

The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope¹

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Presented at the Sunstone Symposium

This year's Symposium addresses the theme: "*Threads in the Mormon Tapestry.*" In June, I participated in a conference at Boise, Idaho that invited various religious groups claiming Joseph Smith as their founder to meet and share ideas. That conference was the first Joseph Smith Restoration Conference, which is hoped to become an annual event. The theme of that conference was, "*What Unites Us is Greater Than What Divides Us.*"

Both last month's Boise conference and this month's Symposium, reflect an undisputable fact about the restoration through Joseph Smith: It is fractured into over an hundred parts. All claiming Joseph Smith as their founder, these factions disagree with one another so strongly they refuse to fellowship with one another. Last month's Boise conference was an attempt to replace division with dialogue. The two largest bodies refused to accept an invitation to send representatives to speak at the conference, but several others were represented. Perhaps the history of the two largest bodies accounts for their reluctance to participate.

The largest Mormon group is the one headquartered in Salt Lake City and controlled by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But there is only one person who actually belongs to that corporation sole. Yet he claims to lead some 16 million followers at present, of which about 4 million are nominally active enough to self-identify as Latter-day Saints. I refer to this group of Mormons as "Latter-day Saints" in keeping with the directive from one of their presidents, Gordon B. Hinckley, who pronounced that members of that group cease to refer to themselves as "Mormons."²

The Salt Lake City-based church has been the most fecund restorationist mother. Following her abandonment of plural wives, she gave birth to numerous fundamentalist organizations. Her progeny include:

¹ All citations and quotes from scripture in this paper are taken from the newly published Old Covenants (containing the Old Testament), New Covenants (containing the New Testament and Book of Mormon), and Teachings and Commandments (containing various revelations, documents and letters from the time of Joseph Smith to today). They are referred to in this paper by identifying "OC", "NC" and "T&C" followed by the location within the respective text. The OC and NC are the most complete version of the JST Bible ever published. The T&C uses the original revelation texts with such limited changes and corrections as Joseph Smith personally added.

² First Presidency Letter, February 23, 2001. See also Boyd K. Packer's General Conference talk, *Guided by the Holy Spirit*, April 2011. That change in nomenclature seems particularly appropriate since so many of the doctrines, principles and teachings of the Joseph Smith era have been abandoned by that group. Most of the Latter-day Saints now seem unaware of much of what Joseph taught.

The Council of Friends: an early polygamist group founded by Lorin C. Wooley in 1920. It in turn gave birth to numerous other polygamist offspring.

The Apostolic United Brethren, splintered from the Council of Friends, but like them, claims it's founding reckons from 1886 with authority given by John Taylor. It has an estimated 9,000 members.

The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, founded by Leroy S. Johnson in 1954 also claims its authority came from the 1886 John Taylor incident.³ It is progeny from the Council of Friends. It has an estimated 6,000 members.

The Latter-day Church of Christ (Kingston Clan) incorporated as a church in 1978 by Ortell Kingston, and has roots that go back to 1926 with Charles Kingston. It has an estimated 1,200 members.

The Church of Jesus Christ (Original Doctrine), Inc., is a daughter of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and great-grand daughter of Brigham Young's Salt Lake organization. It split from its mother because Bishop Winston thought Warren Jeffs was too dictatorial, and led 700 people away from that group. This organization has about 1,000 members today and is also referred to as the Blackmore Group.

There is no accurate count of all the daughters, grand daughters and great-grand daughters that have come from splits from the Salt Lake City mother-church. The overwhelming cause of these departures has been the abandonment of plural wives. When the corporation sole chose property over principle, some believed the principle more important than fidelity to their mother. The daughters want both principle and property, but as Warren Jeffs' Fundamentalist Church has learned by sad experience, Federal Courts can still appoint receivers over sexually deviant religious cults that trade women like possessions.

The second largest church is headquartered in Independence, Missouri and is now called the Community of Christ. It claims to have 250,000 members. There was a time when the landscape of the restoration had the Brighamites in Utah and Josephites in Missouri,⁴ both claiming they were the authorized successor to Joseph Smith. Brighamites - because Brigham Young eventually claimed the right to succeed Joseph as leader. Josephites - because Joseph Smith III was the direct lineal descendant of the slain founder.

³ In 1886 John Taylor received a revelation that "celestial marriage" would never end. The text was not discovered until after his death. Because he purportedly foresaw its future abandonment by the LDS church, in September 1886 it is claimed that he gave authority to five men to continue the practice. I addressed these claims in my website posts (www.denversnuffer.com) on July 23 through 27, 2012 in a five-part explanation titled "*Sorting Things Out*" parts 1-5.

⁴ There were also saints in Texas led by Lyman Wight and in Wisconsin led by James Strang. But these were not as large when their leaders were living. Wight's movement died out after his demise. Strangites still survive, although their numbers today are very small. The "Cutlerites" were led by Alpheus Cutler. Cutler was an inner-circle follower of Joseph Smith, a high priest, endowed in Nauvoo and a member of the Council of Fifty. He initially remained with Brigham Young's group but broke from them in 1853.

Like its larger sister, the Community of Christ also has produced unwanted daughters. One new daughter from the Community of Christ is The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It is also headquartered in Independence, and split from the Community of Christ in 1991. They were disaffected by the decision to ordain women and adopt other innovations. Those who have departed the Community of Christ for the Restoration Church have other reasons for their changed alliance. During the Boise Conference, a Restoration Church leader lamented the Community of Christ's change in attitude toward the Book of Mormon as one of his main reasons for changing his membership to the Restoration Church.

