

Was There An Original?

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Mormonism is compelling. It began as a very big religion, but has diminished considerably over the years.¹ Joseph Smith asserted:

The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another, when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds, and we have the highest degree of evidence of the same.²

Everything true, lovely or of good report was intended to be part of original Mormonism.³ Such a religion would be compelling indeed.

Joseph's original Mormonism was inclusive, not exclusive. All truth belonged to Mormonism, and it never pretended to have it all. Mormonism was the search for truth.⁴ It included undiscovered truths, even unpleasant truths. It began as the search to discover "truth," without any regard for the reaction believers would have to something new.

To Joseph, Mormonism did not possess all truth. His religion was not based on conceit, but on humility—the willingness to continue to search, pray, study and hope for newly revealed additions. It was understood there was a great deal more to be discovered.⁵ The claim that Mormonism was the "only true and living church" presumes its willingness to hear God's voice and receive new truth, not because it was already in possession of all truth. It was "living" during Joseph's life because it continued to grow and expand. Living organisms grow, dead ones decay.⁶

While Boyd K. Packer may have had a point in asserting, "Some things that are true are not very useful,"⁷ as for the original Mormonism it would be more correct to state, 'All truth, (even if

¹ In *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, (Mill Creek Press: Salt Lake City, 2011) I explain the four developmental stages of Mormonism and how only the first was additive, each of the subsequent stages have been deductive.

² Letter from Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, Mar. 22, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri, published in *Times and Seasons*, Feb. 1840, pp. 53–54; spelling and grammar modernized.

³ See *13th Article of Faith*, Pearl of Great Price.

⁴ "[O]ne (of) the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism (is) to receive thruth (truth) let it come from where it may." (*JS Papers, Journals Vol. 3: May 1843-June 1844*, p. 55.)

⁵ *The Articles of Faith* included these affirmations: "9 We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." "13 We believe... If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

⁶ "Growth" and "decay" should not be measured by numbers, but by the content of light. Measured by numbers alone, Mormonism has had a triumphant history (although its momentum is now likewise showing signs of decay). Measured by light, it has only dimmed since the passing of Joseph and Hyrum.

⁷ *The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect*, CES Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants, 22 August 1981, Brigham Young University, p. 3.

unpleasant and un-useful), belongs to Mormonism.’ Packer failed to acknowledge that enlightenment does not bring immediate contentment. Packer did not clarify to what end truth needed to be “useful.” Because the original end of Mormonism was not to merely preserve institutional loyalty, but to teach mankind to converse with the Lord through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence; then to enter into His presence,⁸ thereby to be redeemed from the fall.⁹ But we must all concede that Packer is quite right that truth that destroys idolatry is never “useful” for the idol.¹⁰

The present fracturing of Mormonism is because it has lost sight of the original inclusiveness. The opposite of the Packer standard is the one suggested by J. Reuben Clark, “If we have the truth, it cannot be harmed by investigation. If we have not the truth, it ought to be harmed.”¹¹ Between the approaches of J. Reuben Clark and Boyd K. Packer, the LDS version of Mormonism departed from an inclusive truth to an exclusive truth, becoming intolerant, arrogant, and consequently much smaller.

At its inception, Mormonism revived the original relevance of religion: mankind wants big picture answers from the God who created us. Because all of us hope to hear answers from God, we remain interested, and continue to hold conferences discussing Mormonism. However much our predecessors have tampered with and discarded from the original, the power in the ideals of that original still haunt all who have been exposed to them.

Even if the present-day interest for some is limited to a postmortem of a stillborn cult, critics must acknowledge the power of the original ideas of Joseph Smith.¹² Critics continue to complain because they remain interested, even if disaffected. They linger over the corpse as if they fear another resurrection.

⁸ See, e.g., John 14:23 and D&C 130:3; D&C 93:1. The full explanation of this quest for Mormonism is set out in my first book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*, (Mill Creek Press: Salt Lake City, 2006).

⁹ Ether 3:13.

¹⁰ That talk (*The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect*) by Boyd K. Packer has done greater damage, both short and long term, than anything Mormon opponents have written. It represents LDS leadership enshrining dishonest LDS history as a false virtue, and frames a fight the institution can never win.

¹¹ D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years*, (Brigham Young University Press: Provo, Utah, 1983), p. 24.

¹² The futile search for antecedents to credit, from Solomon Spaulding to Soren Kierkegaard, is beyond the scope of this paper. As Harold Bloom said, “The God of Joseph Smith is a daring revival of the God of some of the Kabbalists and Gnostics, prophetic sages who, like Smith himself, asserted that they had returned to the true religion....Mormonism is a purely American Gnosis, for which Joseph Smith was and is a far more crucial figure than Jesus could be. Smith is not just ‘a’ prophet, another prophet, but he is the essential prophet of these latter days, leading into the end time, whenever it comes.” (*The American Religion*, (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1992), pp. 99, 123.)

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

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

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

Because God spoke, everything changed continually. It was an expanding changeling, never taking a final form. I am only going to refer to a handful of examples to illustrate the shifting contours of Mormonism during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Many others could be added.

ONE TRUE CHURCH:

Mormonism forces us to confront the choice: Mormonism, or the false Judeo-Christian religions that are "other than Mormonism." The breadth of this religious conflict leaves a choice between only two churches. The *Book of Mormon* explains, "Behold, there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church[.]"¹³ Whatever else the original of Mormonism involved, this claim made it important for every religious thinker to investigate.

This gets all the more interesting within the different factions of Mormonism itself. If "there are save two churches only," and only one is the church of the Lamb of God, splintered Mormonism cannot be the "one true church." It is now anything but monolithic. Which version is "true" (because it is impossible for squabbling and disagreeing versions to *all* be the "only true church")?¹⁴ Mormonism has included, or does include:¹⁵

The Church of Christ,
the Pure Church of Christ,
the Church of Jesus Christ,
the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—later re-renamed the Community of Christ,
the Church of Jesus Christ, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife,
the Council of Friends,

¹³ 1 Ne. 14:10.

¹⁴ This is particularly so when the various factions have gone to the trouble of excommunicating one another.

¹⁵ This is only a partial list.

the Latter Day Church of Christ,
the Apostolic United Brethren,
the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
the Church of the First Born of the Fulness of Times,
the Church of the Firstborn,
the Church of Jesus Christ in Solemn Assembly,
The Church of the Firstborn of the Lamb of God, the Righteous Branch of the Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints,
the School of the Prophets,
the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Kingdom of God,
the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days,
Church of Jesus Christ Original Doctrine Inc.,
the Church of Zion,
the United Order Family of Christ,
and many others.

It is an interesting list of names. If there is only one true Mormon church it ought to be “true and living” and “righteous” and “united”—so those words in the names of some of the various splinters are both apt and attention-getting.

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

The whole of Mormonism is affected by an unusual excitement, and multitudes unite themselves to the different Mormon parties, which creates no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, “Lo, here!” and others, “Lo, there!” Some are contending for the LDS faith, some for the RLDS, and some for the FLDS. But, notwithstanding the great love the converts to these different faiths express at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifest by the respective advocates, who are active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they are pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts begin to file off, some to one party and some to another, it is seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts are more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensues—prophets, seers and revelators contending against presidents, prophets, kings and revelators, and pseudo-saint against pseudo-saint; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, are entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is adapted from JS-H 1:5-6. The LDS Church calls all other versions of Mormonism “apostate.” It even labels its own faithful members who are insufficiently subordinate in opinion and speech to correlated

The theme of this Sunstone Conference is the result of the divisions now found in Mormonism. Speakers are addressing the: “Many Mormonisms and the Mormon Movement.” The divergences all reckon from a common starting point, and it is that point of beginning I hope to address. I am concerned with whether there was an *original* Mormonism. To accept “Many Mormonisms” as a welcome outcome is contrary to the first premise of “one true church,”¹⁷ all others being the devil’s whores.¹⁸ If Mormonism has any eternal value it will be found by identifying the original—the one God called “true and living” and was the “only one with which [He was] well pleased.”¹⁹ What was that?

If there is any hope of successfully separating the many Mormonisms into categories of more or less like what began with Joseph Smith, the quest must begin by asking: how do we define the original? The measure of “authenticity” can only be determined by a comparison with an original, which requires us to clarify what is meant by the term “the original.”

William James once explained about those with revelatory encounters with God,

A genuine first-hand religious experience like this is bound to be a heterodoxy to its witnesses, the prophet appearing as a mere lonely madman. If his doctrine prove contagious enough to spread to any others, it becomes a definite and labeled heresy. But if it then still prove contagious enough to triumph over persecution, it becomes itself an orthodoxy; and when a religion has become an orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over: the spring is dry; the faithful live at second hand exclusively and stone the prophets in their turn. The new church, in spite of whatever human goodness it may foster, can be henceforth counted on as a staunch ally in every attempt to stifle the spontaneous religious spirit, and to stop all later bubblings of the fountain from which in purer days it drew its own supply of inspiration. Unless, indeed, by adopting new movements of the spirit it can make capital out of them and use them for its selfish corporate designs!²⁰

We cannot look at the landscape today, separated from the martyrdom by 172 years and see anything but proprietary Mormon orthodoxies attempting to stifle the spontaneous and unruly springs of inspiration, revelation and ‘conversing with the Lord through the veil.’ There is in every splinter an hierarchy whose right alone it is to hear and announce God’s voice. If any should come outside the hierarchies claiming revelation, dutiful followers believe they should test them, by asking they cut off an arm or some other member of the body, and then restore it again, so that we may

history, and praise of church leaders, as “apostate” because any heterodoxy is considered subversive to their vulnerable historical fiction.

¹⁷ See D&C 1:30.

¹⁸ 1 Ne. 14:10.

¹⁹ D&C 1:30.

²⁰ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902, Lectures XIV and XV: The Value of Saintlessness.

know they come with power.²¹ It does not matter the institutions fail to provide such miraculous signs. If the sheep donate enough, the power of constructing monuments with brick and mortar using the widow's mite is enough of a sign to show God supports the leadership. After all, if they build a great temple (or a tower to heaven²²), isn't that sign enough?

So what was original Mormonism? That question is not as simple as it may seem. How would you describe it with certitude? During Joseph Smith's lifetime, Mormonism had the ill-defined visage of a kaleidoscope. As soon as one indispensable characteristic is identified for the original, we find discontinuity. The voice Joseph heard never stopped tampering, adjusting, modifying, adding and improving—unless of course you disliked what happened. For those he alienated, they concluded he fell from grace, and therefore did not improve but damaged the original before he died, leaving something others would need to reorganize and reclaim.²³

FREE TO BELIEVE WITHOUT CREEDS:

While Joseph was alive, there was no approved creed or necessary body of beliefs. Joseph was opposed to constricting the beliefs of the saints. On April 8, 1843, while preaching about interpreting visions, Joseph tried to make it clear that Mormonism allowed differing views to be held by the saints. He referred to an audience member, Pelatiah Brown, who had been summoned before the High Council for preaching false doctrine. Joseph explained his view:

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter Day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammelled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.²⁴

Joseph Smith's tolerant broadmindedness does not mean Joseph Smith's silence about ideas circulating among the early Mormons was an endorsement of those ideas. Mormons at the time were all first generation converts. They brought with them many ideas from their prior religious

²¹ Those familiar with the temple endowment before 1990 will recognize this language taken from the test the false minister obtained from Satan to be used to determine if Peter, James and John were true apostles. Those who only know of the post-1990 endowment may not understand the allusion without this explanation.

²² Gen. 11:3-4.

²³ See, e.g., David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*.

²⁴ DHC 5:340; see also *JS Papers, Journals, Vol. 2*, p. 345: "should not have called up this subject if it had not been for this old white head before. Father [Pelatiah] Brown.—I did not like the old man being called up.(before the High council.)—for erring in doctrine.—why I feel so good to have the privilege of thinki[n]g & believing as I please." Also, *Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 183-184:"Er (Pelatiah) Brown has been the cause of this subject being now presented before you. He, ~~is~~ one of the wisest old heads we have among us, has been called up before the High Council on account of the beast. The old man has preached concerning the beast which was full of eyes before and behind and for this he was hauled up for trial. I never thought it was right to call up a man and try him because he erred in doctrine, it looks too much like Methodism and not like latter day Saintism. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be kicked out of their church. I want the liberty of believing as I please, it feels so good not to be trammelled. It dont prove that a man is not a good man, because he errs in doctrine."

traditions. Joseph made little attempt to compel uniformity, choosing instead to “preach, teach, expound, and exhort”²⁵ a developing religion with increasingly nuanced broad features.

Prior to his conversion, Parley P. Pratt was a Campbellite preacher. He had been preaching a New Testament religion based on four principles: Faith, repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost.²⁶ These ideas were Campbellite before Mormonism began advocating them, and were seamlessly adopted by Mormons from the Campbellite movement.²⁷ After converting, Pratt filled in many of the Mormon lacunas. He was the most prolific pamphleteer in the early Mormon movement, and wrote what became to be regarded as foundational books explaining doctrine.²⁸ It is difficult to track the extent to which today’s Mormon orthodoxy was created by Pratt, but it is clear he was influential both in his own right and in converting Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon would become a member of the first presidency of the LDS Church once that body was added. Rigdon would raise many questions that led to yet another Joseph Smith revelation. Rigdon was looking to restore a New Testament church years before he met Joseph Smith.²⁹ David Whitmer believed Rigdon exerted a powerfully negative influence on Joseph.³⁰ Because Joseph believed Mormons should be free to believe anything they wanted, unconstrained by creed, the contours of Mormonism during Joseph’s life were left poorly defined. The contributions from Pratt, Rigdon and others complicate, rather than contribute, to clarifying the original.

Mormonism expanded continually during Joseph’s life. The portions that existed in 1820, at the time of the First Vision, did not include the *Book of Mormon*,³¹ which would be added in 1830. At the time Moroni (or Nephi) visited Joseph in 1823, it only included the promise that an untitled book “written upon gold plates giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent” would be revealed.³² Today, Mormons identify the angel who visited Joseph and informed him of the plates

²⁵ Part of the duties of any Mormon priest. (D&C 20:46.)

²⁶ See Gregory Armstrong, Matthew Grow and Dennis Siler, *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*, (Arthur H. Clark Company: Norman, Oklahoma, 2011), p. 41.

²⁷ Pratt was swept up into a religious movement led by Sidney Rigdon, who proclaimed a restorationist New Testament Christianity of faith, repentance, baptism, and the promise of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Rigdon exhorted his followers to reject all creeds and take the Bible as the sole norm of faith. (*Id.*)

²⁸ *Voice of Warning*, written in 1837 and *Key to the Science of Theology*, written in 1855.

²⁹ “Rigdon’s teachings were restorationist in a legalistic sense, seeking to re-create early Christianity as described in the New Testament.” (See, *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*, supra, p. 23.) See also Richard Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, (Signature Books: Salt Lake City, 2006).

³⁰ In David Whitmer’s retrospective *Address to All Believers in Christ*, Chapter 4, he explained, “Sydney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church. I believe Rigdon to have been the instigator of the secret organization known as the ‘Danites’ which was formed in Far West Missouri in June, 1838. In Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831, Rigdon would expound the Old Testament scriptures of the Bible and Book of Mormon (in his way) to Joseph, concerning the priesthood, high priests, etc., and would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it. Rigdon finally persuaded Brother Joseph to believe that the high priests which had such great power in ancient times, should be in the Church of Christ to-day. He had Brother Joseph inquire of the Lord about it, and they received an answer according to their erring desires.”

³¹ JS-H 1:1-20.

³² JS-H 1:34-35.

by the name “Moroni.” But in the account Joseph Smith published in the *Times and Seasons* on April 15, 1842, his name was “Nephi.”³³ By 1830, the *Book of Mormon* was in print and a church was organized with elders, priests and teachers. “Apostles” were added to Mormonism in 1831. The quorum of 12 apostles would not be organized until 1835.³⁴

BAPTISM/BAPTISMS:

Mormonism’s mercurial form during Joseph’s lifetime can be seen through an examination of any feature, teaching, practice or organizational form. Everything changed continually. Perhaps the most stable practice of original Mormonism was baptism; so let’s consider that.

It began before 1830. While the mode of baptism (by immersion) remained constant, the language and purposes changed. The original baptismal prayer set out in the Church Articles and Covenants³⁵ used the identical prayer found in the *Book of Mormon*.³⁶ The words of the prayer, after calling the initiate by their name, included “having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you”³⁷ and so on. Those words were changed in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* to “having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you,”³⁸ and so on. Once altered, the words were never changed back. So the *Book of Mormon* commends one baptismal prayer (given by Jesus Christ), and the *Doctrine and Covenants* (since 1835) commends a different prayer.

Proxy baptism of the living for the dead was added in 1840. Originally proxies of either sex could be baptized for both men and women. That later changed, and vicarious proxy work could only be done on behalf of the same sex only.

The purpose of baptism grew from remitting sins and joining the church, to include rebaptism as a means for rededication and purification,³⁹ and baptism for healing of the sick as well.

