipers] are naturally drawn to each other and excite ever-mounting distrust, suspicion, and envy of those excluded from the magic circle. “I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his (Satan’s) kingdom,” said Joseph Smith. ...We all know how the public received the prophet Joseph, who was placed in the greatest danger, not from angry outsiders, but from his jealous followers, like the Higbees and the Laws. The ancient Ephesians passed a law banishing [the] great achievers from the city—they were a standing rebuke to the rest: “If they must excel”...“let them go and excel over [someone] else.” ...Anything they don’t understand makes dogs and people uncomfortable, distrusting, and dangerous.

...We may consider the gospel as the most advanced knowledge on earth, known to but a few because it is accepted and believed by but a few and can be understood by no others.

...In ancient times, apostasy never came by renouncing the gospel but always by corrupting it. No one renounces it today, and so we have...strange paradox of people stoutly proclaiming beliefs and ideas that they have no intention of putting into practice.

...We seek knowledge as our greatest treasure, while the poverty of most of our manuals and handbooks defies description.

...The great apostasy [at] the time of the apostles was not a renouncing of the faith but its corruption and manipulation.

...Everywhere we find myths and legends about how the primal bond that existed between heaven and earth in the Golden Age was broken by the wickedness of men; the great common assemblies ceased and the gods departed. But, as Aristotle notes, some bits of the old knowledge always survived to the next age. ...the three things in the mysteries that Herodotus would never talk about were (1) the grand mystery of the true nature and character of God, which could be known only by revelation, (2) the ordinances by which the mysteries were taught and implemented, and (3) the doctrine or rationale of the whole, including that which explained the rites.

...Philosophy is the road, not the goal, which it never reaches. If you want answers to the questions which it proposes, you can get them in the end only by revelation.

...Joseph Smith points this out: "As Paul said, 'the world by wisdom know(s) not God,' so the world by speculation (is) destitute of revelation." Religion answers by private but nonnegotiable spiritual experiences.

...[Isaac] Newton also talked as Joseph Smith did, that "truth had been given by God [at] the beginning, but had been fragmented and corrupted in the course of time; its traces survived in enigmatic form[s] in these different sorts of literature, but had to be recovered by a sort of dialectic between hard, disciplined inquiry and the ancient sources."

...Joseph explained to the brethren the ordinances and covenants "on to the highest Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds."

These few excerpts from Hugh Nibley illustrate the tension between sacred knowledge and dwindling in unbelief. Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham is an example of a hypocephalus. These **first appeared** in 400 BC, and most examples reckon from very late in the Ptolemaic era. These documents were developed **because the priests realized that sacred knowledge was slipping away and needed to be preserved**. One recent study of the hypocephalus concluded these circular funerary documents were "a synthesis of the widespread theological knowledge of the priests... (Tama Mekis, *The Hypocephalus: an Ancient Egyptian Funerary Amulet*, p. 75).

They were used in only few burials. "It is clear that the use of the hypocephalus never became widespread. Hypocephali remained exclusive pieces of funerary equipment reserved for the clergy and for the members of their [family] who occupied priestly positions in the pallacide of the temples" (*Ibid.* p. 2).

The Facsimile No. 2 was produced **at the end of the dwindling Egyptian religion in its final stages**, still *seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even...the reign of Adam...* (Abraham 2:3 RE). **That facsimile** is both a **powerful symbol** of what the Restoration **promised and** how it has dwindled. The original hypocephalus was intended to preserve sacred, hidden knowledge for use by the faithful and initiated priestly inner-circle. But it was written at a moment when the priests realized their sacred knowledge was slipping away. They were only able to make a **gesture** to preserve it by sketching a montage of ancient hieroglyphs to **echo** their dwindling religion. That document **aptly** symbolizes Joseph's calling to restore the original, sacred, lost knowledge. But Joseph's efforts have also dwindled for nearly two centuries. The opportunity to recover and practice the original religion still exists if the conditions of God's covenant are met.

God overthrew the Egyptian gods by sending Moses. God overthrew the kingdom of the Jews by sending John as forerunner for His Son, the Messiah. God overthrew the Christian

gods by sending Joseph Smith. Last of all, God renewed and restored life to His people in 2017 when He made a new covenant. **Every** time God acts, He overthrows all other **false** faiths to **reaffirm His own religion**. God's goal is always to revive it in its fullness, but that has been **rarely** achieved. He is actively seeking to restore it again today. This work is His, and it will continue until reaching its fullness. **I** am a witness of His hand moving, His voice speaking, His will being revealed, and His guidance being provided continually as His work unfolds line upon line, precept upon precept. We will see it succeed if we have the faith and patience to allow it to do so.