In 2001, a year following the name change from RLDS to Community of Christ, church president W. Grant McMurray admitted doubts about the Book of Mormon, declaring: "The proper use of the Book of Mormon as sacred scripture has been under wide discussion in the 1970s and beyond, in part because of long-standing questions about its historicity and in part because of perceived theological inadequacies, including matters of race and ethnicity."⁵ Then during the 2007 Community of Christ World Conference, church president Stephen M. Veazey ruled it out of order to consider a resolution to "reaffirm the Book of Mormon as a divinely inspired record." In so doing he stated "while the Church affirms the Book of Mormon as scripture, and makes it available for study and use in various languages, we do not attempt to mandate the degree of belief or use. This position is in keeping with our longstanding tradition that belief in the Book of Mormon is not to be used as a test of fellowship or membership in the church."⁶

Both of the largest two Mormon divisions have experienced significant splintering. They may have good reason to fear dialogue between these divisions. As part of encouraging dialogue, this paper deals with two issues. Both have been used to attack and criticize Joseph Smith. If you are conversant with historical or theological Mormon material you may have seen or heard of these subjects, but some of the branches of Mormonism may not have provided any information related to these subjects. The first, and more important topic is Joseph's ascent theology, encouraging man to seek reunion and at-one-ment with God and Christ in the heavens. The second defends Joseph against the accusation that he advocated and practiced the heresy of polygamy.

The institutions claiming to be an authentic version of what Joseph Smith founded have failed to produce the results Joseph foretold. This failure is due, in large measure, because Joseph's teachings have been abandoned or contradicted. There is still a great deal left undone.

Joseph told us to expect great events among the gentiles, Native Americans and remnant of Jewish people before Christ's victorious return. He did not live to see this happen. Upon his death, he left a great deal for others to complete.

⁵ McMurray, W. Grant, "They 'Shall Blossom as the Rose': Native Americans and the Dream of Zion", an address delivered on February 17, 2001.

⁶ Andrew M. Shields, "Official Minutes of Business Session, Wednesday March 28, 2007", in 2007 World Conference Thursday Bulletin, March 29, 2007.

Assuming the work Joseph began is to be finished, it will not happen by heaven laboring independent of us. We have work to do. At the conference in Boise, speaker James McKay from the Restoration Church in Missouri observed, there was still no holy city and no gathering of Israel. He posed the question: “whose fault is that; God’s or ours?” The answer, according to the Book of Mormon, is that we must do the work, while God, as Master of the Vineyard, labors alongside us.⁷ But fault lies with us. God has been willing to do His part of the labor from Joseph Smith’s day until now. God directs the work, and in this way “labors alongside” us. We must resist the temptation to insert our own agenda for God’s. If we fail to grasp that the direction must come from heaven rather than as part of an agenda created by uninspired corporate planners, imaginative and even well intended individuals, then we risk working at odds with heaven. God’s kingdom is a kingdom in every sense of the word, and the King is entitled to direct all its affairs.

Today, we see all of the quarreling restoration mothers, daughters and siblings accusing the others of apostasy and preaching falsely. If you are trying to find a “true” version of what Joseph Smith founded from the quarreling contenders of today, you face the same query Joseph posed at the beginning: “Who of all these parties are right? Or are they all wrong together? And if any one of them be right, which is it? And how shall I know it?”⁸

Sadly, it seems now as the Lord said to Isaiah: “the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes.”⁹ These daughters lust after women, and property, power, authority, and make merchandise of the souls of men.¹⁰

I was a one-time member of the largest branch, but as some of you know, was excommunicated over the demand I retract things I had written about their history. The resulting independence has allowed me to pursue a more unfettered search into Mormon origins, miscarriages, and missteps. Latter-day Saint history has been so radically revised by revelations in the recent records released that anyone reading is left reeling. LDS history written before 1980 is antiquated. And we never had the more complete panoply of Brigham Young’s conjectures, rants, and vulgarities until 2009.¹¹

⁷ NC Jacob 3:27: “And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights, and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them. And they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.”

⁸ T&C 1: Part 2:3.

⁹ OC Isa. 1:11.

¹⁰ NC Rev. 7:4.

¹¹ That is when editor Richard Van Wagoner’s *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 5 volumes, was first published by Smith-Pettit Foundation. It expanded available first-person sermons into five large volumes including many previously unpublished sermons or public remarks of Brigham Young. The texts were taken from manuscript collections at LDS Church Archives: Brigham Young Addresses, Brigham Young Minutes, Brigham Young Diaries, Brigham Young Office and Secretary Journals, Thomas Bullock Minutes, Willard Richards Diary, John D. Lee Journals, and Heber C. Kimball Journals, as well as all prior published talks in *History of Brigham Young*, *Journal History of the Church*, *Deseret News*, *History of the Church*, *Journal of Discourses*, and *Millennial Star*.

The vast expansion of available and reliable historical materials for those interested has increased the schism rate for all the restorationist groups.¹² There is a lot more kicking and pricking afoot, but it is increasingly more difficult to distinguish between kicks and pricks. The tapestry expands as more threads arrive.