³³ See *Times and Seasons*, Vol. III, No. 12, History of Joseph Smith, continued. This is the same name as appears in the Joseph Smith History version of 1839 (which was a copy made by James Mulholland of the prior 1838 history). See JS Papers, Histories Vol. 1, p. 222. The 1839 copy was reviewed by Joseph Smith as it was read aloud while being copied. See *id.*, p. 201. The change from “Nephi” to “Moroni” happened after Joseph Smith’s death and was done by “an unknown hand.” *Id.*, p. 223, footnote 56.

³⁴ Individuals who in 1831 were called apostles, included Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and later Orson Pratt.

³⁵ See *JS Papers, Revelations and Translations, Manuscript Revelations Book*, p. 75.

³⁶ 3 Ne. 11:25.

³⁷ *JS Papers, Revelations and Translations, supra*, p. 85.

³⁸ *JS Papers, Revelations and Translations Vol. 2*, p. 391. See also the side-by-side change in wording on the same volume on p. 208.

³⁹ Edwin Wilde provided some excerpts taken from his review of 178 early Mormon journals mentioning the widespread practice of rebaptism. Here are some of those excerpts: From the journal of Milo Andrus, (1814-1893): “In the spring of 1854, I was sent to Saint Louis to preside over the stake there. Stayed there one year, rebaptized and confirmed about 800 saints.” From the journal of Elizabeth Brotherton: “March 19 1851 Mr. Pratt was appointed on a mission to the Pacific Coast to organize and set in order the Saints that had gone there not knowing where the church would locate. They went in the ship Brooklyn. I went with him to San Francisco, we traveled in company with A. Lyman, and C.C. Rich when they were going to San Bernerdino with a company of Saints. After a tiresome journey we arrived in San Francisco. Mr. Pratt remained there and

rebaptized quite a number in about two months time.” From William Clayton’s diary: “May 9, 1841 Joseph preached on his side on baptism for the dead (see Record.) Afterwards a number was baptized both for remission of sins and for the dead. I was baptized first for myself and then for my Grandfather Thomas and Grandmother Ellen Clayton, Grandmother Mary Chritebly and Aunt Elizabeth Beurwood.” (Clayton was previously baptized October 21, 1837.) From the journal of Warren Foote: “24th. [March 1842] This is the day that I have appointed to go down into the waters of baptism and thereby fulfill the covenant I made to the Lord when I was near death’s door. The meeting was at Elder Jacob Myers house about one mile from Father’s. I walked down there and in company with Amos Kimmins, Franklin Allen, and his wife, Samuel Myers, and Lovina Myers, was baptized by Daniel A. Miller, President of this branch, between five and six o’clock P.M. The foregoing named persons, had been baptized before, and now felt to renew their covenants. As it was concluded to have an evening meeting I thought that I would stay to it. The wind blew up from the north very cool and in going home, I took cold.” Other entries in Warren Foote’s journal: “8th. [May 1842] Sunday. A very large congregation assembled to meeting. Sidney Rigdon preached. In the afternoon there were many baptized in the font in the basement of the Temple and forty three in the Mississippi River. They were mostly rebaptisms.” “[MAY, 1844] 26th. Attended meeting at Bro. J. Clark’s. After meeting I rebaptized Elihu Allen, Joseph Clark, and John B. Carpenter. We ordained E. Allen [a] priest, and Joseph Clark [a] teacher. It is so wet that we cannot plant corn.” “[JUNE, 1844] 9th. Sunday. My wife with five others were rebaptized by Elder J. B. Carpenter.” From the autobiography of Joseph Holbrook: “On Saturday, January 5, 1833...I told Brother Lyons and Rich I would like to be baptized if they thought I was worthy as I had brought my clothes for that purpose. So after breakfast I was baptized with my Aunt Phebe Angel by Leonard Rich...My wife was taken very sick on the 7th of July [1842] and grew worse until she died, being taken sick nine days (July 16, 1842), aged 37 years, 11 months and two days...After my wife’s death, I was rebaptized in the Mississippi River by Brigham Young.” From the autobiography of Joseph Hovey: “I, Joseph, for the first time bowed myself before God in secret and implored his mercy and asked him if what I had read out [of] the Book of Mormon was true and if the man, Joseph Smith, was the one who translated these marvelous records. I, Joseph, asked God for a testimony by the Holy Spirit and truly I got what I asked for and more abundantly. Therefore, my wife, Martha, and I did truly rejoice in the truth we had found in those records. We also searched the Bible daily and found that it did corroborate with the Book of Mormon. We were, therefore, born again and could see the kingdom. Hence, July 4, 1839, we were baptized with water and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. One brother, Mr. Draper, baptized us...there was a committee appointed by the God of Israel to superintend those houses in the fall of 1840. The fund to commence the building of the temple were raised through tithing, that is every man put in a tenth of his property and thereafter his earnings every tenth day. ...I, Joseph, did prosper well in good health but my wife, Martha, was not so well as myself. I, Joseph, did go to work in the stone quarry and I labored exceedingly for the Nauvoo House. I got out several hundred feet of stone during the season. I also worked on the Nauvoo temple cutting stone. In the meanwhile, my wife, Martha, was sick, even abortion took place and she was very low. But she was healed by going to the baptismal font and was immersed for her health and baptized for her dead.” This is from the journal/autobiography of William Huntington Sr.: “In 1833, I found the Book of Mormon. I read the book, believed in the book that it was what it was represented to be. My mind thus being prepared to receive the gospel accordingly, in the month of April 1835, myself and my wife both united with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ...April 11th, 1841 Joseph [Smith] and Sidney [Rigdon] baptized each other for the remission of their sins as this order was then instituted in the Church. Accordingly, on the 27th of April [1841], I was baptized for the remission of my sins. Also, on the same day, was baptized for my brother Hyrum Huntington.” This is from the autobiography of Benjamin F. Johnson: “In the spring of 1835 before I was baptized, my mother and all her children met at the house of my sister, Delcena Sherman, to receive from Patriarch Joseph Smith, Sr., our patriarchal blessings. He blessed all according to age until he came to Joseph E. and myself, when he placed his hands first upon my head. My mother told him I was the youngest, but he said that mattered not—to me was the first blessing; and in blessing me, among other great and glorious things, he told me the Lord would call me to do the work of brother Seth, who had been called away by death. In this promise there was to me more joy than ever before I had known; my dear brother was not to be robbed of his blessings, and if I could only live faithfully his

Emma Smith was rebaptized in October 1842 for her health.⁴⁰ In April 1842, additional clarifications limited baptism and rebaptism for the living to be performed in living waters like a lake, stream or river.⁴¹ Baptism for the dead or for healing the sick, were only to be performed in the temple font.⁴²

So we see the practice of baptism expanded while Joseph was alive, even though it was perhaps the most stable feature of the original.

ORGANIZATION/ORGANIZATIONS:

work would be done, and I should do it for him. I felt this was the greatest boon the Lord could bestow upon me. ...Soon after this, I overstepped my father's objections and was baptized by Elder Lyman Johnson... On the 13th of October [1838] we crossed the Mississippi at Louisiana, and began to hear of great troubles among the Mormons at Far West, and we were warned of the great danger of proceeding, but our camp was only stirred to greater desire to go on. Here I remembered my former purpose to renew my covenant by baptism, and as one of my associates, D. D. McArthur, was to be baptized, I went with him and was baptized by Henry Hariman. [Harriman]" From the autobiography of Joel H. Johnson: "At the October [1856] Conference the heads of the Church preached the necessity of a reformation among the saints by confessing their own sins against God and their brethren and forsaking the same and by forgiving the sins of others and making restitution for all wrongs as much as possible. This glorious work of reformation and restitution soon commenced in Great Salt Lake City and spread with rapidity to all the branches of the Church; and all who confessed and restored were rebaptized for the last time for the remission of their sins." "Thursday, September 18th [1856], I started with my wife Susan and little child accompanied by my son Nephi, with an ox team to go and visit our friends at Summit Creek in Utah County, and also in Salt Lake City, and attend the October conference, and to purchase and drive home a few sheep. We arrived at Summit Creek and Friday the 26th, and found our friends as well. We had a good visit with them and started on Tuesday the 30th for Salt Lake City, and arrived on Friday the 3rd of October, attending conference and done our business and started homeward on Friday the 10th. On our way we called at Lake City in Utah County and purchased 26 sheep, one of which died at Chicken Creek. We arrived safely home with the rest on the 25th and found all well, and was rebaptized on Wednesday, 29th [October 1856], at Fort Johnson by Isaac C. Height, President of the Stake of Cedar City." This is from a letter from Parley Pratt to Brigham Young, August 28, 1851; while he was in San Francisco: "Since I have arrived here I have been diligent in the duties of my calling every hour, and have called upon God for His Spirit to help me with all the energy I possessed, and without ceasing. The result is, the Spirit of the Lord God has been upon me continually, in such light, and joy, and testimony as I have seldom experienced. Brothers A. Lyman and C. C. Rich have been here with me some of the time; we have called together the old members and others, and preached repentance and reformation of life. We have re-baptized many of them, and have re-organized the Church." A statement by Orson Pratt found in the *JD* 18:156-61: "I will here state that Martin Harris, when he came to this [Utah] Territory a few years ago, was rebaptized, the same as every member of the Church from distant parts is on arriving here. That seems to be a kind of standing ordinance for all Latter-day Saints who emigrate here, from the First Presidency down; all are rebaptized and set out anew by renewing their covenants." There are many more.

⁴⁰ "Wednesday 5th Sister E. [Emma Smith] is worse, many fears are entertained that she will not recover. She was baptized twice in the river which evidently did her much good." *JS Papers, Journals Vol. 2: December 1841-April 1843*, p. 161.

⁴¹ *Times and Seasons*, Vol. III, No. 12, April 15, 1842, Conference Minutes from a special conference held in Nauvoo April 6, 1842. Joseph said, "those coming into the church and those rebaptized may be done in the river."

⁴² *Id.*, Joseph said, "Baptisms for the dead, and for the healing of the body must be in the font."

There is no single organized entity that began in 1830 that has remained intact till now.⁴³ Every one of the organized corporate forms of Mormonism has morphed, been superseded, or rolled into new legal entities and changed from whatever existed in New York on April 6, 1830.⁴⁴

Despite common belief to the contrary, there was never a single corporate form of an original. In January 1841, an Illinois corporation was formed⁴⁵ and Joseph Smith elected the Trustee in Trust for the entity. This was likely the first legal organization of the church, as no formal documentation from New York has been discovered. But the Illinois law limited the corporation to owning no more than 5 acres. Upon Joseph's death, the Trustee was lost and disputes over property followed. Property held in Joseph's name may have belonged to the church—or not, if you were Emma Smith. Hopefully no one believed that salvation was tied in any way to which corporate entity owned what property upon the death of Joseph Smith.⁴⁶

Each one of the proprietary, corporate forms of Mormonism are very pushy about insisting they are “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.”⁴⁷ But even if there were such a thing as continuity of a corporate entity from Joseph Smith until today, would that really be the original without doing, teaching, conducting and delivering what originally was done, taught, conducted and delivered? Can institutional identity decide religious authority apart from conduct? The LDS version of scripture rejects that idea.⁴⁸

⁴³ For a description of the changing internal organization see David J. Whittaker, *An Introduction to Mormon Administrative History*, Dialogue, Volume 15, No. 4, Winter 1982, p. 16.

⁴⁴ David Whitmer explained the Church of Christ existed *before* April 6, 1830 and had three branches: “Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches of the ‘Church of Christ,’ in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, N.Y.; one at Manchester, N.Y., and one at Colesville, Pa. It is all a mistake about the church being organized on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully organized -- spiritually -- before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N.Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land; you can see this from Sec. 17 Doctrine and Covenants: the church was organized on April 6th ‘agreeable to the laws of our country.’” (*Address to All Believers in Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887.) But since most people attending this symposium reckon the organization from April 6, 1830 I accept that date for purposes of this presentation.

⁴⁵ This may have been the first formal corporate form, the substance of the earlier New York organization is unknown and paperwork for that formation does not exist. The “United Firm” was apparently a partnership.

⁴⁶ In the case of *The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints v. Williams, et. al.* (“et. al.” including John Taylor, among others) Court of Common Pleas, Lake County, Painsville, Ohio (February 1880), the Reorganized LDS Church cleared title to the Kirtland Temple (which was dismissed without deciding any real issue of the case) and the RLDS have pointed to the case as legitimizing their claim to be THE original.

⁴⁷ D&C 1:30. The LDS version insists the term “Mormon” belongs to them and ought not be used to refer to any other group or organization. (See www.mormonnewsroom.org/style-guide.)

⁴⁸ If D&C 121:36-37, 40-42 are taken at face value, then priesthood can be easily forfeited. The revelation describing “the power and authority of the higher or Melchizedek priesthood is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church... to have the heavens opened unto them—to commune with the general assembly and church of the first born, and to enjoy communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” (*JS Papers, Revelations and Translations, Vol. 2*, p. 395; now also found in

NAME/NAMES:

There was never a single name used to identify an original Mormon church. The organization changed names several times from the 1830s to 1841. In addition to different names, a series of entities, many of which were not legally separate from the individuals involved,⁴⁹ were formed to hold property belonging to the “Church of Christ.”⁵⁰ The “United Firm” merged three business entities: N.K. Whitney & Co., a preexisting business formed by Newel Whitney and Sidney Gilbert in Kirtland, Ohio; Gilbert, Whitney & Co., an entity formed by Gilbert in Missouri in 1832; and The Literary Firm, supervised by W.W. Phelps, organized for the church’s printing operations. Members of the United Firm were Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, William W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Edward Partridge, Newel K. Whitney, Sidney Gilbert, Frederick G. Williams and John Johnson. Profits from the three ventures were to be shared between businesses and to provide income for the member of the firm.⁵¹

The first name didn’t last⁵² and was occasionally replaced by the “Church of Jesus Christ.” The third iteration was the “Church of the Latter Day Saints,”⁵³ and still later the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” In a Marriage Certificate prepared by Joseph Smith on January 18, 1836 he identified the organization as “the church of christ of Latter-Day Saints.”⁵⁴ On April 26, 1838,⁵⁵ a revelation settled the question of name as “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” but the revealed name was not used until years later.

Today, in the published revelation in the *Doctrine and Covenants*,⁵⁶ the original revealed name has been altered, substituting a new “revealed name.” The original name approved by God was “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints”⁵⁷ –no capitalizing “the” and no hyphen between “Latter” and “Day” (as the RLDS Church once spelled “Latter Day” in their name). In the LDS *Style Guide*, (something of such importance that a member of the quorum of the twelve introduced it) the name is now: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”⁵⁸ If the name of the church matters

D&C 107:18-19.) This in all likelihood means that without the communion and presence of the Father and Son there is no higher priesthood authority or power. Mormons do not consider that meaning.

⁴⁹ The “United Firm” was apparently the first legal entity formed. It was likely a partnership. Later a series of Agricultural Companies were formed to own property in Far West.

⁵⁰ This name came from Christ’s instruction given in 3 Ne. 27:7-8.

⁵¹ For more on the venture see *JS Papers, Documents, Vol. 4: April 1834-September 1835*, pp. 19-38.

⁵² The *Evening and Morning Star*, published between 1832-1834 uses “Church of Christ” 115 times and “Church of Jesus Christ” only once. In contrast, the *Times and Seasons* from 1839-1846 used “Church of Christ” 118 times and “Church of Jesus Christ 13 times.

⁵³ The name was changed in 1834. Minutes of the Conference of Elders when the change was adopted can be found at *JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4, April 1834-September 1835*, p. 44. The motion to change the name was made by Sidney Rigdon. The *Times and Seasons* used the “Church of the Latter Day Saints” 47 times.

⁵⁴ *JS Papers, Journals, Vol. 1: 2835-1836*, p. 164.

⁵⁵ D&C 115:4—the capitals and missing hyphen as in the original.

⁵⁶ The one published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

⁵⁷ See *JS Papers*, Revelation 26 April 1838 (current D&C 115).

⁵⁸ See www.mormonnewsroom.org/style-guide as well as the *Church News*, February 17, 2001, “Church Should be Called by its Revealed Name.” The church also copyrighted in 2013 the fourth edition of a 91 page

to the degree indicated by a published revelation and the church's *Style Guide*, then the name God revealed has been abandoned. No organization exists today that uses the revealed, required name. The format for the LDS corporate church name only acquired a settled form with the *Style Guide*, adopted in 1972.⁵⁹

WASH AND ANOINT:

The criteria for an "original" Mormonism must reckon from some form of continuity, but continuity of exactly what? Is it some form of practice? Practices changed markedly during Joseph's lifetime and never acquired a settled form. For example, it took six years from founding the church before washings and anointings were introduced on January 21, 1836 in Kirtland. Once introduced, they were changed.

Originally they were done with whisky⁶⁰ scented with cinnamon,⁶¹ followed by perfumed olive oil.⁶² Feet and face washing were added after the Kirtland Temple dedication on March 27, 1836. The rites were revised in Nauvoo and tubs were added as a practical accommodation in the Nauvoo Temple. Joseph died before the construction of the Nauvoo Temple had been completed to the second floor, and therefore neither a building design for the upper floors, nor a ceremony for the endowment were completed by Joseph Smith before his death.⁶³

revised version of its *Style Guide for Publications of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* which clarifies how the church's name ought to be spelled, hyphenated and capitalized.