"Each of the great dispensations of the gospel has come in a time of world upheaval, when the waywardness of the human race has been matched by...climactic restlessness of the elements" (Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, p. 164).

The overthrow of Egypt's gods by signs and wonders has inspired people (from ancient Israel to modern writers) with thoughtful reflection. When the signs and plagues are viewed from the Egyptian religious perspective (to the extent we have been able to reconstruct that view), the God of Israel directly challenged the gods of Egypt.

The competing **servants** [serpents] described in Exodus 4:11 was a direct conflict between the power of Israel's God and the Egyptian magicians. To Egypt, the serpent symbolized Apophis, the force of chaos. For Israelites, the brass serpent was to become a symbolic representation of their future Messiah. A serpent made of brass, raised up on a pole for suffering Israelites to look upon to be healed, foreshadowed the atoning sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah.

Moses' staff became a serpent that ate the Egyptian magicians' serpents. The incident demonstrated the Messiah's power to overthrow destruction and chaos. The event should have taught the Egyptian Pharaoh that Israel's God held all power.

The plagues that began with Egyptian water turning to blood was a direct defeat of the Nile god, Hapi. That first plague and the final destruction both involved authority over water. Gabriel poisoned the Nile at the beginning and completed the overthrow when the waters of the Red Sea returned to drown Pharaoh's horsemen and chariots.

Pharaoh witnessed the defeat of other Egyptian gods. Hathor was overthrown when the Egyptian cattle died, while the Israelite cattle were spared.

Geb was overthrown when dust under Uriel's stewardship was sent to afflict the Egyptian's skin with boils.

Fire was sent by Raphael with burning hail and loud thunder. Later, a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night unmistakably signified Raphael's protection for Israel.

Michael sent the east wind and locusts to destroy the crops of Egypt. Then Michael blocked the light of Ra, overthrowing the Egyptian deity believed to have power over all creation, including the underworld. Michael removed the breath of life from every firstborn in Egypt

that finally led to Egypt's surrender. The power of Israel's God **and the combined acts of His archangels** proved too much to resist.

Egypt believed there were "four sons of Horus." This idea was left from the Patriarchal era and was their **apostate** belief that roughly corresponded to the four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. Yet Egypt chose to fight against these four until they were destroyed. Once Egypt was defeated, **for centuries** Israel's religion increased, and Egypt's waned. Eventually, this led to the ultimate death of Egypt's religion. So complete was the God of Israel's overthrow of Egypt that the Egyptian language **itself** was altogether lost until the Rosetta Stone made it possible to reconstruct (in part) the identities of some of Egypt's defeated gods and fragments of Egypt's ancient beliefs.

In another conflict, John the Baptist was ordained by God's angel when eight days old to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews. Joseph Smith explained John the Baptist "wrested the keys, the kingdoms, the power, the glory from the Jews, and by the holy anointing and decree of heaven" (*TPJS*, p. 276). He went before the Messiah, as foretold by Gabriel to his father, Zechariah. The Messiah's forerunner fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy and testified to the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. Once the Messiah had been lifted up, God destroyed the Jewish nation and demolished their temple.

After nearly two millennia, Joseph Smith ended the Christian God's silence by declaring the heavens had opened and the Father and Son had appeared to and spoken with him. In the following two decades, ancient Scripture from Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, and Moses were restored, the Bible corrected and expanded, new revelations and commandments provided, and lost authority to act in God's name was returned.

In 2014, God revoked the authority of the LDS hierarchy. In the ensuing few years, that institution has **continually** stumbled into darkness and disarray, with their temples closed and services altogether interrupted for a year. They have **voluntarily** altered and abandoned parts of their temple rites. They have voluntarily chosen to destroy the original Salt Lake Temple and replace it with a modern substitute lacking the original symbolism and meaning. They have continually surrendered to popular opinion and increasingly adopted the worldly agenda of accepting sexual confusion, political intolerance, and censorship of opinion. When viewed as trends, it becomes apparent the LDS Church's leadership is rapidly moving in a direction contrary to its original roots.

In contrast, a small group has been repenting and returning **to** the original roots established by God through Joseph Smith. By 2017, a more accurate version of the Book of Mormon was recovered, the JST Bible revisions were accurately published for the first time, the Lectures on Faith returned to the canon, additional Scriptures added, and a new covenant with God was established. **Overthrowing and returning are repeated cycles, and they are underway again today.** But the overthrow and the returning are not yet complete. The overthrow **will bring a full end to all nations and religions**, but the returning will be determined by covenant-keeping.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.