But Mormonism's tapestry is not limited to the committed or devout. It now includes hundreds of thousands, perhaps more, disaffected former-Mormons who remain unable to fully depart. Mormonism exerts a religious gravitational pull almost impossible to fully escape. It remains with all of us, whether you are active in one of the two mother churches or one of their progeny. Mormon denominational splintering continues unabated.

Sunstone attracts believers and disbelievers, the disaffected, the orthodox and the apostate. Why does Mormonism exert that pull?

The religion Joseph Smith ignited echoes with the wonder and appeal of God doing among us what He once did long ago with the people in the Bible. The restoration suggests that the long, awaited moment of Christ's return is at last approaching. Therefore we either hope this to be true or need it to be exposed as a fraud. Either way, our fears or hopes are emphatic.

Accordingly, we all must decide what to make of Joseph Smith. All our fear, wonder and hope rests on resolving what to make of the life of Joseph:

This frames the dichotomy in the legacy of that man:

-With hope in his authenticity, we see him as God's messenger.

-With doubts about him, we see him as a charlatan.

Those polar opposites are inherent in his life, and were foretold at the beginning and reconfirmed toward the end.

The angel who appeared to Joseph in September 1823 said: "He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi,¹³ that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for

¹² The Latter-day Saints have announced plans to write a new version of Mormon history. This seems ominous, given the many errors contained in the editorial insertions into the *Joseph Smith Papers*. The LDS Historian's Office even have the audacity to contradict historical records while they introduce them.

¹³ All of the Joseph Smith written accounts that name the angel identify him as "Nephi" and not "Moroni." In the *Joseph Smith Papers, Histories*, Vol. 1, we learn Joseph read and corrected his history: "...it suggests that JS [Joseph Smith] read aloud from Draft 2 in the large manuscript volume, directing editorial changes as he read." (*Id.* at p. 201.) Here is how Draft 2 reads, describing the visit of the angel to him in his bedroom on the night of September 21, 1823: "When I first looked upon him I was afraid, but the fear soon left me. He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi." (*Id.* p. 222.) Under Joseph's direction a Draft 3 was prepared by Howard Coray. This version reads as follows: "When I first looked upon (him) I was afraid; but the far soon left me: calling me by name, (he) said, ~~that~~ he was a messenger, sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Nephi—" (*Id.* p. 223.) There is a *JSP* footnote that explains someone, unidentified as to whom or when, changed the name from "Nephi" to "Moroni" because of what the editors refer to as a "clerical error." The same footnote explains that throughout Joseph Smith's lifetime, in any history he supervised, the name was

good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.”

My mother taught me to hold Joseph for evil. I’ve studied his life carefully, read what his critics and admirers have claimed for and about him. I’ve tried not to be hasty in reaching a conclusion. After four-and-a-half decades I have decided to hold Joseph for good. I’m all in. To me he is the real thing: a messenger sent from God to deliver a message that we reject at our peril and accept to our blessing. He had a great soul that searched, stretched, believed, hoped, fought fiercely, defied pain and persecution, and bore the hallmarks we should expect from a prophet messenger from God. He was a brilliant light: rough cut, homespun, and rustic. But he was also ablaze with insight, keen and penetrating, able to capture with a phrase a glimpse of the infinite.

At the beginning, Joseph Smith’s restored religion included noble, thrilling and aspirational words, worthy enough for them to belong to God. If you divorce these words from an opinion of Joseph, and allow them to be independent ideas, they are worthy of meditation. Joseph Smith left religious writings and sermons that are the equal of the New Testament. They are the equivalent to the Vedas. They are as worthy as the Tibetan Book of the Dead.¹⁴ They stand alongside the Tao Te Ching. But they trace their origin to Joseph Smith, and therein lies the rub.

I was raised among those who had Joseph’s name for evil. Baptists regard Joseph as a deceiver, liar and imposter. They find the English vocabulary has an insufficient supply of caustic adjectives to heap enough scorn on him. To paraphrase Billy Beane’s description of his Oakland A’s:¹⁵ There’s bad men; and then there’s devils. Then there’s 50 feet of crap. And then there’s Joseph Smith.

When Mormon missionaries began pestering me in New Hampshire, I was amused at their sincerity and could not take seriously anything they offered. To me, they defended a false cult founded by a charlatan. I experienced an internal conflict between my mother’s credo to be polite to others and her instruction that Joseph Smith was a fraud. Without resolving that conflict, I listened politely while pondering profanity.

always “Nephi”. Here is an excerpt from footnote 56 on page 223 of *Joseph Smith Papers, Histories*, Vol. 1: “A later redaction in an unidentified hand changed ‘Nephi’ to ‘Moroni’ and noted that the original attribution was a ‘clerical error.’ Early sources often did not name the angelic visitor, but sources naming Moroni include Oliver Cowdery’s historical letter published in the April 1835 *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, an expanded version of a circa August 1830 revelation, as published in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants; and a JS editorial published in the *Elders’ Journal* in July 1838. The present history is the earliest extant source to name Nephi as the messenger, and subsequent publications based on this history perpetuated the attribution during JS’s lifetime.” (*Id.* p. 223.)

¹⁴ The lyrics to *Tomorrow Never Knows*, a Beatle song composed by John Lennon, was inspired by the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It was a revolutionary musical landmark when first released and remains an influential song 52 years after its appearance on the *Revolver* album.

¹⁵ *Moneyball*: “There are rich teams and there are poor teams. Then there’s 50 feet of crap. And then there’s us.”