⁵⁹ Lest you think the exact name is a trivial matter, I received a letter from a woman informing me that she knew I was a deceiver when she saw how I spelled the name of the church in *(Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil)* (Mill Creek Press: Salt Lake City, 2006). I had failed to capitalize "T" in "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," and therefore was in open rebellion against the church. For the want of a capital "T" I was branded apostate. The *Style Guide*, as explained to the press by Dallin H. Oaks, required such slavish conformity in the mind of that woman that any deviation was rebellion against God and His exacting expectations.

⁶⁰ This use of "strong drinks" was foreshadowed three years earlier in the 1833 revelation D&C 89:7.

⁶¹ "[M]et in the evening with [B]ro. Joseph Smith, Jr. at his house, in company with [B]ro. John Corroll, and after pure water was prepared, called upon the Lord and proceeded to wash each other's bodies, and bathe the same with whiskey, perfumed with cinnamon. This we did that we might be clean before the Lord for the Sabbath, confessing our sins and covenanting to be faith to God. While performing this washing unto the Lord with solemnity, our minds were filled with many reflections upon the propriety of the same, and how the priests anciently used to wash always before ministering before the Lord." (*Oliver Cowdery Sketch Book*, 16 January 1836, pp. 4-5, archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah). Also quoted in David Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship*, (Signature Books: Salt Lake City, 2002), p. 11.

⁶² This practice continued following Joseph's death. "The brethren rejoiced at the commencement again of the administration of these ordinances which had not been administered since they were in the Temple at Nauvoo. Pres[iden]t Young had procured and perfumed the oil which was consecrated at the circle on Sunday evening for the purpose." Devery Anderson, *The Development of LDS Temple Worship 1846-2000*, (Signature Books: Salt Lake City, 2011), p. 25; quoting *Historian's Office Journal*, Dec. 31, 1866.

⁶³ Brigham Young completed the unfinished ceremony and attributed his authority to do so to Joseph Smith. According to L. John Nuttall's *Diary*, Brigham Young stated he received the endowment from Joseph before the temple was available and "after we got through Bro Joseph turned to me and said Bro Brigham this is not

Joseph declared, “Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.”⁶⁴ The first question this raises is whether Joseph contradicted himself by changing things. The only way to reconcile the many changes he instituted is to take note that he made only additive expansions, finishing and recovering the ordinances instituted in the heavens. He was transmitting what came from above to believers, and that happened incrementally. His changes never took away from the ordinances, but frequently expanded on what was here before.

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

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

Fundamentalist versions of Mormonism have attempted to revive or preserve plural wivery, but the history that the practice was part of original Mormonism is anything but clear. Only a single document links Joseph Smith to the practice.⁶⁵ The single document Brian Hales has identified is the published version of D&C 132. However, that version of the document is an undated copy of something first written on July 12, 1843 by William Clayton. The one written by Clayton no longer exists.⁶⁶ But since the fundamentalists accept the published version (it being the only one extant),

arranged right but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed...” (Diary entry February 7, 1877, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; cited with some additions in Anderson, Devery and Bergera, Gary, *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed, 1842-1845*, (Signature Books: Salt Lake City, 2005), p. 7.)

⁶⁴ *TPJS*, p. 308. “Ordinances were instituted in heavn before the f[o]undation of the world of in the pri[e]sthood. for the salvation of man. not be alterd. not to be changed.—all must be saved upon the same principle.” (*JS Papers, Journals, Vol. 3, May 1843-June 1844*, p. 32 (all as in original).

⁶⁵Brian Hales: “Establishing the Prophet’s precise instructions is difficult due to a lack of contemporary accounts recording Joseph Smith’s specific teachings on these lofty topics. Furthermore, a challenge arises regarding which sources should be considered authoritative for defining his theology, ideology, and cosmology. Of course, the most authoritative of sources would be the Prophet himself, but his writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on celestial and plural marriage, Doctrine and Covenants 132.” (*Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Volume 3, Theology*, chapter 6: Authoritative Sources for Joseph Smith’s Theology, pp.69-84.)

⁶⁶ The original is gone, and the handwritten copy is in the hand of Joseph Kingsbury who was not a scribe for Joseph Smith at any time. It was not made public until 1852 and may well have been among the changed

they face the dilemma that it limits to “only one on the earth at a time”⁶⁷ who can hold authority to solemnize such relationships. Every one of the fundamentalist sects claim that they alone have that “one on the earth” possessing such authority. They obviously cannot all be right, but certainly could all be wrong.⁶⁸ This topic is treated separately in a later section of this paper.

FIRST VISION(S):

The First Vision is a clear illustration of Joseph’s practice of adding to the religion. Originally, the event was not part of the Mormon narrative. Once it was added, it changed over multiple tellings. The 1832 account focused on Joseph’s personal salvation:

[T]he Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord, in the 16th year of my age a pillar of fire light above the brightness of the Sun at noon day come down fro above and rested upon me and I was filld with the Spirit of God and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I Saw the Lord and he Spake unto me Saying Joseph my Son thy Sins are forgiven thee. Go they way walk in my Statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life...⁶⁹

The 1835 account is the first to mention a struggle with the devil:

I made a fruitless attempt to pray My tongue seemed to be swoolen in my mouth, so that I could not utter, I heard a noise behind me like some one walking towards me. I strove again to pray, but come not; the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer, I sprang upon my feet and looked round, but saw no person or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking. I kneeled again, my mouth was opened and my tongue loosed; I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head; which presently rested down upon me, and filled me with unspeakable joy. A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing consumed. Another personage soon appeared like

documentation referred to by Charles Wandell. Wandell noted in his diary: “I notice the interpolations because having been employed in the Historian’s office at Navuoo by Doctor Richards, and employed, too, in 1845, in compiling this very autobiography, I know that after Joseph’s death his memoir was ‘doctored’ to suit the new order of things, and this, too, by the direct order of Brigham Young to Doctor Richards and systematically by Richards.” (See Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, (Signature Books: Salt Lake City, 1994), p. 322.) He was reacting to the publication of Joseph’s history in the Deseret Evening News. The “new order of things” he referred to was the public practice of plural wives.

⁶⁷ D&C 132:7.

⁶⁸ I’ve written two papers on this topic available on my website, and also discuss the issue in *Beloved Enos* (Mill Creek Press: Salt Lake City 2009), and therefore do not repeat the discussion again.

⁶⁹ Milton Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, (Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1980) 2nd Edition, Appendix A, p. 157.

unto the first: he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee. He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I saw many angels in this vision.⁷⁰

The account evolved in the 1838 retelling to have cosmic implications for the salvation of all mankind. Both the Father and Son appeared, and the purpose was not to forgive Joseph's sins, but to confirm the entire Christian world "were all corrupt" and taught "the commandments of men" "having a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof." It is the 1838 version that is canonized in the *Pearl of Great Price*. Like everything else for so long as Joseph Smith was involved, the First Vision expanded, both in details and meaning, until it was no longer about Joseph the individual, but the salvation of all mankind.

DISEMBODIED/EMBODIED HOLY GHOST(S):

The description of the Godhead, which was settled during Joseph's lifetime, became unsettled after his death. When *Lectures on Faith* was adopted as scripture by a conference in 1835,⁷¹ the Godhead consisted of two personages: the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost was not a person but "the mind" of the Father and Son.⁷² It was described similarly in Moses 6:61, as a "record" or "truth of all things" and not an individually embodied spirit being.

A different definition gradually crept into LDS scripture, assuming the final form in 1921.⁷³ The 'Holy Ghost creep'⁷⁴ stemmed from a talk Joseph delivered on April 2, 1843. The note-takers who were present during that talk bequeathed an altered definition of the Holy Ghost. Their notes reflected what they believed they heard from Joseph. However, Brigham Young and Jedediah Grant approved a change from the notes in 1854, which then underwent a round of punctuation changes in 1858. A final version of the embodied Holy Ghost doctrine was approved by Heber J. Grant and a committee of six members of the twelve in 1921 (the same time they deleted the *Lectures on Faith* from the scriptures). The addition of the embodied Holy Ghost to LDS scripture created a doctrinal conflict with *Lecture Fifth*, and something had to give. So the *Lectures* were deleted.⁷⁵ Whatever else this process illustrates, it confirms there was confusion stemming from Joseph's comments in April 1843, and therefore Mormon beliefs remained unstable while Joseph was alive.

SCRIPTURE(S):

⁷⁰ *Id.*, Appendix B, p. 159.

⁷¹ The details of adopting the volume as scripture by a vote of a solemn assembly, together with the various priesthood quorums sustaining the volume, is detailed in the section, *General Assembly*, pp. 255-257 of the *1835 Doctrine and Covenants*.

⁷² See *Lecture Seventh* ¶3.

⁷³ See Ronald Bartholomew, *The Textual Development of D&C 130:22 and the Embodiment of the Holy Ghost*, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2013).

⁷⁴ I coin this term as a quick way to describe the post-Joseph aggregation of changes that ultimately caused the conflict between the *D&C* Holy Ghost and the *Lectures on Faith* (and *PofGP*) Holy Ghost. The description in Moses 6:61 is comparable to *Lectures on Faith* in that the Holy Ghost is an impersonal record, not a being of spirit. The LDS changes made in 1921 failed to harmonize this verse in Moses with their change to the *D&C*.

⁷⁵ I discuss this in detail in *Preserving the Restoration* (Mill Creek Press: Salt Lake City, 2015), where I urge believers to continue to regard *Lectures on Faith* as scripture.

Mormonism's canon of scripture was still unsettled when Joseph died in 1844. Different Mormon sects rely on different canons as their sacred texts. Joseph retranslated the Bible, which is commonly referred to as the Joseph Smith Translation. He called this endeavor "the fullness of the scriptures" and it was only the Joseph Smith Translation that was used throughout *Lectures on Faith*. Joseph prophesied that the church would fail if the fullness of the scriptures were not completed.⁷⁶ Though finished, Joseph never published the text. Upon his death, it became the property of Emma Smith. She bequeathed it to the RLDS (CofC) Church, and they subsequently published it. Excerpts are now in the LDS Bible in footnotes and an appendix.

This canonical disparity between Mormonisms is only possible because a completed authoritative canon was still expanding during Joseph's life. Ironically, the canonical exposition Joseph personally edited and vouched for, *Lectures on Faith*,⁷⁷ has been discarded by every Mormon sect.

apostles/Apostles/APOSTLES:

⁷⁶ The minutes of a conference on October 25, 1831 meeting tell of Joseph Smith's need for assistance while he worked on "the fulness of the Scriptures." This reference to scriptures is defined by the LDS Church Historian as "JS's Bible revision." (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 2: July 1831-January 1833*, p. 85, footnote 76.) The minutes include this statement by Joseph Smith: "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 fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall." (*Id.*, p. 85, as in original.) Although the scripture translation was completed by July 2, 1833, as Joseph mentioned in a letter to church leaders in Missouri: "[W]e this day finished the translating of the Scriptures for which we returned gratitude to our heavenly father[.]" (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 3, February 1833-March 1834*, p. 166.) Despite this, Joseph never released them for publication to the church. The LDS Church Historian's Office notes, "the work was never fully published during JS's lifetime... neither the Bible revision nor the classification of scriptures project was ever published in JS's lifetime[.]" (*Id.*, p. 179.)

⁷⁷ "The first part of the book will be found to contain a series of Lectures as delivered before a Theological class in this place, and in consequence of their embracing the important doctrine of salvation, we have arranged them into the following work. ...We do not present this little volume with any other expectation than that we are to be called to answer to every principle advanced, in that day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed, and the reward of a very man's labor be given him." (Preface, 1835 Doctrine and Covenants; appearing over the names of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon and F. G. Williams.) In the preface to *Lectures on Faith* in the 1835 edition, (*JS Papers, Revelations and Translations, Vol. 2*, beginning on page 311) Joseph wrote: "We deem it to be unnecessary to entertain you with lengthy preface to the following volume, but merely to say that it contains in short the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe. The first part of the book will be found to contain a series of lectures as delivered before a theological class in this place. And in consequence of their embracing the important doctrines of salvation, we have arranged them into the following work. We do not present this little volume with any other expectation than that. We are to be called the answer to every principle advanced." He defended every principle advanced in *Lectures on Faith*. Before publishing it as scripture, it was presented to a council of the church to be sustained as scripture. "On 17 August 1835, a general assembly of the church met for the purpose of examining a book of Commandments and Covenants that had been compiled and written by the publications committee." [Joseph Smith headed the publications committee.] "This committee having finished the said book according to the instructions given them, it was deemed necessary to call the General Assembly of the Church to see if the book be approved or not by the authorities of the Church. That it may, if approved, become a law of the church, and a rule of faith and practice of the same." (*JS Papers, Revelations and Translations, Vol. 2*, p. 307.)

Originally, like the *Book of Mormon*, the church had elders, priests and teachers. Then the term “apostle” began to be used. But the term “apostle” did not mean the same thing then that it does today. A quorum of twelve apostles did not exist in Mormonism until February 1835. Prior to that, many individuals were identified as “apostles.” The term meant someone sent with a message from God.⁷⁸ The term was originally used to identify all the missionaries sent to preach the *Book of Mormon* and restoration. The revelations given through Joseph Smith specifically identified the following men as “apostles” in the following sections and dates:

- Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, D&C 18:9 (June 1829)
- Joseph Smith, D&C 20:2 and Oliver Cowdery, D&C 20:3 (April 1830)
- Joseph Smith, D&C 21:1 and Oliver Cowdery 21:10 (April 1830)
- Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt and Leman Copley, D&C 49:1, 11 (March 1831)—sending them forth “like unto mine apostle of old, whose name was Peter”

A series of revelations likewise referred to “apostles” and included admonitions, instructions, and commandments to different audiences composed of “apostles” before the organization of a quorum of twelve in 1835.⁷⁹ The Seventy were regarded as “apostles.”⁸⁰ It was not until 1835 that

⁷⁸ The LDS Historian’s Office acknowledges it meant, “A title indicating one sent forth to preach; later designated as a specific ecclesiastical office.” (*JS Papers, Documents, Vol. 1, July 1828-June 1831*, p. 495—Glossary, “Apostle”.) There has been no attempt to deal with the anachronism of applying the term “apostle” used in revelations before there was a twelve to mean exclusively those who belong to the twelve.

⁷⁹ November 1831 – D&C 1:14: “the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people.” This *did not, indeed could not*, refer to a non-existent quorum of the twelve. At that time, it referred to any of the “disciples” he sent out as missionaries in the early church as explained in the same revelation, D&C 1:4-9.

March 1830 – D&C 19:8: refers to giving information to Martin Harris because “it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles.” This meant that Martin Harris was entitled to have a mystery revealed to him.

The language in D&C 27:12 *is not part of the original revelation* given in August 1830. It was apparently added by Sidney Rigdon sometime between 1834 and 1835.

December 1830 – D&C 35:6 informs Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that they could then give the gift of the Holy Ghost “by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old.” This is consistent with everywhere else in scripture that associates “laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” with the status of “apostle.” See, e.g., D&C 20:38, 43; 3 Ne. 18:36-37; Moroni 2:2-3.

September 1831 – D&C 64:39: “they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known.” Given to the elders of the church, many of who were calling themselves “apostles” as is mentioned two months later in the November 1831 revelation (D&C 1:14, discussed first above). Verses before this relate to establishing Zion (v. 34-38) making the exposure of false “apostles” a task required for those who will populate Zion. All the missionaries called themselves “apostles.” The revelation meant that the unworthy who were sent as missionaries will be exposed to be unworthy.

September 1832 – D&C 84:63: “you are mine apostles” Given to the missionaries who were now returning, having been sent out the previous year. All the missionaries were identifying themselves as “apostles” and the Lord was acknowledging and confirming this was true.

June 1833 – D&C 95:4: “For the preparation wherewith I design to prepare mine apostles to prune my vineyard for the last time,” Referring to the Kirtland Temple the Lord wanted built (and they had delayed starting). He said it was necessary to prepare all these “apostles” who were serving missions.

February 1834 – D&C 102—minutes of a meeting written by Oliver Cowdery which identifies the “traveling high council composed of the twelve apostles.” This council would not come into existence for another year.

the three witnesses to the *Book of Mormon*, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, were asked by Joseph Smith to choose the first twelve members of the newly announced quorum of the twelve. The Three Witnesses made their choices at a meeting on February 14, 1835. They also ordained the twelve chosen men to be apostles belonging to the new quorum. The ordinations took place between February and April 1835. Ordination was accompanied by a charge given by Oliver Cowdery that explained their ordination was not complete until they qualified. In part it included:

It is necessary that you receive a testimony from heaven to yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God. That is more than the testimony of an angel. When the proper time arrives, you shall be able to bear this testimony to the world. When you bear testimony that you have seen God, this testimony God will never suffer to fall, but will bear you out; although many will not give heed, yet others will. You will therefore see the necessity of getting this testimony from heaven. Never cease striving until you have seen God face to face. Strengthen your faith; cast off your doubts, your sins, and all your unbelief; and nothing can prevent you from coming to God. Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid his hand upon you. We require as much to qualify us as did those who have gone before us; God is the same. If the Savior in former days laid his hands upon his disciples, why not in latter days? . . . The time is coming when you will be perfectly familiar with the things of God. . . . You have our best wishes, you have our most fervent prayers, that you may be able to bear this testimony, that you have seen the face of God. Therefore call upon him in faith in mighty prayer till you prevail, for it is your duty and your privilege to bear such a testimony for yourselves. (*DHC*, 2:192-98.)