Having nothing better to do one weekend, I went with the Mormons to a campout in Sharon, Vermont, the birthplace of Joseph Smith. There I obtained a copy of the Doctrine & Covenants from the visitor's center. Steve Klaproth, himself a convert, showed me Section 76. Reading it was the first time I took seriously anything that came from Joseph. The words gripped me. They inspired my mind to deep reflection. They had value. It shattered the paradigm and left me unable to trust a dismissive view for Joseph. He required evaluation. Joseph's words inspired my investigation of the restoration.

In Joseph Smith's History there is a passage that still appeals to my heart and mind. He wrote, "During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three, (having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly — and if they supposed me to be deluded, to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me)..."¹⁶ THAT is still going on. Joseph is still being posthumously persecuted.

Persecution is what happens when an idea cannot be opposed on its merit. Persecution is the product of fear typically experienced by those lacking knowledge. There are two great competing forces in the whole of creation: Love and fear. I think God's love for us is exemplified in Him speaking to Joseph Smith. And I am grateful for how that has enriched my life.

Here are some of the great thoughts God inspired and Joseph Smith conveyed to us:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God. Nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries;¹⁷

This is one of the great and succinct declarations about coming to know God. Finding Them is deeply personal. We come to God by giving "heed and diligence" to what God asks of us. I cannot do that for you, nor can you do it for me. It is the sojourn of every individual.

The path requires motion. We remain in motion all the time. There is no stasis, no holding a position. We advance (that is, experience restoration) or we recede (that is, experience apostasy). There is no avoiding movement.

The mysteries of God are His hidden but simple truths. They can set a man's bones on fire.¹⁸

¹⁶ T&C 2:10.

¹⁷ NC Alma 9:3.

¹⁸ See, OC Jeremiah 8:7. Paul declared: "Our God is a consuming fire." (NC Heb. 1:57.)

To pay heed to God requires that we not harden our hearts. When we have hard hearts we know less. Even what we once knew can be lost. Eventually, we know nothing of God's mysteries and we are left alone, without God in the world.¹⁹

Another similar inspired thought:

Woe be unto him that crieth, All is well. Yea, woe be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men and denieth the power of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Yea, woe be unto him that saith, We have received and we need no more. And in fine, woe unto all those who tremble and are angry because of the truth of God. For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness, and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth, lest he shall fall.

Woe be unto him that shall say, We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God for we have enough. For behold, thus saith the Lord God, I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. And blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom. For unto him that receiveth I will give more, and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. (NC 2 Ne. 12:5-6)

All truth must come from God. The precepts of men are not only unreliable but they are corrupted by their source. God's truths do not end. This thought, like the one before, reminds us that we must seek the constant nourishment of our minds and souls to be in God's path. When God is silent, then you are cut off from truth. Those God can save are those who listen for His voice. No matter how unlikely the source from which God's voice comes, if it is God's word it is to be prized. Even when it comes from the Joseph Smith your mother warned you about.

The hallmark reaction from those disinterested in what God is saying is their angry rejection and refusal to acknowledge more. When you are content - you perish. When you hunger and thirst - you live.

Then another profound declaration along the same line:

And because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another, for my work is not yet finished, neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words, neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. (NC 2 Ne. 12:10)

Last year I delivered a talk at the Sunstone Symposium titled *Other Sheep Indeed*. In it I invited others with sacred writings to come and bring them. That invitation was first offered by Joseph Smith in 1840. He anticipated a temple to be built in Nauvoo to which records would

¹⁹ See, NC Alma 19:10.

be brought from all over the world “bring every thing you can bring and build the house of God and we will have a tremendous City which shall reverberate afar... then comes all the ancient records dig them up... where the Saints g[ather] is Zion.”²⁰ Not all of God’s words are in the Bible. God has spoken to every nation (meaning religious body of people).²¹ Truth is everywhere, among all people. If we love God and truth we will want to search for it. We will not be content to leave it unexplored, undiscovered. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after more righteousness.²² Blessed are those who are followers of righteousness, desiring to possess great knowledge, and to be greater followers of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge.²³ And blessed are those who do not suppose the scriptures contain all God’s words and They (the Gods) have not provided more.

One of the world’s greatest religious epistles was composed in Liberty Jail. It includes the following passage:

[T]he things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of Eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination 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[.]²⁴

These words enlarge the soul. Only a great religion challenges us to stretch as high as the utmost heavens! Search into and contemplate the darkest abyss! An expansive religion that urges us to become godlike in our interest, in our search for truth! We are clearly directed to turn our attention to the heavens and learn how they function, what they are, and who is to be found there. This is a vast religion. It is not confined to the earthly, and certainly not under the control of any institution’s administrative regimentation, or stifling controls. It cannot be what institutional Mormonism has become:

“O God, God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of [modern Mormonism]!

Fie on ’t, ah fie!

²⁰ *JS Papers, Documents Vol. 7*, p. 336.

²¹ “For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word; yea, in his wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.” NC Alma 15:13.

²² NC 3 Ne. 5:10.

²³ T&C 145:1:1.

²⁴ T&C 138:18-19.

'Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed.
Things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.
That it should come to this."²⁵

The restoration is far too great to have been reduced to the vain, trifling, low, mean, vulgar, and condescending versions presented in today's Mormon institutions. If we are going to hold a conference, it should aspire to stretch our minds upward! To make us reach beyond, and never remain content. This Sunstone Symposium deals with diverse, interesting thought, important issues and wonderful contrasts. God is being honored here. Churches should aspire to be as informative and thought-provoking.

This search into the highest heaven is the search to find holiness. Joseph Smith wanted us to ascend, like the ancients, into that realm of light and truth. How can any of us be content to listen to the institutional fare? It is incapable of sustaining spiritual life. Joseph's ideas and teachings are as far above those teachings of today as the heavens are above the earth. The restoration once sought to find what God declared as "His way" to Isaiah: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."²⁶ How the restoration has fallen! It is little wonder so many now hold Mormonism in contempt. It has become unnecessarily contemptible when it ought to be inspiring.²⁷

The restoration's delight has turned to dismay; its ingenuity turned to ineptitude. Silk has become burlap. How have we allowed it to become so?

During confinement in Liberty Jail, Joseph reflected on the tragic and sudden disarray that priesthood leaders inflict on the restoration. Whereas Joseph first envisioned an authoritative administration for the incipient faith, in Liberty Jail he stripped priesthood of all its right to exercise control and dominion. These inspired words not only undo Joseph's initial investiture of priestly authority, it also rejects the long-established Roman Catholic decision to make priesthood non-forfeitable and independent of individual worthiness:²⁸

²⁵ *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 2.

²⁶ OC Isa. 20:2.

²⁷ Joseph Smith's teachings and doctrines are not emphasized, and many are not even known in the scatterlings of Mormonism. Institutions have revised the concept of a prophet and seer to now consist of an administrative head controlling the body beneath him. This, too, while denigrating the founding Prophet who did access the heavens and ascended into the realm of light above.

²⁸ Catholics faced this issue because Donatus, a faithful priest, endured persecution when the Bishop of Alexandria fled. Donatus argued that fleeing the flock in a time of trouble was such a betrayal of the faith that the Bishop lost priesthood authority. Donatists believed that priesthood required righteousness of the ordained man. This controversy lasted several centuries before it was resolved. In 314, the first Council of Arles rejected the idea, and later Augustine of Hippo's active campaign in opposition to Donatus' position and permanently shifted momentum. By the 6th Century Donatism was rejected.

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 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. 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 you have reproved, lest he esteem you to be his enemy, that he may know that your faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death; your bowels also being full of charity towards all men, and to the Household of faith, and virtue garnish your thoughts unceasingly. Then shall your confidence wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrines of the Priesthood shall distill upon your soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be your constant companion, and your scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, and your dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto you for ever and ever. (T&C 139:5-6)

Consider how these ideas affect religion. A calling to priesthood does not accomplish anything if the individual is not “chosen” by God. We can ordain men but heaven must ratify and elect that man.²⁹ No one is permitted to function on God’s behalf without God’s personal imprimatur of approval.

²⁹ The power of the priesthood cannot be controlled by men. It comes from heaven or it does not come at all. There has never been an institution entrusted with the power of heaven. “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.” (T&C 139:5.) A gentile church can convey authority for men to rule over one another throughout the world. But the power of the priesthood comes only one way, and, as the revelation to Joseph Smith states, men do not have any right to either confer it, or prevent it from being conferred. Heaven alone determines if a man will be permitted to act as one of Heaven’s chosen high priests. For example, Nephi’s younger brother Jacob was ordained to the priesthood by Nephi. (See 2 Ne. 6: 2: “Behold, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi, unto whom ye look as a king or a protector, and on

Priesthood is connected to heaven. Without a connection to heaven, there is no priesthood. The “powers of heaven” are, of course, the angels themselves. Priests must have angelic accompaniment to claim priesthood. And angels cannot be manipulated by the ambition, self-will, or worldly ambition of men.

The called, but unchosen, use office and position to cover their sins or to gratify their pride and vain ambition. They are like the Jews who persecuted Christ, while sitting in the chief seats. Likewise, there is no priesthood in the possession of any man who exercises control, dominion, or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men in any degree of unrighteousness. Christ’s gentle example of kneeling to serve presents a neon-bright example of how priesthood is to be used. He came to serve, not to be served.³⁰

He taught, invited, bid others to repent, and clarified a better understanding of the scriptures for others. He did not demand support. He ministered light and truth for all who would listen. Any other kind of conduct antagonizes the heavens, which then withdraw themselves. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, that is an end to the Priesthood or the authority of that man.

Imagine how different things are when you know that there is no power or authority in the priesthood itself. But the power to influence others comes only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, and by kindly presenting pure knowledge. Imagine that a teacher must greatly enlarge your soul to actually claim priesthood. How different would it be for you? You would be drawn to attend a meeting for what great light it could provide to you. You would no longer endure those meetings, conferences and conversations that are low, mean, vulgar and condescending; leave if they do not edify or enlighten you soul. Religious classes and meetings that bore us are an obscenity. Discussions filled with a myriad of unenlightened personal opinion are the real pornography of today’s Mormonism.

Joseph Smith revoked the right of priesthood to govern, and replaced it with the priesthood’s obligation to teach and inspire. This ideal should still be central. We should all repent and forsake the false models of a controlling hierarchy. All the accretions of power, wealth, compulsion and dominion of the various Mormon sects should end this instant.