Oliver's charge was nothing new. Joseph Smith had already explained on January 23, 1833 to the "School of the Prophets" that to be an "apostle" required a visit from Christ and the Father.⁸¹ Oliver was just repeating in 1835 what Joseph taught beginning in 1833.

March 1835 – D&C 107:23: The twelve apostles are identified as "twelve traveling councilors" These particular "apostles" were a traveling council with authority equal to the many other "apostles" in the church. The apostles in the first presidency, and in the seventy, and in the other standing high councils are all equal in authority to these traveling high council apostles.

⁸⁰ "on this day the council of the seventy meet to render an account of their travels and ministry, since they were ordained to that apostleship[.]" (*JS Papers, Journals Vol. 1, 1832-1839*, p. 139.)

⁸¹ *Minutes, Salt Lake City School of the Prophets*, October 3, 1883, (quoting from Zebedee Coltrin who was recounting events to the School): "At one of these meetings after the organization of the school, (the school being organized on the 23rd of January, 1833, when we were all together, Joseph having given instructions, and while engaged in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence, no one whispered above his breath, a personage walked through the room from east to west, and Joseph asked if we saw him. I saw him and suppose the others did and Joseph answered that is Jesus, the Son of God, our elder brother. Afterward Joseph told us to resume our former position in prayer, which we did. Another person came through; he was surrounded as with a flame of fire. He (Brother Coltrin) experienced a sensation that it might destroy the tabernacle as it was of consuming fire of great brightness. The Prophet Joseph said this was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I saw Him.

Along with the administrative quorum of twelve apostles, in 1835 Joseph introduced a hierarchy of equal orders of three presidents, twelve apostles, 70 seventies and unlimited high councils.⁸² All of these various councils were equal in authority possessing all the rights of presidency in the church.⁸³ In today's LDS vocabulary, each of these groups would "possess all the priesthood keys with the authority to exercise them."⁸⁴ Equality has been shattered, authority has been seized, scriptures have been ignored, and today's Mormonism in almost all the various iterations is dominated by a presiding, single authority figure supported by an oligarchy of paid, professional church authorities.

POWER AND INFLUENCE:

Joseph Smith took an inconsistent path identifying the center of power and influence in Mormonism. On the day the church was organized, a revelation identified Joseph as the church's "prophet, seer and revelator."⁸⁵ Five months later in September 1830, another revelation limited all revelations and commandments for the church to those coming through Joseph Smith.⁸⁶ David Whitmer thought Joseph Smith was led into error by pride when he assumed the role of "prophet, seer and revelator."⁸⁷

"When asked about the kind of clothing the Father had on, Brother Coltrin said: I did not discover his clothing for he was surrounded as with a flame of fire, which was so brilliant that I could not discover anything else but his person. I saw his hands, his legs, his feet, his eyes, nose, mouth, head and body in the shape and form of a perfect man. He sat in a chair as a man would sit in a chair, but this appearance was so grand and overwhelming that it seemed I should melt down in his presence, and the sensation was so powerful that it thrilled through my whole system and I felt it in the marrow of my bones. The Prophet Joseph said: Brethren, now you are prepared to be the apostles of Jesus Christ, for you have seen both the Father and the Son and know that they exist and that they are two separate personages." (The part referring to the definition of an "apostle" is excerpted and quoted in *JS Papers, Documents, Vol. 3: February 1833-March 1834*, p. 43, footnote 259.)

⁸² The High Council in Nauvoo thought it had church-wide authority as evidenced by sending *An Epistle of the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in Nauvoo, to the saints scattered abroad, greeting*.[.] It was published in the *Times and Seasons*, Vol. III, No. 15, June 1, 1842 with the direction to the church: "Now therefore let this epistle be read in all the branches of the church[.]"

⁸³ D&C 107:21-36.

⁸⁴ There was no single person, group or body holding "keys" which were exclusive property of that single person, group or body.

⁸⁵ D&C 21:1. In 1841 by revelation Hyrum joined Joseph in the role. (See D&C 124:94.) It was not until 1843, however, that Joseph put Hyrum into that role in a meeting at the stand in Nauvoo: "proposing Hyrum (Smith) as a prophet." (*JS Papers, Journals, Vol. 3: May 1843-June 1844*, p. 61.) (See also *Id.*, footnote 270: "in the afternoon discourse he told the Saints to consider Hyrum Smith a prophet. According to William Clayton JS said that 'Hyrum held the office of prophet to the church by birth-right & he was going to have a reformation and the saints must regard Hyrum for he has authority.'")

⁸⁶ D&C 28:2: "But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses."

⁸⁷ See, *An Address to All Believers in Christ, Chapter IV, How the Church was Established in the Beginning, and How They Drifted into Error*, "Just before April 6, 1830, some of the brethren began to think that the church should have a leader, just like the children of Israel wanting a king. Brother Joseph finally inquired of the Lord about it. He must have had a desire himself to be their leader, which desire in any form is not of God, for Christ

Despite the revelations making Joseph the primary revelator of commandments for the church, he never presumed to be the exclusive revelator. To the contrary, others were expected to receive them,⁸⁸ and he was pleased when others received visions, believed them to be authentic, and recorded them.⁸⁹ The year after revelation conferred status on Joseph as primary revelator, another revelation empowered everyone holding priesthood with the authority to reveal the mind of God: “they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost & whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be Scripture shall be the will of the Lord shall be the mind of the Lord shall be the voice of the Lord & shall be the power of God unto Salvation[.]”⁹⁰

From October 31, 1838 to April 22, 1839, Joseph was on an unwelcome hiatus from leading the church. He spent most of those 173 days in the jail of Liberty, Missouri. On March 25, 1839 Joseph wrote in response to a letter Emma had sent him earlier in the month. He starts out with a salutation that rivals the Apostle Paul in terse prose:⁹¹ “Your humble servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., prisoner for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the Saints, taken and held by the power of mobocracy, under the exterminating reign of his excellency, the governor, Lilburn W. Boggs...”⁹²

During the half-year in prison, Joseph rethought the propriety of holding primary priestly power. Two events leading to his imprisonment were likely contributors to him rethinking all authority. The first was Rigdon’s July 4th Salt Sermon that threatened “extermination” of Missourians. This thought apparently inspired Governor Boggs and was adopted by him in Missouri Executive Order 44, known as the “Extermination Order.” But Mormons, not Missourians, were the targets for extermination.

The second was Sampson Averd’s role in leading Mormon vigilantes against non-Mormons, burning homes, destroying crops and pillaging property. Joseph’s preference was to take the high

said ‘If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.’ ‘He that would be great, let him be your servant.’ ‘For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.’ A true and humble follower of Christ will never have any desire to lead or be first, or to seek the praise of men or brethren. Desiring any prominence whatever is not humility, but it is pride; it is seeking praise of mortals instead of the praise of God. Joseph received a revelation that he should be the leader; that he should be ordained by Oliver Cowdery as ‘Prophet Seer and Revelator’ to the church, and that the church should receive his words as if from God’s own mouth. Satan surely rejoiced on that day...”

⁸⁸ A revelation later at the end of the next year (not in the D&C) said “the duty of the Bishop shall be made known by the commandments which have been given and by the voice of the conference.” (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 3: July 1831-January 1833*, p. 150.) Another revelation (also not in the D&C) likewise expected the conference to obtain revelation: “it shall be made known unto them by the voice of the conference their severall missions.” (*Id.*, p. 156.)

⁸⁹ For example: Joseph taught others should expect to have God appear to them: “[A]ll who are prepared and are sufficiently pure to abide the presence of the Lord, will see him in the solemn assembly.” (*JS Papers, Histories Vol. 1: 1832-1844*, p. 123.) Later in the solemn assembly he recorded, “My Scribe also received his anointing (with us) and saw in a vision the armies of heaven protecting the Saints in their return to Zion—“ (*JS Papers, Journal Vol. 1: 1832-1839*, p. 170.) “we ~~commenced~~ spent the time in rehearsing to each other the glorious scenes that transpired on the preceding evening, while attending to the ordinance of holy anointing.” (*Id.*, p. 171.)

⁹⁰ *JS Papers, Documents Vol. 2: July 1831-January 1833*, p. 101; see also D&C 68:3-4.

⁹¹ See, e.g., 1 Cor. 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:1-10; Philemon 1:1-3.

⁹² For a complete transcript of the letter see *TPJS*, pp. 129-148.

moral ground, and it was hard to go there when his followers engaged in morally reprehensible misconduct.

The day after his arrest, Joseph was sentenced to die. It was a perfunctory military tribunal conducted by General Lucas. Lucas issued this order: “To Brigadier-General Doniphan: Sir: You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square of Far West and shoot them at 9:00 tomorrow morning. Samuel D. Lucas, Major-General Commanding.” Doniphan responded: “It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning, at 8 o’clock; and if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God. A. W. Doniphan, Brigadier-General.”⁹³ Nothing ever happened to General Doniphan for disobeying a direct order. Instead his response provoked a debate over the propriety of the state militia executing a civilian. On so thin a thread hung the lives of Joseph and seven others.

A civilian court was to decide the matter. The prisoners were transported to Richmond, where the chief witness against Joseph was the same Sampson Avard responsible for Danite depredations.

In the letter from Liberty Joseph advised the saints:

...Nevertheless we would suggest the propriety of being aware of an aspiring spirit, which spirit has often times urged men forward to make foul speeches, and influence the Church to reject milder counsels, and has eventually been the means of bringing much death and sorrow upon the Church.

The comments seem focused on the Mormon contribution to the conflict, not on shirking blame and avoiding accountability. The identities of those who made “foul speeches” are left to conjecture, but the letter was for a Mormon audience, and therefore were likely Mormons. Rigdon? Avard?

We would say, beware of pride also; for well and truly hath the wise man said, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. And again, outward appearance is not always a criterion by which to judge our fellow man; but the lips betray the haughty and overbearing imaginations of the heart; by his words and his deeds let him be judged. Flattery also is a deadly poison. A frank and open rebuke provoketh a good man to emulation; and in the hour of trouble he will be your best friend; but on the other hand, it will draw out all the corruptions of corrupt hearts, and lying and the poison of asps is under their tongues; and they do cause the pure in heart to be cast into prison, because they want them out of their way.

Joseph’s reaction seems unexpected and out of context. A religious leader imprisoned, under sentence of death, writing to caution about pride and flattery. Pride and flattery have become tools for advancing modern Mormonism.⁹⁴

⁹³ *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties Missouri*, (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1886), p. 137.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., Russell Ballard, *The Greatest Generation of Young Adults* (April 2015 General Conference); Julie Beck, *You Have a Noble Birthright* (April 2006 General Conference); Thomas Monson, *Be Thou an Example* (April 2005 General Conference); Neil Anderson, *You Know Enough* (October 2008 General Conference); President

Joseph's counsel about using time wisely, particularly when Mormons meet for conferences, councils or conversations is a remarkable standard that has gone neglected. His letter from jail encouraged believers to be careful about letting fiction and vanity assume prominence:

A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of; 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. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity--thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! 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!

Another passage echoes from Liberty and should trouble Mormonism a great deal more than it does. It is given little thought, but the imprisoned prophet-founder pondered about pride and petitioned his followers to avoid its practice:

... And if there are any among you who aspire after their own aggrandizement, and seek their own opulence, while their brethren are groaning in poverty, and are under sore trials and temptations, they cannot be benefited by the intercession of the Holy Spirit, which maketh intercession for us day and night with groanings that cannot be uttered.

We ought at all times to be very careful that such high-mindedness shall never have place in our hearts; but condescend to men of low estate, and with all long-suffering bear the infirmities of the weak.

These were ideals for original Mormonism that would challenge us still today (if we considered them still binding). Stratification of haves and have-nots is just part of our landscape.

The most remarkable part of the letter, however, addresses priestly domination. While in prison, suffering and oppressed by the state and political authorities, Joseph's concern turned to priestly abuse. Donatus Magnus⁹⁵ would agree with these words. Catholicism rejected the Donatist

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Church News* interview, June 7, 1995; Vaughn J. Featherstone, Champion of Youth (October 1987 General Conference); *Letter to the Youth of the Church*, (Church News, 9 May 1981); Neal A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness* (October 1976 General Conference).

⁹⁵ Donatus was the North African Bishop of Carthage in 313 ad. Roman Emperor Diocletian persecuted Christians, causing many to turn traitors to the cause. Donatus believed they forfeited their ecclesiastical authority when they betrayed the faith, requiring them to be re-baptized and re-ordained before holding authority. Likewise any ordinances performed by them during the period of apostasy were invalid. This view was rejected as heresy by the Catholic Church.

Heresy and concluded unfaithfulness was no impediment to priestly authority.⁹⁶ Joseph's letter vindicates the North African priest:

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

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

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile, reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; that he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death; let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly, then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrine of the Priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dew from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy sceptre an unchanging sceptre of righteousness and truth, and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

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

Two months following the Liberty Jail confinement Joseph's advice to church leaders reflected his misgivings about power and authority in priesthood leaders. In an address to the twelve apostles and seventies, Joseph told them they needed to guard against self-sufficiency, self-righteousness and self-importance.⁹⁷ He was alarmed by the idea leaders would think themselves

⁹⁶ See *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Donatists (www.newadvent.com/cathen/05121.a.htm)

⁹⁷ "I then addresst them, and gave much instruction calculated to ꝑ guard them against selfsuffiency, selfrighteousness & selfimportance[.]" *JS Papers, Journals Vol. 1: 1832-1839*, p. 344.

better than church members, and would rise up in judgment, calling themselves more righteous than those they led. His warning to leaders included the following:

I will give you one of the *Keys* of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church [meaning church members], saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy, and if he does not repent, will apostasize, as god lives.⁹⁸

This caution has been turned on its head by the many Mormonisms of today. Hierarchies uniformly regard themselves as “righteous” even claiming they cannot lead their churches astray.⁹⁹ They presume to condemn and find fault with the church’s members, saying the members are out of the way while the leaders are righteous. In short, the fears that began to mount in Joseph’s heart while in Liberty Jail, which he voiced again in this sermon, have all come to pass.

In 1842 Joseph Smith lamented the Saints were depending too much on the prophet, darkened in their minds and neglecting the duties devolving on themselves. This position practically renounces a dominant role for a central leader.

If Apostle Samuel Richards can be trusted, the editorial in the *Millennial Star* on November 13, 1852 contained the words of Joseph Smith, and not himself. The editorial was titled “Priesthood” and in a voice attributed to Joseph declared:

We have heard men who hold the priesthood remark that they would do anything they were told to do by those who preside over them even if they knew it was wrong; but such obedience is worse than folly to us; it is slavery in the extreme; and the man who would thus willingly degrade himself, should not claim a rank among intelligent beings, until he turns from his folly. A man of God would despise the idea. Others, in the extreme exercise of their almighty authority have taught that such obedience was necessary, and that no matter what the saints were told to do by their presidents, they should do it without any questions. When Elders of Israel will so far indulge in these extreme notions of obedience as to teach them to the people, it is generally because they have it in their hearts to do wrong themselves.¹⁰⁰

Whatever early authority may have been centered on Joseph, by the early 1840s Mormon priestly domination was greatly diminished, if not altogether gone. It is impossible to reconcile the most virulent form of priestly power found in Correlated LDS Mormonism with the Liberty Jail edict that “no power or influence can, or ought, to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood.” Joseph Smith’s meditations on learning from sad experience that men abuse even “supposed”

⁹⁸ See *DHC* 3:385.

⁹⁹ See, e.g., Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, First Presidency Message, January 2001, *A Prophet’s Message and Counsel for Youth*, “I make you a promise that the authorities of this Church will never lead you astray.”

¹⁰⁰ See *Millennial Star*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Nov. 13, 1852. Even if the quote does not originate with Joseph, its publication in 1852 is in a consistent line with Joseph’s changing thinking about limiting priesthood power.

power¹⁰¹ has been forgotten by modern Mormonisms. Unclear thinking critics aspire to join in the abuse, wanting ordination for women in the hope that females would be able to improve on the sad state of affairs. It is more likely that expanding participation would only expand the number of those who abuse authority while occupying the chief seats.¹⁰² Fortunately, anyone can be a servant, kneeling to wash others' feet as the Master showed in His example,¹⁰³ whether they are ordained or not. Anyone can teach pure knowledge using persuasion and meekness. THAT is godly, and will save souls, whether the teacher is ordained or not.

SEALING/ADOPTING:

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

Joseph's original instruction about sealing dealt with connecting the living faithful to the "fathers" Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.¹⁰⁴ The connection was to be accomplished through adoption sealing, not genealogy. Joseph was connected to the "fathers" through his priesthood.¹⁰⁵ He and his brother Hyrum were to become 'fathers' of all who would live after them. Families were originally organized under Joseph as the father of the righteous in this dispensation.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, men were sealed to Joseph Smith as their father, and they as his sons. This was referred to as 'adoption'

¹⁰¹ Fortunately the claims of priestly power by LDS Mormonism are now entirely hollow. When Joseph lamented men abused "a little authority, as they suppose" he was describing pretend priests. Immediately preceding that description he wrote of heaven's exclusive control over actual priestly status: "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*. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but *when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.*" (D&C 121:36-37.)