Another statement from Joseph makes it clear the restoration *was* intended to reintroduce the original religion of the Bible, not the diluted “Christianity” of his day. The original faith, in the first dispensations, had more understanding than what we find preserved in the Bible. Joseph was searching back into these beginnings. His heart was “turned to the fathers” of

whom ye depend for safety, behold ye know that I have spoken unto you exceedingly many things.”) He preached and taught after that ordination. However, when he replaced his older brother as prophet, he explained that he obtained that errand from the Lord. (See Jacob 1: 17: “Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.”) Many other examples are in scripture. Ordination invites. God alone confers His power.

³⁰ NC Luke 13:6.

the first generations. He wanted a return of their original as part of the end. It was to be nothing less. Consider this declaration:

[H]as the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he so long as time shall last, or the Earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. For it is by faith that miracles are wrought. And it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, woe be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also, and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made.³¹

If the heavens open to us, we have faith. If the heavens are brass, we are faithless. And without faith, it is as if Christ provided us no redemption. These words are as inspiring as they are sobering.³²

At the conclusion of the vision of the three-heavens, Joseph wrote the following. It clarifies that we are supposed to access heaven, and see for ourselves the glory to be found there:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his Kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpasses all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him and purify themselves before him, to whom he grants the privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.³³

This privilege of seeing and knowing for ourselves is available to us “while in the flesh.” The restoration aimed to reconnect us to heaven in a literal way. This is the same that transpired with Enoch and others in earlier dispensations.

³¹ NC Moroni 7:7.

³² Religious scholar Harold Bloom may understand Joseph Smith’s intention better than modern Mormon sects. He wrote that Joseph Smith was “accomplishing a transumption of his Latter-day Saints to the ever-earliness of the great patriarchs and to Enoch in particular.” Being “highly conscious of restoring ancient mysteries associated with Enoch” to repeat “the union of Patriarch and angel in Enoch ... for the ecstasy of union with the Divine principle, for the actual fusion of man with God.” (Harold Bloom, *The American Religion*, pp. 100-102.)

³³ T&C 69:29.

The Book of Mormon is filled with ascension lessons and examples.³⁴ There is one verse that captures Joseph Smith's ascent theology. That verse compresses it into a single sentence. It explains why the Book of Mormon contains the "fullness of the gospel." Here is the inspired declaration as a first-person promise from the Lord:

Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my Voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I Am, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world[.]³⁵

"Every soul" includes you and me. Every one of us has equal access to the Lord. The conditions are the same for all. Forsake sins; come to Christ; call on His name; obey His voice; keep his commandments. This is far more challenging than obedience to a handful of "thou shalt nots" because so much is required to be done, so much required to be known. A great deal of study and prayer is required to stand in the presence of the Lord. Once done, we shall see His face and know that He is the true light that enlightens every one. He is the God of the whole world.

Immediately after His resurrection, Christ did not minister to gentiles.³⁶ But after the Book of Mormon came forth, gentiles are also eligible for Christ's ministry in very deed:

And it shall come to pass that if the gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks, and harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father. Yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever[.]³⁷

His promise to us is predicated on "hearkening" to the Lamb. Gentiles failed to do so, and upon Joseph's death, a great dearth set upon the restoration. Until there is gentile repenting and returning, it will continue to unwind. Since June 27, 1844 we have a restoration slow-moving car wreck. The pace of that decay is accelerating.

We must rage against the fading of that light.³⁸ "And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience you may possess your souls, and you shall have Eternal life."³⁹

³⁴ This is why the Book of Mormon is the primary text I used in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*.

³⁵ T&C 93:1.

³⁶ "[T]hey understood not that the gentiles should be converted through their preaching. And they understood me not that I said, They shall hear my voice. And they understood me not that the gentiles should not at that time hear my voice, that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost." (NC 3 Ne. 7:3.)

³⁷ NC 1 Ne. 3:25.

³⁸ Dylan Thomas, *Do not go gentle into that good night*. The final two lines are: "Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Dylan so inspired Bob Zimmerman that he changed his name to Bob Dylan. American Poet, Elizabeth Bishop, wrote of his passing: "Thomas's

Evidence of Christ is everywhere. Joseph used cosmological terms in the following passage describing the importance of light coming from Christ and His Father:

[H]e is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made, as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made, and the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which now shines, which gives you light, is through him who enlightens your eyes, which is the same light that quickens your understandings, which light proceeds forth from the presence of God, to fill the immensity of space: the light which is in all things, which gives life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God[.]⁴⁰

If you are alive, you are connected to Christ. If you detect the light of the sun, you detect a testimony of Christ. If you behold the moon moving in her cycles overhead, you behold a testimony of Christ.

There is another cosmic observation about our relationship to God and how we are gaining experience in this creation:

All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it to act for itself, as all intelligence also, otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man, because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light, and every man whose spirit receives not the light is under condemnation. For man is spirit, the elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy; ...The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, Light and Truth. Light and Truth forsake that evil one. ...And that wicked one comes and takes away light and truth through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.⁴¹

False traditions are as destructive for us as outright disobedience. The result is the same. The difference is when we know we disobey we feel guilt. But false traditions fool us into thinking we are obedient when we are merely misled. Thus Satan leads to destruction as mankind follows darkness rather than Christ's light.

Joseph Smith also provided us with Christ's personal explanation of what He endured to atone for our sins. It is a profound statement as anything found in the Four Gospels.

poetry is so narrow — just a straight conduit between birth & death, I suppose—with not much space for living along the way.”

³⁹ T&C 101:6.

⁴⁰ T&C 86:1.

⁴¹ T&C 93:10-11.

[S]urely every man must repent or suffer, for I God am endless, wherefore, I revoke not the judgments which I shall pass, but woes shall go forth: weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, yea, to those who are found on my left hand.

Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment. Again, it is written Eternal damnation, wherefore, it is more express than other scriptures that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men altogether for my name's glory. Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is mete unto you to know, even as mine apostles. I speak unto you that are chosen in this thing, even as one, that you may enter into my rest, for behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it? For behold, I am Endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is Endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore –

Eternal punishment is God's punishment.

Endless punishment is God's punishment.

Wherefore, I command you by my name, and by my Almighty power that you repent, repent lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore, how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I God have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer, if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain and to bleed at every pore, to suffer, both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.⁴²

This harrowing plea in the first-person account begs us to accept Christ's sacrificial gift. But it warns us there is a price to be paid if we reject what He offers. He only finished "his preparations" for us. If we reject what He prepared, we are left to face the consequences without His intervention. There is to be punishment for sins, but it is avoidable punishment and need not be endured. All He asks is that we accept the gift on His simple terms: Repent, be baptized and follow Him.

Joseph wrote this harrowing request for us to accept Christ: "[H]e loveth those who will have him to be their God."⁴³ We just won't respond to that plaintive plea.

This plea reminds me of another Joseph Smith declaration. This one comes from Nephi, son of Lehi, in the Book of Mormon:

I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.⁴⁴

⁴² T&C 4:1-5.

⁴³ NC 1 Ne. 5:20.

⁴⁴ NC 1 Ne. 1:10.

Nothing is asked of you that you cannot accomplish. You can have Christ to be your God, if you accept His invitation and keep His commandments. No commandment has been given that is beyond your capacity to perform. Repenting and being baptized is simple enough that any person of age can choose to comply. We are in control of our destiny.

There are hundreds of potential quotes that could be added to this paper. One final quote will end this part of the paper:

[W]hen ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.⁴⁵

This was how Christ lived His life. He showed forth the glory of God the Father by serving and elevating others. We, too, can serve God by giving comfort to our fellow men and women. There is no end to the opportunities to help others. This life is abundant in opportunity to reflect God's grace, kindness and help by service to others. If you act that part, you are in God's service. Think Sub-for-Santa and consider joining Sub-for-God. It will add 364 days of opportunity.

The angel who visited Joseph in 1823 said his name would be had for good and evil among all people. A similar message was repeated 16 years later in March 1839 when the voice of the Lord spoke to Joseph in Liberty Jail. God said to Joseph, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and Hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor." Although these two are similar, there is a profound difference between the angel's statement in 1823 and the voice of God in 1839. The angel only said people would speak good and evil of Joseph. But God added a description of those who would speak evil, and those who would speak good of Joseph.

That voice of God said, "fools shall have [Joseph] in derision." Because I accept this statement as God's, I am led to conclude all who have spoken derisively of Joseph have done so foolishly. We ought to stop our foolishness. We need to end the derision of Joseph.

God also condemned the "testimony of traitors" against Joseph. While alive, Joseph identified some of his contemporary traitors and named them: George Hinkle,⁴⁶ John Corrill, Reed Peck, David Whitmer, W.W. Phelps,⁴⁷ Sampson Avard,⁴⁸ William McLellan, John

⁴⁵ NC Mosiah 1:8.

⁴⁶ "Joseph Smith Jr is now unlawfully confined and restrained of his liberty in Liberty jail Clay County (Mo) that he has been restrained of his liberty near five months your petitioners clame that the whole transaction which has been the cause of his confinement (is) unlawfull from the first to the Last he was taken from his home by a fraude being practised upon him by a man by the name of George M Hinkle..." (*JSP, Documents Vol. 6*, p. 344; as in original.)

⁴⁷ "Look at Mr [George M.] Hinkle. A wolf in sheep's clothing. Look at his brother John Corrill Look at the beloved brother Reed Peck who aided him in leading us, as the savior was led, into the

Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, and Orson Hyde.⁴⁹ These had been prominent leaders, trusted friends, and one-time believers in Mormonism. It was false testimony by those from within the flock that led to imprisonment of Joseph and other leaders.

The traitors of 1838 were joined by yet more traitors between 1842-44. In Missouri, Joseph was accused of treason and inciting violence. In 1842-44 Joseph's traitors accused him of adultery, polygamy and lying. John C. Bennett was a sexual predator who claimed amidst his secret seductions that Joseph Smith authorized him to engage in his promiscuity.

When his misconduct came to light, Bennett admitted Joseph authorized no such wickedness. He swore under oath, "that he never was taught any thing 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, either in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illegal

camp as a lamb prepared for the slaughter and a sheep dumb before his shearer so we opened not our mouth But these men like Balaam being greedy for a reward sold us into the hands of those who loved them, for the world loves his own. I would remember W[illiam] W. Phelps who comes up before us as one of Job's comforters. God suffered such kind of beings to afflict Job, but it never entered into their hearts that Job would get out of it all. This poor man who professes to be much of a prophet has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel, and this ass not being of the same kind of Balaams therefore the angel notwithstanding appeared unto him yet he could not penetrate his understanding sufficiently so but what he brays out cursings instead of blessings." (*JSP, Documents Vol. 6*, p. 300-301; as in original.)