¹⁰² See Luke 20:46. A position Christ warned against.

¹⁰³ John 13:4-5.

¹⁰⁴ "The spirit power & calling of Elijah is that ye have power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oracles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the Earth & to receive, obtain and perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the fathers unto the children & the hearts of the **children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven.**" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, Provo (BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), p. 329, emphasis added). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are in the heavens, sitting upon thrones. (D&C 132:37.) Connecting to the un-resurrected dead, as presently practiced by LDS Mormons, does nothing to reconnect to heaven.

¹⁰⁵ See, *e.g.*, Abr. 2:10-11.

¹⁰⁶ Brigham Young made a clumsy allusion to this when he taught, "Joseph Smith holds the keys of this last dispensation, and is now engaged behind the veil in the great work of the last days...no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith...." October 9, 1859, (*JD* 7:289.)

because the family organization was not biological, but priestly, according to the law of God. As soon as Joseph died, the doctrine began to erode, ultimately replaced by the substitute practice of sealing genealogical lines together. In between the original adoptive sealing to Joseph Smith and the current practice of tracking genealogical/biological lines, there was an intermediate step when families were tracked back as far as research permitted, then the line was sealed to Joseph Smith. That practice is now forgotten, and certainly no longer practiced by any denomination within Mormonism.¹⁰⁷

When Joseph died, any understanding of the practice of “adoption” was quickly lost. One writer explained:

The period after Taylor’s death in July 1887 appears to have been one of continued confusion regarding the law of adoption. Two months later in September 1887, John M. Whitaker, John Taylor’s son-in-law wrote: “I went back to the office where I found [Apostle] Brother Lorenzo Snow and [First Council of the Seventy member] Jacob Gates. They conversed a long time. He finally entered into a deep subject on ‘The Law of Adoption.’ Brother Gates said he didn’t believe in it as did also bother Snow. He reference back to the time that Brigham Young was in Kirtland[;] he had a person asked him about it and he said ‘I don’t know nothing about it.’ President Taylor on one different occasion had a letter written to him for the following reason: it was [two undecipherable words] of Prophet J Smith or rather sister Eliza R. Snow Smith (Brother Gates didn’t know which[;] a bout [sic] 70 persons were adopted into President J Smith’s [family;] Sister Snow Smith said ‘she didn’t understand the law’ but had no objections to them being sealed to her husband. And this led Brother Gates to write to President Taylor asking him if he knew anything about it. He never answered the letter. But on another occasion Brother Gates saw him and asked him plainly. President Taylor said he knew nothing about it. And also just lately when asked by Brother Snow, President Wilford Woodruff knew nothing about it. [;]It hadn’t been revealed to him.’ I know this at this time to say [or show] a prevailing feeling among the Twelve that they don’t understand it. George [undecipherable] Cannon also said he didn’t understand it.”¹⁰⁸

Mormonism never acquired a settled form of temple rites, the adoption process being poorly understood even while Joseph was alive.¹⁰⁹ For a short time temple sealings of ancestors went

¹⁰⁷ *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, Mill Creek Press, (Salt Lake, 2011), pp. 481-482.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Stapley, *Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism*, *The Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2011, pp. 53-117; citing to *John M. Whitaker, Diary, Book No. 4, September 16, 1887 to September 20, 1888*, November 16, 1887, MS 0002, Marriott Special Collection; transcription from Pitman shorthand by LaJean Purcell Carruth.

¹⁰⁹ His first public allusion to it was on October 15, 1843: “to see the kingdom of Good [God]. & subscribe the articles of adoption to enter therein.” (*JS Papers, Journals Vol. 3: May 1843-June 1844*, p. 114.) Although his letter from Liberty Jail included language that foreshadowed adoptions: “There are many teachers, but, perhaps, not many fathers.”

as far as information permitted, then the last known ancestor was sealed to Joseph Smith. But as Jonathan Stapley explained, “the idea of linking to Joseph Smith was eventually dismissed or forgotten.”¹¹⁰ The confusion over the subject once again confirms both the ever-changing nature of Mormonism and its failure to become complete during Joseph’s life.

David Whitmer was disaffected because everything continually changed. His *Address to All Believers in Christ* began by addressing the issue of Mormonism-in-motion:

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

He thought the *Bible* and *Book of Mormon* were the only faithful canon, and all else was vanity and foolishness. He departed before the now-lost practice of adoption was introduced. Likewise, although he heard of the temple endowment, he never experienced it.

ETERNAL PROGRESSION:

In developing man’s role in the cosmos, things began rather Protestant-like. Joseph eventually taught plainly that men could become gods.¹¹¹ Further, he asserted that God was once a man and had progressed to godhood.¹¹² LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley commenting on this topic stated, “I don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it. I haven’t heard it discussed for a long time in public discourse. I don’t know. I don’t know all the circumstances under which that statement was made. I understand the philosophical background behind it. But I don’t know a lot about it and I don’t know that others know a lot about it.”¹¹³ President Hinckley was right, of course. The idea crept into Mormonism late in Joseph’s life, and never had an opportunity to be fully developed. So Mormons do not know a lot about it.

¹¹⁰ Stapley, *Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism*, *The Journal of Mormon History*, supra, p. 53, 113-114.

¹¹¹ D&C 132:17-20.

¹¹² First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heaven, is a man like one of you. That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today and you were to see the great God who holds this world in its orbit and upholds all things by his power, you would see him in the image and very form of a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion and image of God. ...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. ...God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did, ...Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. ...Here, then, is eternal life--to know the only wise and true God. And you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves--to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done--by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you are able to sit in glory as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.” (King Follette Discourse, *Times and Seasons*, 15 August 1844.)

¹¹³ Biema, David Van. *Kingdom Come*, *Time*, August 4, 1997, page 56.

Joseph Smith's 'Magnum Opus,' the *King Follett Discourse*,¹¹⁴ seems more like an introduction to something new than an older fully developed theology. Though the idea that man could progress to be like God had been disclosed earlier,¹¹⁵ the idea that God was once like man and also learned His salvation was clearly something new, first revealed in this talk.¹¹⁶ Joseph's April 1844 sermon finally closed an idea opened nine years earlier in the 1835 *Lectures on Faith*. In those lectures Joseph posed, and answered, the question:

Where shall we find a saved being? For if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved. We think that it will not be a matter of dispute, that two saved beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved; for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute of every creature that will be saved; and if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be, or else not be saved. We ask then where is the prototype, or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question, there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible, that it is Christ: all will agree in this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation; or, in other words, that he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation and ask how it is that he is saved? The answer is because he is a just and holy being; and if he were anything different from what he is, he would not be saved; for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else; for if it were possible for him to change, in the least degree, so sure he would fail of salvation and lose all of his dominion, power, authority, and glory, which constitutes salvation; for salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself and one like him.¹¹⁷

This 1835 teaching was just a prelude, left un-clarified and unexplained. The implications of this teaching escaped believers. Mormons were surprised to learn Christ did what His Father did¹¹⁸ when

¹¹⁴ The talk was first published posthumously in the *Times and Seasons*, August 15, 1844, although it was delivered April 7th of that year.

¹¹⁵ Though the idea is Biblical (see, e.g., Rom. 8:16-17; Rev. 3:21; 1 John 3:2) it was considered novel when Joseph first revealed the idea in 1832 (D&C 76:55-60).

¹¹⁶ "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible, --I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form --like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man: for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God[.]" (*TPJS* p. 345.) Even the hint found in Ether 3:6-16 failed to clearly assert God was once like man.

¹¹⁷ *Lecture Seventh*; ¶9

¹¹⁸ "What did Jesus say? (Mark it, Elder Rigdon!) The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do we believe it? If you do not believe it, you do not believe the Bible." (*TPJS* p. 346, discussing John 5:19.)

He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Like God the Father, Christ “laid down His life and took it up again” or, in other words, attained to the resurrection from the dead.¹¹⁹ These ideas were consistent with earlier revelations, translations and writings, but *King Follett* signaled a whole new level of harmonizing ideas and adding upon the restoration.

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

CAMBELLITE CONTRIBUTIONS:

Mormonism failed to reach a finish line while Joseph was alive. God seems quite willing to give people what they want, even if it displeases Him.¹²⁰ The early eager Campbellite converts steered Joseph’s inquiries, and over the following decade the restoration focused on organizing a restored, New Testament, Primitive Christian Church with all the original offices, teachings and practices. In the background of this preoccupation with New Testament Christianity, however, God pointed Joseph, and in turn us, toward something more ancient. God was attempting to return to the earth the original faith taught to Adam in the beginning. The first four Mormon missionaries were sent to proselytize American Indians or Lamanites in September 1830. Oliver Cowdery, Parley Pratt, Ziba Peterson and Peter Whitmer, Jr. were sent after one target but hit another. Pratt altered the mission trajectory as they passed through the Ohio area where he formerly served as a Campbellite advocate. This detour brought approximately 200 Campbellite converts into the Mormon ranks. The center of activity for Mormonism shifted from New York to Ohio. The focus of the “restoration” changed from a trek back to Eden, to a search for an authentic New Testament, Primitive Christian church with all the accouterments of the original. The Campbellites wanted, above all else, to have the authentic, original Primitive Church back again. They desired to confidently claim they were in sole possession of the restored original.

¹¹⁹ Attaining to the resurrection happens when the individual is able to come forth from the grave because death has no right or claim upon them. Christ delivers a form of resurrection to this creation, but the creation is dependent upon Him to rise again. In the theology introduced in this discourse, Joseph suggested the conquest of death happened only after proceeding from exaltation to exaltation until the individual arrived at the same station as Christ and His Father attained. “[Y]ou have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one: from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.” (*TPJS* pp. 346-347.)

¹²⁰ See, e.g., 1 Sam. 8:6-9; Eze. 14:7-10; “President Joseph Smith read the 14th chapter of Ezekiel—said the Lord had declared by the Prophet, that the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption of the Jewish church—that righteous persons could only deliver their own souls—applied it to the present state of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall—that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds...” (*TPJS*, p. 237.)

The religion of Adam was the objective of Mormonism. Joseph Smith was unable to fully restore that first religion of man. Joseph predicted the religion would include a future gathering in the “everlasting hills,” (in all likelihood meaning the Rocky Mountains) where returning tribes would be “crowned” with glory in a New Jerusalem to be God’s last days Zion.¹²¹ The returning tribes did not gather in Kirtland, Jackson County, Far West, or Nauvoo. Joseph was dead before the trip westward to Salt Lake. Even the most ardent defender of the LDS version of Mormonism must concede there were things expected, even promised and prophesied to happen, that were left unrealized when Joseph died.

The LDS and RLDS organizations disagreed on many subjects, but four in particular separated them. These four were polygamy, succession in the presidency, plurality of Gods, and secret temple rites including baptism for the dead. Depending on which part of the history was considered most important the outcome favored one over the other. One writer explained the disagreements this way, “I realized that as long as the focus was on Kirtland, the prairie Mormons [RLDS] held the advantage, but whenever the debate turned to Nauvoo, the mountain Mormons [LDS] would win.”¹²² The morphing faith under Joseph Smith was responsible for allowing this outcome. Anywhere along the timeline of his life as church leader, if there was a line drawn, what followed was different from before. It was dynamic, increasing, and consistent in building on what already existed, always in motion. It was an additive faith, never deductive. Nothing was abandoned, but expansions sometimes so transformed the earlier ideas, rites or practices that the new developments seemed to revolutionize the religion.

Because of the instability of Mormonism during Joseph Smith’s life, it is reasonable to conclude that if there was an original, it cannot be defined by searching the teachings, practices, features, rites, or organization of the period from 1820 to 1844. One must look elsewhere to define an “original.”

LOOKING FORWARD INSTEAD OF BACK:

Apart from the changing organization, practices and teachings, there was the prophesied destiny of the faith. Many things are known to be undone because Joseph identified them as the targeted destiny for Mormonism. Perhaps the best and the only, way to identify an “original” Mormonism is to look at the aspirations for a religion that embraces all truth. If the goal of the original is considered, one can get much closer to defining it than by reassembling bits from its

¹²¹ D&C 133:23-35.

¹²² William Russell, *The LDS Church and Community of Christ: Clearer Differences and Closer Friends*, Mormon Dialogue, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 177, 182. In that article he proposes that when Joseph Smith wrote the Wentworth Letter in 1842 he chose to omit the most exotic features of the Nauvoo developments, including temple rites. The Reorganized LDS movement followed most closely the features of Mormonism explained in the Wentworth Letter, and likewise rejected the Nauvoo additions. As he explained it, “we agreed with the Palmyra and Kirtland doctrines but rejected the later Nauvoo doctrines. We accepted the early part of the Mormon tradition but rejected the later, more extreme Mormon doctrines.” (*Id.*, p. 184-185.)

beginning. It is Mormonism's destiny that best tells us what Mormonism was, is, and is to come.¹²³ Anything else fails to meet the scriptural definition of truth.

Christ compared the time when He would return in glory to the time of Noah.¹²⁴ Joseph added information about the time of Noah in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, the relevant portion now being included in the *Pearl of Great Price*. Preliminary to the destruction of the wicked in Noah's day, mankind became wicked, murderous, and the world was filled with violence.¹²⁵ But if the wicked ripened in their behavior, so did the righteous. Not only were Noah and his family spared, but also Enoch's city,¹²⁶ and later many others were caught up to heaven.¹²⁷ To the same effect, Christ foretold that the time of His coming would be when the wheat and tares were both ripe.¹²⁸ Taken together, Mormonism exists with the expectation that there will come a time when violence overtakes the world, and like Enoch's people, a single place of peace will be established like in the days of Noah, as a refuge from that storm.

Ripened wheat occupying the future Zion are described in Mormonism with details of where, how and who will be involved. It is, however, important to clarify that there remains an unfinished role for Elijah before any expectation of Zion.

Joseph wrote a letter September 6, 1842 listing the heavenly visitors who helped create Mormonism. The list begins with an unidentified "voice mercy from heaven" followed by a "voice of truth out of the earth." Presumably these were Christ in the First Vision and Nephi or Moroni revealing the *Book of Mormon*. Then "Moroni," the "voice of the Lord" to the three witnesses, "Michael," the voice of God (conferring priesthood), Michael again, Gabriel, Raphael, and "divers angels from Michael or Adam down to the present time."¹²⁹ The letter was written six years after the Kirtland Temple dedication. There was no mention of Elijah in his letter. Oliver Cowdery failed to ever mention any visit from Elijah.¹³⁰ Joseph always referred to Elijah's return as a future event.¹³¹ The original form of Mormonism expected Elijah to return at some point after the 1840s.¹³² Elijah's return will be one marker signaling the return of the original.

¹²³ This is the definition of truth: "And truth is a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come." (D&C 93:24.)

¹²⁴ See Matt. 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27.

¹²⁵ Moses 8:28-30.

¹²⁶ Moses 7:19-21.

¹²⁷ Moses 7:27.

¹²⁸ Matt. 13:25-30.

¹²⁹ See D&C 128:19-21.

¹³⁰ For a summary of Oliver's various statements see Richard Anderson, *The Credibility of the Book of Mormon Translators*, BYU Studies, Vol. 8, (1968), p. 277.

¹³¹ I have explained this in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and elaborated on the reason for a needed future return in *The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered*, available on my website and in the book *Essays: Three Degrees* (Mill Creek Press: Salt Lake City, 2013).

¹³² On 13 August 1843 Joseph's journal recorded, "he shall send Elijah the prophet... and he shall reveal the covenants of the fathrs (in relation) to the children,--(originally written) and the children and the covenant[n]ts

At the time of Abraham, generations of apostates separated father Abraham from the religion of Adam. But Abraham “sought for the blessings of the fathers” and wanted “to be one who possessed great knowledge.” The result was Abraham “holding the right belonging to the fathers.”¹³³ It was not easy to acquire, but as long as Shem was alive, it was still possible for Abraham to obtain it as “it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.”¹³⁴

Joseph lived generations after the right descending from the fathers, or the first man, Adam, had been lost. Therefore, it was necessary for revelation, visitations and restoration; or in the language of Joseph Smith, “divers angels from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensations, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!”¹³⁵ But the original was “lost unto [Mormonism], or which [God] hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood” by January 1841.¹³⁶ God offered to “restore again” the fullness, on condition that the Mormons wanted it enough to provide a demonstration of faith.¹³⁷ They failed, and as a sign of their failure they received “instead of blessings...bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon”

of th[e] childr[en] in relati[o]n to the fathrs—“ (*JS Papers, Journals Vol. 3, May 1843-June 1844*, p. 77, all as in original.)

¹³³ Abr. 1:2.

¹³⁴ Abr. 1:3.

¹³⁵ D&C 128:21.

¹³⁶ D&C 124:28.

¹³⁷ D&C 124:27-32. That same revelation made Hyrum Smith a “prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph[.]” (*Id.*, v. 94.) His position was above the twelve, because in December 1841 he presided over a conference in Ramus, Illinois at which four of the twelve were present, including Brigham Young. (See *JS Papers, Journals, Vol. 2, December 1841-April 1843*, p. 10.) In that role a few months later Hyrum published a revelation to the church: “[I]hey have neglected the House of the Lord, the Baptismal Font, in this place, wherein their dead may be redeemed, and the key of the knowledge that unfolds the dispensation of the fullness of times may be turned, and the mysteries of God be unfolded, upon which their salvation and the salvation of the world, and the redemption of their dead depends, for ‘Thus saith the Lord, there shall not be a General Assembly for a general conference assembled together until the House of the Lord shall be finished, and the Baptismal Font, and if we are not diligent the church shall be rejected, and their dead also, Saith the Lord[.]’” Hyrum Smith, Patriarch for the whole church, *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 1, November 15, 1841. In the same volume *An Epistle of the Twelve* stated, “[I]he first great object before us, and the saints generally, is to help forward the completion of the Temple and the Nauvoo House; buildings which are now in progress according to the revelations, and which must be completed to secure the salvation of the church in the last days, for God requires of his saints to build him a house wherein his servants may be instructed, and eudued with power from on high[.]” It was published over the names of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, William Smith, Lyman Wight, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, Geo. A. Smith and Willard Richards. In the December 15, 1841 edition (Vol. 3, No. 4) another Epistle of the Twelve stated concerning the Nauvoo Temple, “[I]f this building is not completed, speedily, ‘we shall be rejected as a church with our dead,’ for the Lord out God hath spoken it[.]” It wasn’t completed and the details are discussed in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

them.¹³⁸ They did not enjoy God’s protection, which would have included having a “holy spot” where, despite mobs and opposition, “they shall not be moved out.”

If the original Mormonism needed to recover the fullness that was lost, then to revive an original, it will require a recovery of what was lost. If recovered, believers will be able to receive a holy spot, accepted and defended by God. In that place the in religion of Adam will be taught. The promised original religion includes the revelation of everything, “nothing shall be withheld.” “All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth[.]” Mormonism will recover information about “the sun, moon, [and] stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fullness of time—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest.”¹³⁹

These subjects seem disconnected with today’s Mormonism, but the religion of Abraham (and therefore the religion of Adam) included “a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers.”¹⁴⁰ The original Mormonism must grow in ancient knowledge until understanding reaches into the heavens. Not just spiritual understanding, but also physical understanding of the layout of the universe. The placement of the lights in the firmament was for “signs” to man,¹⁴¹ and therefore were deliberately placed and contain information originally understood by Adam.

Almost from the beginning moments of Mormonism, the ambition to build a “New Jerusalem” on this continent was announced. Christ foretold The New Jerusalem in the *Book of Mormon*.¹⁴² It was a later revelation to Joseph Smith that cemented the idea as part of the destiny for Mormonism. In January 1831, Mormons were promised they would be shown a location for that holy city.¹⁴³ That revelation explained how, after God reveals the location,¹⁴⁴ to collect funds for the purchase and construction of the city. To succeed, the New Jerusalem would require new covenants, which God also promised to reveal in due course.¹⁴⁵

In March 1831, another revelation described the New Jerusalem as “Zion” which would be a place of glory and protection. It would be a land of peace, a city of refuge where the glory of the

¹³⁸ D&C 124:44-48.

¹³⁹ D&C 121:28-32.

¹⁴⁰ Abr. 1:31.

¹⁴¹ Gen. 1:14, also Abr. 1:31.

¹⁴² See, 3 Ne. 20:22 (where not only is the New Jerusalem foretold, but Christ promises He will “be in the midst” of them) and 3 Ne. 21:23-25 (where gentiles are included with the promised city, and again He promises to “be in the midst” of them).

¹⁴³ D&C 42:9, 62

¹⁴⁴ *Id.*, v. 35, see also D&C 84:2-4 for the first approved location and D&C 124:42-45 for a later approved replacement location. Its final location will be “upon the mountains” (D&C 49:25).

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*, v. 67.

Lord would be visible. “[T]he terror of the Lord also shall be there,¹⁴⁶ insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion.” This revelation also contrasted the violence among the tares and peace among the wheat: “And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy.”¹⁴⁷

The gathering to the New Jerusalem develops in time to the status of being “Zion” where God will visit. The growth is through refinement of the residents of the New Jerusalem.¹⁴⁸ In 1833, the Lord revealed that once developed into His Zion, nothing on earth or in hell can move it from the place God plants it. He will defend it, and although scourges will be dispensed to the ungodly, “the Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people[.] ...Nevertheless Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever [God has] commanded her.”¹⁴⁹ Zion’s appearance on earth is a signal that all other governments will end.¹⁵⁰

In 1834, the Lord explained that He, and not the residents of His Zion, would fight the coming battles. “For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for as I said in a former commandment,¹⁵¹ even so will I fulfill—I will fight your battles.”¹⁵²

GENEALOGY (NOT NAME EXTRACTION):

Because of prophecies made to the patriarchal fathers, the right to found this future city of peace descends from a specific ancient line. There will be an heir descended from both Jesse and Joseph¹⁵³ who will accomplish it.¹⁵⁴ Occupants of the community will likewise have lineal qualification. The last-day’s Zion is an accomplishment promised earlier to the patriarchal fathers

¹⁴⁶ See also, D&C 133:56 where the Lord’s return to live in Zion is to be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead.

¹⁴⁷ D&C 45:66-71.

¹⁴⁸ D&C 35:24.

¹⁴⁹ See, D&C 97:19-27.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph taught, “we believe god will not destroy the kingdoms of the earth till, he has set (up) his own kingdom.” (*JS Papers, Journals Vol. 3, December 1842-June 1844*, p. 342.)

¹⁵¹ Meaning D&C 98:37.

¹⁵² D&C 105:14.

¹⁵³ This lineage disqualified Joseph Smith, who was descended from Joseph, but not from Jesse. He was a “pure Ephraimite” according to the LDS Church. See Daniel H. Ludlow, *Of the House of Israel*, Ensign, January 1991, citing with approval Brigham Young’s assertion in *JD* 2:268-269 as part of the article.

¹⁵⁴ D&C 113:5-6.

and it is through their descendants God intends to vindicate the promises.¹⁵⁵ The result of this alignment will be a priestly city of Zion that will “return to that power which she had lost.”¹⁵⁶

Many other details that are passed over are in the revelations to Joseph Smith.¹⁵⁷ But one promise requires particular mention. The city founded by Enoch, which was the original City of Zion, will return.¹⁵⁸ When it does, an earthly counterpart also named “Zion” is the place to which Enoch and his people will return. “Then shalt thou [Enoch], and all thy 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 mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made[.]”¹⁵⁹

The original iteration of Mormonism was apocalyptic. But it was oddly practical about the apocalypse, assuming there were things that could be done to prepare. Not in haste, which was condemned,¹⁶⁰ but it was a physical and spiritual enterprise to be accomplished by the hard effort of those interested in welcoming the Lord’s return.

ON AND OFF AGAIN POLYGAMY/PLURAL WIVES/POLYGyny:

The matter of plural wives, spiritual wives, polygamy or polygyny is certainly part of Joseph’s life. However, the history and reliable documentation concerning this issue is anything but certain. There is debate even over when it first appeared. The date that makes the most sense is 1829. When Joseph and Oliver were translating the *Book of Mormon*, it provoked them into praying about baptism. Similarly when the issue of plural wives surfaced in the translation of Jacob 2, it also provoked an inquiry. Brigham Young made this statement:

Said that while Joseph and Oliver were translating *The Book of Mormon*, they had a revelation that the order of patriarchal marriage and the sealing was right. Oliver said to Joseph, “Brother Joseph, why don't we go into the order of polygamy and practice it as the ancients did? We know it is true, then why delay?” Joseph’s reply was, “I know we know it is true and from God, but the time is not yet come.” This did not seem to suit Oliver who expressed the determination to go into the order of plural marriage anyhow, although he was ignorant of the order and the pattern and the results. Joseph said, “Oliver if you go into this thing, it is not with my faith or consent.” Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdrey took to wife Miss Annie Lyman, cousin of George A. Smith.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ D&C 113:7-8.

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., D&C 133:12-35.

¹⁵⁸ See, Jude 1:14-15.

¹⁵⁹ Moses 7:63.

¹⁶⁰ See, e.g., D&C 63:24; 101:68; 133:15.

¹⁶¹ See *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, vol. 5, entry of July 26 of 1872, a talk given in Salt Lake City 14th Ward.

Brigham Young is quoting a private conversation between Oliver and Joseph that took place 32 years earlier, which he apparently recalled off the top of his head. He was not there when the conversation occurred. He could not know what was actually said yet he retells it as if quoting the actual words spoken between Joseph and Oliver. He likewise does not tell us the source of his information. Did it come from Joseph, or Oliver, Annie Lyman, George A. Smith, or someone who heard about it from one of them? There is no attempt to authenticate the account. The story may not be altogether accurate, at least as far as quoting what was said at the time, but the fact he positively claims the revelation happened in the 1829 time frame is plausible.

The chronology of Section 132 is NOT known, other than it was put into a lost writing for the first time on July 12, 1843. Then, once written, the original was destroyed and only a copy in the handwriting of Joseph Kingsbury (who was not present when the revelation was received) survives as a copy of whatever was first revealed.¹⁶² The first portion of Section 132 was likely composed in 1829 and was inspired by the material in Jacob Chapter 2 in the *Book of Mormon*, and not the later translation of the Old Testament as LDS traditions hold.¹⁶³ There are also potentially at least five separate portions consolidated into one document.

If the chronology begins in 1829, the possibility of plural wives was “on” then (at least as far as Oliver Cowdery was concerned), but Joseph hesitated to practice it, so it was also “off” then as to him. In the 1835 D&C, polygamy was definitely “off” with this official statement of position: “Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and

¹⁶² If contemporary statements by Joseph and Hyrum can be trusted, the original revelation did not relate to present day marital relationships. In the City Council minutes of June 8 and 10, 1844 Joseph and Hyrum give an explanation of original revelation and its limitation:

“[Hyrum] referred to the revelation [he] read to the [Nauvoo Stake] High council — that it was in answer to a question concerning things which transpired in former days & had no reference to the present time — that W[illiam] Law[,] when sick[,] [confessed and] said ^he had been guilty of adultery &^ he was not fit to live or die, had sinned against his own soul...” (John S. Dinger, *Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, Signature Books (Salt Lake City: 2011) p. 241.) “[The mayor said]...They make [it] a criminality of for a man to have a wife on the earth while he has one in heaven — according to the keys of the holy priesthood, and [the mayor] read the statement of W[illiam] Law in the Expositor, where the truth of God was transformed into a lie. [He] read [the] statements of Austin Cowles — & said he had never had any private conversation with Austin Cowles on these subjects, that he preached on the stand from the bible showing the order in ancient days[,] having nothing to do with the present time...” (*Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, p. 254.) “[C]ouncillor H[yrum] Smith — spoke to show the falsehood of Austin Cowles in relation to the revelation referred to — that it referred to former days [and] not the present time as stated by Cowles. [The] Mayor said he had never preached the revelation in private as he had in public — had not taught it to the highest anointed in the Church ^in private^ which many confirmed.

“[The mayor said][,] on enquiring [of God regarding] the passage in [the Bible that in] the resurrection they neither marry &c[;] I received for [an] answer, Men in this life must be married in view of Eternity, [and that] was the [full] amount of the [content of the] revelation, otherwise [in the resurrection] they must remain as angels only in heaven, and [the mayor] spoke at considerable length in explanation of the[se] principles[.]” (*Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, pp. 255-256.) If you believe these statements, the original version of Section 132 could not read as the Joseph Kingsbury copy reads.

¹⁶³ Dating explained in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”¹⁶⁴

It was alleged to be “on” again in 1838 when Cowdery accused Joseph, but apparently that was a false alarm. The earliest authoritative suggestion that Joseph had any involvement with plural wives was in in April 1838 at the disciplinary council proceeding before the Far West High Council. The case involved seven charges against Oliver Cowdery. The council excommunicated Oliver Cowdery from the church.¹⁶⁵ The second charge against Cowdery was, “for seeking to destroying the character of President Joseph Smith jr by falsly insinuating that he was guilty of adultery &c.”¹⁶⁶ In the transcript of the hearing George W. Harris, one of the witnesses, testified Oliver Cowdery,

he seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith jr was guilty of adultery, but when the question was put, if he (Joseph) had ever acknowledged to him that he was guilty of such a thing; when he answered No.¹⁶⁷

Next another witness, David Patten, testified:

he went to Oliver Cowdery to enquire of him if a certain story was true respecting J. Smith's committing adultery with a certain girl,¹⁶⁸ when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty; he then went on and gave a history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape stating that no doubt it was true.¹⁶⁹

Thomas Marsh testified:

while in Kirtland last summer, David W. Patten asked Oliver Cowdery if he Joseph Smith jr had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ D&C 101:4 (which remained in the scriptures until 1876, when it was removed and Section 132 added).

¹⁶⁵ The entire proceeding can be found in *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, Edited by Donald Q. Cannon, Lyndon W. Cook, Deseret Book (Salt Lake City, 1983), pp. 162-171.

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*, p. 163 all quotes as in original. Joseph Smith never used the term “Celestial Marriage” to describe plural wives, but he did use the term “adultery” to describe it.

¹⁶⁷ *Id.*, p. 167, meaning that Joseph never acknowledged it was true.

¹⁶⁸ The record is footnoted by Cannon and Cook to add, “The girl referred to here is Fanny Alger, Joseph Smith’s first plural wife.” *Id.* at p. 171, footnote 18. They cite as support a letter from Oliver Cowdery to Warren Cowdery January 21, 1838 in the Huntington Library, a copy of which is on microfilm at Church Archives, and another letter from Benjamin F. Johnson to Elder George S. Gibbs in 1911. A typewritten copy of the Johnson letter is at Brigham Young University.

¹⁶⁹ *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, p. 167—meaning that the accusation against Oliver Cowdery was true, i.e. he had insinuated this about Joseph Smith and adultery.

¹⁷⁰ *Id.* meaning it was true Oliver Cowdery did convey the false idea Joseph Smith committed adultery.

Joseph Smith testified in the hearing. His testimony is only summarized and the summary was ambiguous. However it is clear from the outcome of the hearing that Joseph necessarily denied he was involved in the practice, otherwise the decision of the council makes no sense. Here is the summary of his testimony:

Joseph Smith jr testifies that Oliver Cowdrey had been his bosom friend, therefore he intrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting the girl business.¹⁷¹

The court's decision vindicated Joseph and condemned Cowdrey. One of the reasons for condemning Cowdrey was the false accusation of "adultery" against Joseph:

After some remarks by the Councillors, it was decided by the Bishop and his Council that the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd charges were sustained...¹⁷²

The second charge dealt with the false accusation against Joseph Smith that he committed adultery. The complaint that Oliver Cowdrey was falsely attributing to Joseph Smith the untrue claim he (Joseph) committed adultery justified the decision that Oliver Cowdrey "was, therefore, considered no longer a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."¹⁷³ So in 1838, plural wives was apparently "off."

Once John C. Bennett secretly taught there was such a thing as a "spiritual wife" to women in Nauvoo, something akin to plural wives was "on" again. Except it wasn't marriage, just some sort of spiritual relationship involving carnal relations. And once Joseph learned of Bennett's conduct Joseph tried to make plural wives "off" again. One of the great obstacles to getting the truth is Bennett. Because of who he was and what he did, his sexual improprieties were attributed to Joseph Smith. In the *Times and Seasons* edition for June 15, 1842, there was a little notice on the last page of the edition. The little notice said:

NOTICE.

The subscribers, Members of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, withdrew the hand of fellowship from General John C. Bennett, as a christian, he having been labored with from time to time, to persuade him to amend his conduct, apparently to no good effect.

JOSEPH SMITH
HYRUM SMITH
WM. LAW

The following members of the Quorum of Twelve concur in the above sentiments.

BRIGHAM YOUNG
HEBER C. KIMBALL
LYMAN WIGHT
WILLIAM SMITH

¹⁷¹ *Id.*, p. 168.

¹⁷² *Id.*, p. 169

¹⁷³ *Id.*, p. 169.

JOHN E. PAGE
JOHN TAYLOR
WILFORD WOODRUFF
GEORGE A. SMITH
WILLARD RICHARDS

We concur in the above sentiment.

N.K. WHITNEY
V. KNIGHT
GEORGE MILLER
Bishops of the above mentioned Church.

Nauvoo, May 11th, 1842.

That was the original notice. But John C Bennett ‘did not go quietly into that good night.’ As soon as the notice was published he went out of his way to change the account of his history to change himself into the good guy (just diddling about undercover—no pun intended—to access the naked truth about Mormonism). This in turn made Joseph Smith the lecherous leader of a libidinous theology that made a sacrament of reckless sex. He attributed to Joseph Smith and the Mormons things he had done. The July 1st edition of the *Times and Seasons* devoted almost the entire edition to debunking Bennett. The lead article begins with this statement:

It becomes my¹⁷⁴ duty to lay before for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and the public generally, some important facts relative to the conduct and character of Dr. John C. Bennett, who has lately been expelled from the aforesaid Church; that the honorable part of the community may be aware of his proceedings, and be ready to treat and regard him as he ought to be regarded, viz: as an imposter and base adulterer.

The original notice in June said nothing about adultery. Because of Bennett’s campaign they had to discuss the ugly facts. The article continues,

...a communication had been received at Nauvoo, from a person of respectable character, and residing in the vicinity where Bennett had lived. This letter cautioned us against him, setting forth that he was a very mean man, and had a wife, and two or three children in McConnelsville, Morgan county, Ohio; but knowing that it is no uncommon thing for good men to be evil spoken against, the above letter was kept quiet, but held in reserve.

Church leaders did not at first trust the information in the letter. But Bennett proved the content true by his misconduct in Nauvoo. Joseph was always willing to believe the best about people and to accept repentance at face value. The lead article explained how they dealt with him, “finally threatening him to expose him if he did not desist. This, to outward appearance, had the desired

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Smith was the editor and publisher.

effect, and the acquaintance between them was broken off.” Meaning he admitted, and apparently stopped, his sexual exploits.

Sadly, the article reports, “he only broke off his publicly wicked actions, to sink deeper into iniquity and hypocrisy.” Secretly, “he went to some of the females in the city, who knew nothing of him but as an honorable man, & began to teach them that promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, was a doctrine believed in by the Latter-Day Saints, and that there was no harm in it[.]”

The account continued, explaining, Bennett would “persuade them that [Joseph Smith] and others of the authorities of the church not only sanctioned, but practiced the same wicked acts; and when asked why I publicly preached so much against it, said that it was because of the prejudice of the public, and that it would cause trouble in my own house.”

Bennett’s explanation was a lie that lives on today. Bennett accused Joseph of hiding it because of expected criticism, and fear Emma would discover the practice. However, Joseph excommunicated Bennett, exposed numerous others, and clearly did not fear public exposure of wrongdoing. He welcomed public exposure of the sexual misdeeds in Nauvoo. The trials were public. News reporters from outside Nauvoo attended some of the proceedings and reported on their content, just as the newspaper Joseph edited and published covered the Bennett affair. Bennett clearly lied. Bennett “persuaded [his victims] that there would be no harm if they should not make it known.” He seduced these females “by his lying.” Joseph’s *Times and Seasons* article explained that, “Not being contented with having disgraced one female, he made an attempt upon others, and by the same plausible tale, overcame them also[.]”

“[I]t was a fact that Bennett had a wife and children living, and that she had left him because of his ill-treatment towards her. This letter was read to Bennett, which he did not attempt to deny; but candidly acknowledged the fact.”

Action against Bennett was delayed because “Dr. Bennett made an attempt at suicide, by taking poison.” This was wrongly interpreted to be a sign of remorse and shame, and gave some hope he would reform. However, “without any government over his passions, he was soon busily engaged in the same wicked career, and continued until a knowledge of the same reached my ears.” In response to this news, Joseph Smith “publicly proclaimed against it, and had those females notified to appear before the proper officers that the whole subject might be investigated and thoroughly exposed.”

This edition of the *Times and Seasons* also reprinted an affidavit signed by John Bennett. It says:

John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith: that he never was taught anything in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel, or of virtue, or of the laws of God, or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith; and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct

whatever, even in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illegal and illicit intercourse with females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others.

JOHN C. BENNETT.

Next the Aldermen and members of the City Council, in this same edition of the *Times and Seasons* also signed an affidavit recounting Dr. Bennett's testimony before them:

I publicly avow that anyone who has said that I have stated that General Joseph Smith has given me authority to hold illicit intercourse with women is a liar in the face of God, those who have said it are damn liars; they are infernal liars. He never, either in public or private, gave me any such authority or license, and any person who says it is a scoundrel and a liar.

Joseph asked Bennett in front of the Council, "Will you please state definitely whether you know anything against my character, either in public or in private?" General Bennett answered, "I do not. In all my intercourse with Gen. Smith, in private and in public, he has been strictly virtuous." The edition then reprints affidavits signed by George Miller, one of which mentions Bennett "was an expelled Mason."

The subject gets taken up again in the August 1st edition of the *Times and Seasons*. Yet more affidavits, more public statements, and more acknowledgments are given. This time William Law provided an affidavit defending the character of Joseph and condemning what John Bennett attributed to him. Law's affidavit recounts,

I told him we could not bear with his conduct any longer—that there were many witnesses against him, and that they stated that he gave Joseph Smith as authority for his illicit intercourse with females. J.C. Bennett declared to me before God that Joseph Smith never taught him such doctrines, and that he never told any one that he (Joseph Smith) had taught any such things, and that any one who said so told base lies[.]

...

These statements he made to me of his own free will, in a private conversation which we had on the subject; there was no compulsion or threats used on my part[.]

...

On one occasion I heard him state before the city Council that Joseph Smith had never taught him any unrighteous principles, of any kind, and that if any one says that he ever said that Joseph taught such things they are base liars, or words to that effect.

In the Nauvoo City and High Council minutes there followed a number of trials as Joseph sought out the participants to expose their sexual misconduct and bring it to an end. He did not tolerate it, and did not hide it when he learned of it.

On May 11, 1842 Bennett resigned his mayoral post because he had been accused of “adultery, fornication, buggery and miscegenation.”¹⁷⁵ Buggery is the euphemism used in that time period for homosexual relations. Miscegenation was the legal offense of a white person having intercourse with a black person, because that was improper mixing of the races. He was apparently indiscriminate about sex.

The minutes of the Nauvoo City Council for July 20, 1842, report the earlier testimony of Mayor John C. Bennett when he resigned office:

John C. Bennett was not under duress at the time he testified before the city council, May 19, 1842, concerning Joseph Smith’s innocence and virtue and pure teaching. ...there was no excitement at the time, nor was he in anywise threatened, menaced or intimidated. His appearance at the city council was voluntary; ...Joseph Smith asked him if he knew anything bad concerning his public or private character. He then delivered those statements contained in the testimony voluntarily, and on his own free will, and went of his own accord, as free as any member of the Council.

WILSON LAW, GEO A. SMITH, JOHN TAYLOR, GEO W. HARRIS, WILFORD WOODRUFF, NEWEL K. WHITNEY, VINSON KNIGHT, BRIGHAM YOUNG, HEBER C. KIMBALL, CHARLES C. RICH, JOHN P. GREEN, ORSON SPENCER, WILLIAM MARKS.

Joseph Smith’s 1838 history was originally written to admit:

“I was left to all kinds of temptations, and mingling (with) all kinds of society I frequently (fell) into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and the corruption of human nature which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God.” (*JS Papers, Histories Vol. 1: 1832-1844*, p. 220.)

The history of Joseph Smith was first published in the *Times and Seasons*. This part of his history was printed in an installment on April 1, 1842. (*Times and Seasons, Vol 3*, p. 749.) The explanation that Joseph was not guilty of “any great or malignant sins” had not yet been added in April 1842. The month after the publication of this installment of Joseph’s history, on May 11, 1842, John C. Bennett was excommunicated from the church for adultery. Bennett did not go quietly, and therefore public notice of his excommunication was announced in print on June 15, 1842. Bennett got louder and more accusatory and on July 1, 1842 a full account of John C. Bennett’s misconduct was explained in the *Times and Seasons*.

Because Bennett began his public accusations against Joseph Smith in 1842, on December 2, 1842 a note was added to Joseph’s history. The LDS Historian’s Office explains the note clarified

¹⁷⁵ *The Wasp*, July 27, 1842—a newspaper printed in Nauvoo but not an official church publication.

his sins “were of a minor nature.” (See, *JS Papers, History, Vol. 1*, p. 221, footnote 55.) The changed language is now what we read in the *Pearl of Great Price*.¹⁷⁶

“In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been.” (JS-H 1:28.)

The addition of this clarification was in direct response to John C. Bennett’s adultery, the discovery by Joseph Smith of a “spiritual wife” system being practiced in Nauvoo, and the accusation that he was aware of, believed in, and practiced adulterous relationships. As Joseph Smith stated publicly months later in a meeting in Nauvoo:

“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.”¹⁷⁷

When the context is considered, the timing of the edit change to Joseph’s History denying he committed “any great or malignant sins,” is in response to scandal brought to Joseph’s attention through the John C. Bennett affair. Joseph was denying he was involved in the “spiritual wife” system of adulterous relationships practiced in Nauvoo that was being attributed to him.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ The addition/substitution is in Willard Richards’ handwriting, and reads as follows:

“In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins: a disposition to commit such was never in my nature; but I was guilty of Levity, & sometimes associated with jovial company &c, not Consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been; but this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth & is acquainted with my native cheerly Temperament.” (*Manuscript History*, Note added December 2, 1842.)

¹⁷⁷ DHC 6:411, May 26, 1844.

¹⁷⁸ This subject requires conspiracy and lies. There is a choice between Joseph Smith being a liar, engaged with others in a Nauvoo conspiracy to hide abominable relationships, on the one hand; or Joseph being truthful and therefore, upon his death others engaged in a conspiracy to attribute their adulterous and abominable relationships to him and concocted revisionist accounts to justify themselves. Either theory makes early Mormons liars and conspirators. The question turns on whether you think Joseph was truthful. Until persuaded beyond reasonable doubt, I hesitate to call Joseph a liar and deceiver, although the majority of Mormons, including the LDS Church, regard him so. I know what is required to have God answer. The “key” to be able to ask and have God answer (which is what the “keys of the kingdom” means—see D&C 124:95; compare D&C 42:68-69, 84:19, 90:1-4, 115:18-19, 128:14, because without revelation to obtain God’s answer, Mormonism is just as adrift in uncertainty as apostate Christianity. They are like Laman and Lemuel, who could not understand a revelation given their father. In response to Nephi’s inquiry as to why they did not ask God, they responded: “the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.” 1 Ne. 15:9. It takes revelation to understand revelation.). That “key” is to sacrifice your life by obedience to God. Live humbly and meekly before God, obeying every word that proceeds from Him. This despite the rage of false religionists who will always condemn the things of God by pretending they, without revelation, can know what God meant, intended or is doing. They are pretenders, without authority. They fight against God. A

To the extent Joseph exposed his thoughts about sex, they were dominated by sexual purity and self-control.¹⁷⁹ His public and private statements point to a man who prized chastity, fidelity and condemned promiscuity. His letters are consistent with his public statements. In an address to those present for a high council trial before the Nauvoo High Council on November 25, 1843, Joseph Smith declared:

[G]ave an address tending to do away with every evil, and exhorting them to practice virtue and holiness before the Lord; told them that the Church had not received any permission from me to commit fornication, adultery, or any corrupt action; but my every word and action has been to the contrary. If a man commit adultery, he cannot receive the celestial kingdom of God. Even if he is saved in any kingdom, it cannot be the celestial kingdom.¹⁸⁰

In the minutes of the High Council for November 21, 1843 it was Joseph Smith who brought the charges. He accused Elder Harrison Sagars of two offenses:

1st. For trying to seduce a young girl, living in his house[,] by the name of Phebe Madison. 2nd. For using my name in a blasphemous manner, by saying that I tolerated such things in which he is guilty of lying &c &c. Joseph Smith.¹⁸¹

Joseph responded to the claim he authorized seduction of females by accusing those making the claim of “blasphemy.” At the trial he denounced he ever gave permission for fornication, adultery or any corrupt action. A false accusation against a prophet, when there is insufficient proof to remove all doubt of the accusation, is a grave offense. It offends the injured party, but also the one who sent Him as His messenger.

Beginning in 1842, plural wivory was definitely “off.” Except on July 12, 1843, according to William Clayton, Joseph dictated a revelation that made it somewhat “on” again. We do not have the original of that document. We have a copy in the handwriting of Joseph Kingsbury. We also have Emma Smith’s testimony that Joseph didn’t participate in plural marriages. So it was “off” then. Then in 1852 it was “on” again and, like Bennett, it was all Joseph’s idea. At that point, the journals were altered, affidavits were ginned-up, and sermons were delivered asserting it was all Joseph’s idea.

man who has the “keys” must sacrifice all to know God. Joseph held the keys, and that compels me to assume Joseph’s innocence until there is something far more compelling than the present record to stand as proof to the contrary.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph’s August 18, 1842 letter to the parents of Sarah Ann Whitney has been represented as a love letter to her, instead of to her parents. He was in hiding, Emma Smith had encouraged him to change hiding places to avoid capture by Missouri hunters who wanted to capture and return him to Missouri. Emma also warned Joseph she was being followed. Joseph’s letter telling the Whitneys they ought to “find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safty” directly related to Emma’s warning about Missouri spies following her.

¹⁸⁰ *DHC* 6:81.

¹⁸¹ *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, John S. Dinger, editor, Signature Books, (Salt Lake City, 2011), pp. 479-480.

We are forced to choose between circumstantial proof, often from witnesses telling their tale decades after the events, compounded by the conjecture of the witness or the audience who heard the witness, to support the proposition that Joseph Smith was a vile hypocrite. Or, alternatively, we can take him at his word and accept what he said about himself, and believe and trust he did not advocate or practice sexual sin.

In the aftermath of John Bennett's misconduct, Joseph tracked down what happened in Nauvoo. On May 21, 1842, the high council met and "[A] charge [was] [preferred] against Chauncey L. Higbee by George Miller for unchaste and un-virtuous conduct with the widow [Sarah] Miller, and others."¹⁸² In the trial, "Three witness[es] testified that he had seduced [several women] and at different times [had] been guilty of unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with them and taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and also taught that Joseph Smith authorised him to practice these things &c"¹⁸³

On May 25, the charge was preferred "against Ms. Catherine Warren by George Miller for unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with John C. Bennett and others. The defendant confessed to the charge and gave the names of several other [men] who had been guilty having unlawful intercourse with her[,] stating they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practiced it[,] ...learning that the heads of the church did not believe of [the] practice [of] such things[,] she was willing to confess her sins and did repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her."¹⁸⁴ She furnished the identities of the several men involved, resulting in yet more church court proceedings to stop the spread of Bennett's mischief.

On September 3, 1842, "[A] charge was preferred against Gustavius Hills by Elisha Everett[,] one of the teachers of the Church[,] for illicit intercourse with a certain woman by the name of Mary Clift by which she was with child[,] and for teaching the said Mary Clift ~~that~~ that the heads of the Church practiced such conduct & that time would come when men would have more wives than one &c"¹⁸⁵

The next day, September 4, 1842, "Esther Smith gave evidence that [the] defendant¹⁸⁶ told her that it was lawful for people to have illicit intercourse if they only held their peac[e] & that ~~the time would~~ it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the Church."¹⁸⁷

More court proceedings were held in an effort to round up those who were involved in this practice. John Bennett, in response to the treatment given him by the church, set out to tell another story where he was a hero and Joseph was the villain. He wrote, lectured and campaigned against Mormonism, first to salvage his reputation, but ultimately as his profession.

¹⁸² *Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, p. 414, all as in original.

¹⁸³ *Id.*, pp. 414-415, as in original.

¹⁸⁴ *Id.*, p. 417, as in original.

¹⁸⁵ *Id.*, p. 424, as in original.

¹⁸⁶ Gustavius Hills.

¹⁸⁷ *Id.*, p. 425, as in original.

Joseph left a record of public and private actions taken in opposing the plural wife system. These included: “I preached in the grove and pronounced a curse upon all adulterers and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons and those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs.”¹⁸⁸ Then there is the obviously altered Joseph Smith journal for Thursday 5th October 1843, which confirms there was an effort to alter documents to conform to later events and practices:

(ORIGINAL) Evening at home and walked up and down the street with my scribe. Gave inst[r]uction to try those who were preaching teaching or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives. on this Law. Joseph forbids it. and the practice ther[e]of— No man shall have but one wife.

(REVISED) Evening at home and walked up and down the street with my scribe. Gave inst[r]uction to try those who were preaching teaching or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives. on this law for according to the law i hold the keys of this power in the last days, for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom the power? and the keys are conferred - and I have continually said Joseph forbids it. and the practice ther[e]of No man shall have but one wife at a time unless the Lord directs otherwise

So it was “off” on October 5, 1843 until someone revised the content at a later date. Once revised at a later date it was “on” again, and perhaps retroactively “on” since the original alterations were not possible to detect until the *Joseph Smith Papers* project made the original available for public view.¹⁸⁹

There was a published denunciation of polygamy in February 1844 in the newspaper Joseph edited:

As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan. This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.¹⁹⁰

The Relief Society later put out a more detailed document titled *A Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo* that offered an even stronger denial of plural marriage. It was penned by W. W. Phelps at the request of Joseph Smith. The document was presented to a general meeting of the church at which Joseph presided in March 1844, only three months before he was killed:

¹⁸⁸ *WJS*, p. 114, citing *Manuscript History* and *Book of the Law of the Lord*—Joseph Smith (Sermon at the Grove; Apr 10, 1842)

¹⁸⁹<http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-draft-1-march-31-december-1843&p=144#/paperSummary/history-draft-1-march-31-december-1843&p=143>

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Smith & Hyrum Smith, *Times and Seasons* Vol. 5 (February 1, 1844).

A vast assembly of Saints met at the Temple of the Lord at nine o'clock a. m., by a special appointment of President Joseph Smith, for the purpose of advancing the progress of the Temple, &c. The Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, was present; also of the Twelve Apostles Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and George A. Smith; also the temple committee and about eight thousand Saints....[later in the meeting] an article was also read by W. W. Phelps, entitled, *A Voice of innocence from Nauvoo*, and all the assembly said 'Amen' twice.¹⁹¹

Here is the content of that document:

Virtue Will Triumph.

At four overflowing meetings of the Ladies of Nauvoo, members of the Female Relief Society, (each meeting being composed of different members that all might have the opportunity of expressing their feelings) held at Gen. Smith's large assembly room on Saturdays the 9th and 16th of March 1844. The following preamble and resolutions were read and unanimously adopted at each meeting.

THE VOICE OF INNOCENCE FROM NAUVOO

The corruption of wickedness which manifested itself in such horrible deformity on the trial of O. F. Bostwick last week for slandering President Hyrum Smith and the widows of the city of Nauvoo, has awakened all the kindly feelings of female benevolence, compassion and pity, for the softer sex to spread forth the mantle of charity to shield the characters of the virtuous mothers, wives, and daughters of Nauvoo from the blasting breath and poisonous touch of debauchers, vagabonds and [?]akers, who have jammed themselves into our city to offer strange fire at the shrine of infamy, disgrace, and degradation: as they and their kindred spirits have done in all the great cities throughout the world, corrupting their ways on the earth, and bringing women, poor defenceless women, in wretchedness and ruin.

As such ignoble blood now begins to stain the peacable habitants of the saints, and taint the free air of the only city in the world that pretends to work righteousness in union, as the sine qua non, for happiness, joy, and salvation: and as such ungodly wretches, burning or smarting with the sting of their own shame, have doubtless, transported with them, some of the miserable dupes of their licentiousness, for the purpose of defiling the fame of this godly city: mildewing the honesty of our mothers, blasting the chastity of widows and wives, and corrupting the virtue of our unsuspecting daughters, it becomes us, in defence of our rights, for the glory of our fathers, for the honor of our mothers, for the happiness of our husbands, and for the welfare of our dear children, to rebuke such an outrage on the chastity of society: to thwart such a death blow at the hallowed marriage covenant: and to ward off such poisoned daggers from the hearts of our innocent daughters, for the honor of Nauvoo: and write with indellible ink upon every such villain: virtue perditorus!

¹⁹¹ DHC 6:236, p 241.

Beware of the wretch! and, so put in every virtuous woman's hand a rod, to scourge such tormentors of domestic felicity, with vengeance through the world: curse the man that preys upon female virtue! curse the man that slanders a woman! Let the righteous indignation of insulted innocence and virtue, spurn him from society: Let the dignity of the mothers of Israel kick the blood thirsty pimp from the pale of social communion. Let the widows and wives who tread in the footsteps of their queenly mother Eve, drive such fag ends of creation, as was Cain, to the land of Nod, and let the timid daughters of Nauvoo dread such CANKER WORMS more than the pestillence that walketh in darkness, and shun them as the serpent on the land and the shark in the sea. My God! My God! is there not female virtue and valor enough in this city to let such men die of the rot: - that the sexton may carry their putrid bodies beyond the limits of the city for food, for vultures, eagles and wolves. Refuse them female courtesies; deny them the pleasure of family correspondence and family intercourse; curse the woman that speaks to such rotten flesh, if she knows who they are; curse the man that will harbor them; and curse the lawyer that will stoop from the dignity of his profession to plead for them; The apologizer is as mean as the murderer!

Female virtue is a pearl of great price, and should glitter in the abodes of men, as in the mansions of bliss, for the glory and honor of him, whose image she bears and whose help meet she is, and every attempt of man to seduce that virtue, is, next to murder, a robbery that cannot be restored.

If woman swerves from the rules of righteousness 'Ruin ensues, reproach and shame; And one false step bedims her fame; In vain the loss she may deplore, In vain renew her life before' With tears she must in anguish be 'Till God says, 'set that captive free'

Many of the distinguished females of Nauvoo, have waded to their present habitations through persecution, sorrow, and death, robbed and insulted and bereaved of husbands and children by the combined powers, of priests, and spiritual wickedness in high places, but none of these piercing calamities of man touch the heart of woman with such severe poignancy, as the envenomed slander of O.F. Bostwick, that he could take a half bushel of meal, obtain his vile purpose, and get what accommodation he wanted with almost any woman in the city.

Wo to the wretch that can thus follow the blood stained mobbers of Missouri, in their hellish career, and deal his slander about the streets of Nauvoo, as he may imagine with impunity. Wo to the man or lawyer that filthifies himself by advocating such rotten hearted raven's rights, or recommends him to any but the sympathies of Satan.

Has any man a mother in this city? honor says clear such rubbish from her door. Has any many a wife? benevolence whispers, trap such beasts of the field that they may not worry the flock, nor kill the lambs. Has any man a widowed mother? humanity seems to caution him - thy mother is in danger, protect her, from the stench of such carrion. Has any man, daughters? the voice of reason compels him to exclaim: There is a wolf in the path, beware! Has any man, sisters? the blood of his kindred says, evil be to him that evil thinks: and let the whole virtuous female population of the city, with one voice, declare that the seducer of female chastity, the slanderer of female character, or the defamer of the character of the heads of the church, or the canker worms of our husband's peace: the prostitute, their pimps, whether in the character

of elite, lawyer, doctor, or cicisbeo, shall have no place in our houses, in our affections, or in our society.

Wherefore,

Resolved unanimous, That Joseph Smith, the Mayor of the city, be tendered our thanks for the able and manly manner in which he defended injured innocence in the late trial of O.F. Bostwick for slandering President Hyrum Smith, and almost all the women of the city.

Resolved unanimously, That we view with unequaled disapprobation and scorn the conduct of any man or woman, whether in word or deed, that reflects dishonor upon the poor persecuted mothers, widows, wives and daughters of the Saints of Nauvoo; they have borne aspersions, slander and hardships enough; forbearance has ceased to be a virtue and retaliation, like the dagger or the bowl, ought to close the lips of such cowardly assassins.

Resolved unanimously, That while we render credence to the doctrines of Paul, that neither the man is without the woman; neither is the woman without the man in the Lord, yet we raise our voices and hands against John C. Bennett's "spiritual wife system," as a grand scheme of profligates to seduce women; and they that harp upon it, wish to make it popular for the convenience of their own cupidity; wherefore, while the marriage bed, undefiled is honorable, let polygamy, bigamy, fornication, adultery, and prostitution, be frowned out of the hearts of honest men to drop into the gulf of fallen nature, 'where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched! and let all the saints say, Amen!

EMMA SMITH, Prest.

H. M. Ells, Sec. pro tem

And so in March 1844 plural wives were definitely "off" and decidedly so. None of the Relief Society women in Nauvoo were available any longer.

A month before he was killed Joseph reiterated his opposition to plural wives, equating multiple wives to adultery:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.¹⁹²

So it was decidedly "off" in the months leading up to his death.

Although Joseph was accused of attempting to seduce Sarah Pratt, Joseph's son interviewed her and published the interview in the RLDS newspaper. Her answer was published after her death in the *Saints Herald*, a newspaper printed by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Below is the account they published:

Did he ever at such time, or in any other time or place, make improper overtures to you or to proposals of an improper nature? Begging your pardon for the apparent indelicacy of this question. To this Mrs. Pratt replied quietly but firmly,

¹⁹² Joseph Smith *DHC* 6:411, May 26, 1844.

“No. Joseph, your father, never said an improper word to me in his life. He knew better.”

Sister Pratt, it has been frequently told that he behaved improperly in your presence, and I have been told that I dare not come to you and ask you about your relations with him, for fear you would tell me things which would be unwelcome to me. “You needn’t have no such fear,” she repeated, “your father was never guilty of an action or proposal with improper nature in my house, toward me, or in my presence, at any time or place. There is no truth in the reports that have been circulated about him in this regard. He was always the Christian gentleman and a noble man.”¹⁹³

This adds to the interpretive problem caused by John Bennett. Since he admits he lied to get the confidence of the Mormons, did he also lie when he told the story of Joseph attempting to seduce Sarah Pratt? Likewise, because Bennett’s account was first confirmed by Sarah Pratt, (after she was disaffected), does that repair Bennett’s account? And for Sarah, did she tell the truth to Joseph Smith III? Did she tell the truth when she later said Bennett was telling the truth about Joseph attempting to seduce her to be one of his spiritual wives? Are these witnesses credible and believable? There are many histories that accept the fact that while Orson Pratt was on a mission to England Joseph Smith approached his wife to be his plural wife. Are they right?

During Joseph’s lifetime plural wives was never openly advocated, taught or practiced. If we can trust the copy of Section 132 in the handwriting of Kingsbury as authentic, there are difficulties in harmonizing the document with Joseph’s public and private statements from 1842 to 1844. The record is inconclusive, despite the dogmatism of our historians.

SUCCESSORS (or not):

Joseph Smith completed his work (he thought) in 1834 when he organized a complementary presidency in Zion. The president was David Whitmer, with counselors William W. Phelps and John Whitmer.¹⁹⁴ Four days following a council electing the new presidency Joseph spoke at another meeting confirming, “if he should now be taken away that he had accomplished the great work which the Lord had laid before him[.]”¹⁹⁵

He wrote in his journal the following year (1835) that the church’s permanent foundation was assured because of the Missouri president, who would take over if he were taken.¹⁹⁶ Unfortunately, in 1838 the successor Whitmer resigned as president in Zion, joined the dissenters and contributed to the agitation that resulted in the Mormon War that began that year. He later

¹⁹³ *Saints’ Herald*, January 15, 1935, 80.

¹⁹⁴ *JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4: April 1834-September 1835*, p. 90: a transcript of the meeting of “a general Council of High Priests” on July 3, 1834: “It was agreed that David Whitmer should be first President and to be assisted by William W. Phelps and John Whitmer.”

¹⁹⁵ See *Id.*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁶ “I had established this church on a permanent foundation when I went to the Missouri and indeed I did so, for if I had been taken away it would have been enough[.]” (*JS Papers, Journals Vol. 1: 1832-1839*, p. 97.)

organized his own competing church, and when 82 years old published *An Address to All Believers in Christ* retelling the events of 50 years earlier as he recalled them.

Presumably an active dissenter who had not participating in the church for 6 years was disqualified as Joseph's successor upon Joseph's death in 1844.

Another successor was appointed in 1841. Hyrum Smith was given the same status as Joseph by revelation.¹⁹⁷ Although Hyrum was faithful, he died moments before Joseph and left the "successor" unidentified. This was all the more unfortunate because Joseph alone had the power to appoint a successor.¹⁹⁸

Unfortunate for Mormonism, Brigham Young substituted another answer in a post-martyrdom knee-slapping moment of necessity (which is always the 'mother of invention').¹⁹⁹ But that is another story I have addressed elsewhere.²⁰⁰

INCLUSIVE, NOT EXCLUSIVE:

If there was an original Mormonism, it had an inclusiveness to it that welcomed all truth. Diverse, even opposing views held in good faith, were welcome—even expected.²⁰¹ The original would have welcomed Paul Toscano and Boyd Packer (and it is doubtful Packer would have authority to forcibly exclude Toscano).²⁰² The original would have welcomed the insights of both Kate Kelly and Dallin Oaks, and allowed their opposing views to be resolved by persuasion and long suffering. The original would have allowed D. Michael Quinn to have continued, unfettered access to the Historical Department archives to mine and publish the sins and excesses of the past. Confessing sins is good for the individual,²⁰³ but it is even better for an institution. An original

¹⁹⁷ Hyrum was to "take upon him the office of Priesthood and Patriarch ... whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph[.]" (D&C 124:91-94.)

¹⁹⁸ "And this ye shall know assuredly—that there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me. But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for if it be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead." (D&C 43:3-4.)

¹⁹⁹ "The first thing I thought of Brigham said in his journal, 'was whether Joseph had taken the keys of the kingdom with him from the earth; brother Orson Pratt sat on my left; we were both leaning back on our chairs. Bringing my hand down on my knee, I said the keys of the kingdom are right here with the Church.'" (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Edited by Richard Van Wagoner, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2009), Vol. 1, p. 38, entry of July 16, 1844.)

²⁰⁰ See *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, pp. 69-95.

²⁰¹ One of the gifts of the Spirit is the "diversity of operations" which belongs to the family of believers. See D&C 46:16. The word "diversity" appears only four times in scripture: as varying "gifts" (1 Cor. 12:4), varying "operations" (1 Cor. 12:6 and D&C 46:16) and diverse "tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). All these references imply the body of Christ (Church) will be dissimilar—perhaps even spectacular differences among the members. How tragic uniformity has made Mormonism! Being "one" is something "of the heart" and not of the countenance, vocabulary, viewpoint or thought. It means only that we should love one another.

²⁰² See D&C 121:37, 41-42.

²⁰³ Proverbs 28:3; D&C 58:43.

would not have leaders seeking to hide their sins or gratify their pride, or whose vain ambitions attempt through control, dominion and compulsion²⁰⁴ to reign with intimidation over a flock that is only kept from the truth because they are not allowed to find it.²⁰⁵

In the original, Mormonism's general conferences would look a lot more like a Sunstone Symposium than the uniform and predictable events each April and October. General Conference now serves to remind us of how greatly we are separated from God's authentic voice once echoing in Mormon meetings when Joseph spoke.

RECOVERING THE BIG RELIGION:

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

If James 1:5 were true for Joseph Smith, it should be true for us. We can ask God with real intent, and obtain a like measure of wisdom from on high. Mormonism may have been a briefly lit candle whose flame expired on June 27, 1844. But it left behind a smoldering spark that only needs another generation to breathe enough of the breath of life to reignite the flame. The breath of the spirit gave life to man originally.²⁰⁶ It can still restore life.

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

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

Joseph died with a clear conscience.²⁰⁷ Too few Mormons since him have done likewise. A clear conscience requires us to live by God's voice, not man's. To have a clear conscience requires us to know we are doing God's will.²⁰⁸

Somehow LDS Mormonism has tolerated marital misconduct, adultery, concealing criminal misconduct by "lying for the Lord" to evade Federal investigations, aggregating wealth while neglecting the poor, exercising control to abrogate follower's consciences under the false claim it is the right of church leaders to do so. It has abandoned priestly adoptions,

²⁰⁴ D&C 121:37.

²⁰⁵ D&C 123:12.

²⁰⁶ Gen. 2:7.

²⁰⁷ See D&C 135:4.

²⁰⁸ *Lecture Third*, ¶5 explains faith is based on "an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing, is according to [God's] will."

denounced eternal progression, de-canonized *Lectures on Faith* (without a vote of the members), and hidden in shame their use of church finances. It recently has stretched LDS “sustaining” into an oath-like obligation binding on LDS members to further subjugate them to the hierarchy.²⁰⁹ LDS Mormonism has determined truth can be sometimes “unhelpful” to it. These deviations have happened as modern LDS Mormonism yet claims Joseph as its founder. Modern Mormonism isn’t—in any of the present forms. It has become something far deviant from the original, and as this Sunstone Conference shows, its deviations are metastasizing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While he was thus engaged, pouring out his bitter words upon me, a rabble rushed in and nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel among themselves for the premises, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud.

While I was a little distance from the barn, I heard them screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as it appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the vision ended.²¹⁰

We now can see the fulfillment of Joseph’s final vision about his “farm.” The original is now the property of angry men, and those who believe as Joseph are no longer welcome. The original can only be recovered in the same way it began: By God’s direct

²⁰⁹ Russell Nelson, *Sustaining the Prophets*, October 2014 General Conference. The approach advocated by Nelson enforces authoritarian Mormonism contrary to D&C 121:34-38.

²¹⁰ *TPJS*, pp. 393-394, edited to remove insertions about the church that do not belong in the account.

involvement. If an “original” returns, it will add elements that recover, finish, and fulfill—not just add upon, but greatly expand, and yet remain entirely consistent with, the original.

In the current environment of “Many Mormonisms,” the original will likely be unnoticed, or dismissed as merely another schismatic breakaway from the party of angry men now occupying “Joseph’s farm.” But if the original of Mormonism was founded on God’s voice,²¹¹ then God’s voice is abundant enough to recreate what is yet to be fully created.²¹² That is, of course, assuming there is ever again someone foolish enough to hear and heed His voice.²¹³

This paper is only a survey of the many ways in which Mormonism was in a constant state of development while Joseph lived. Other topics could be added and would show the same evidence of transition. Likewise a great deal more could be said about the prophesied destiny for the restoration. A “dispensation of fullness of times” will not reach a conclusion without the full return back to the original religion of Adam and the patriarchs.

²¹¹ God’s work in the restoration followed (and will yet follow) the pattern from “the beginning” when “God created the heaven and the earth.” He spoke: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” (Gen. 1:1, 3.) All His great works involve Him speaking and thereby causing/creating: “My works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease.” (Moses 1:4.)

²¹² Borrowing from The Doobie Brothers, *What a Fool Believes*: “Trying hard to recreate what had yet to be created once in her life.”

²¹³ As the Apostle Paul put it: “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more[.]” (2 Cor. 11:23.) “We are fools for Christ’s sake.” (I Cor. 4:10.) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called[.]” (I Cor. 1:26.)