⁴⁸ We have learned also since we have been in prison that many false and pernicious things which were calculated to lead the saints far astray and to do great injury (have been taught by Dr. [Sampson] Avard) as coming from the Presidency and we have reason to fear (that) many (other) designing and corrupt characters like unto himself (have been teaching many things) which the presidency never knew of being taught in the church by any body untill after they were made prisoners, which if they had known of, they would have spurned them and their authors from them as they would the gates of hell. Thus we find that there has been frauds and secret abominations and evil works of darkness going on leading the minds of the weak and unwary into confusion and distraction, and palming it all the time upon upon the presidency while mean time the presidency were ignorant as well as innocent of these things, which were practicing in the church in their name[.]" (*JSP, Documents Vol. 6*, p. 306)

⁴⁹ Such characters as [William E.] McLellan, John Whitmer, O[liver] Cowdery, Martin Harris, who are too mean to mention and we had liked to have forgotten them. [Thomas B.] Marsh & [Orson] Hyde whose hearts are full of corruption, whose cloak of hypocrisy was not sufficient to shield them or to hold them up in the hour of trouble, who after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of God and become again entangled and overcome the latter end is worse than the first. But it has happened unto them according to the words of the savior, the dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Again if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking (for) of judgement and fire indignation to come which shall devour these adversaries. For he who despiseth Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses of how much more severe punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath sold his brother and denied the new and everlasting covenant[.]" (*JSP Documents Vol. 6*, pp. 307-308.)

illicit intercourse with the females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others.”⁵⁰

William Law was also involved in secret adultery, and Joseph Smith refused to seal Law’s marriage. A conspiracy of traitors in 1844 included William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster who published the Nauvoo Expositor accusing Joseph Smith of the very evil Joseph had been hunting down and eradicating through high council proceedings since the Bennett affair had become public.⁵¹

Joseph was unequivocal in his opposition to adultery and plural wife taking. About the time Bennett’s misconduct was beginning to come to light, Joseph organized the Female Relief Society to encourage moral and chaste conduct in Nauvoo.⁵² In addition to the steps he took

⁵⁰ Affidavit of John C. Bennett dated 17 May 1842 and published in the *Times & Seasons* on July 1, 1842 in Vol. III, No. 17, at p. 839.

⁵¹ In the aftermath of John Bennett’s misconduct, Joseph pursued an effort to track down what had happened in Nauvoo. By 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.” (*Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, p. 414, all as in original.) 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” (*Id.*, pp. 414-415, as in original.)

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.” (*Id.*, p. 417, as in original.) She furnished the identities of the several men involved, resulting in 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” (*Id.*, p. 424, as in original.)

The next day, September 4, 1842, “Esther Smith gave evidence that [the] defendant [Gustavius Hills] 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.” (*Id.*, p. 425, as in original.)

Yet more courts were held as the 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 in which he was the hero and Joseph was the villain. He wrote, lectured and campaigned against Mormonism, first to salvage his reputation, but ultimately as his profession.

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.” (Joseph Smith (Sermon at the Grove; Apr 10, 1842)

⁵² “Spoke of the organization of the Female Relief Society; said he was deeply interested, that is might be built up to the Most High in an acceptable manner; that its rules must be observed; that

privately to discipline those involved directly, he made many public declarations against plural wives and in favor of chastity and moral purity. These included, among many others:

“Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused through the fallacy of Dr. Bennett’s letters, we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the Church. ‘Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.’”⁵³

“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.”⁵⁴

“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.”⁵⁵

He also encouraged the Relief Society to adopt a declaration titled *A Voice of Innocence*.⁵⁶ It was read publicly by W.W. Phelps on March 7, 1844, then edited by Emma Smith, adopted by the Relief Society, and published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on March 20, 1844.

none should be received into it but those who were worthy; proposed a close examination of every candidate; that the society was growing too fast. It should grow up by degrees, should commence with a few individuals, thus have a select society of the virtuous, and those who would walk circumspectly; commended them for their zeal, but said sometimes their zeal was not according to knowledge. One principle object of the institution was to purge out iniquity; said they must be extremely careful in all their examinations, or the consequences would be serious. ...[T]he Saints should be a select people, separate from all the evils of the world— choice, virtuous and holy.” (*TPJS*, p. 201-202, March 30, 1842.)

⁵³ *Times & Seasons* Vol. 3, p. 909, Sept. 1, 1842.

⁵⁴ Joseph Smith & Hyrum Smith, *Times and Seasons* Vol. 5 (February 1, 1844).

⁵⁵ *DHC* 6:411, May 26, 1844.

⁵⁶ It states in part: “The corruption of wickedness which manifested itself in such horrible deformity on the trial of Orsemus 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 debauchees, vagabonds, and rakes, who have jammed themselves into our city to offer strange fire at the shrines of infamy, disgrace and degradation; as they and their kindred spirits have done in all the great cities throughout the world: corrupting their way: on the earth, and bringing woman, poor defenseless woman, to wretchedness and ruin. ... and, as such ungodly wretches, burning or smarting with the sting of their own shame, have doubtless, transported with them; some

Because of the testimony of traitors, Joseph Smith has been held in derision from 1842 to the present. He is accused of being a sexual predator, liar, and adulterer. Fools have repeated the accusations originally made by the adulterer John C. Bennett, though Bennett testified under oath that Joseph was not responsible and never behaved in any improper way toward women.

The derision of Joseph now comes from the LDS Church, which claims him as their founder. It comes from Brian Hales, who claims to be an accurate biographer.⁵⁷ It comes

of the miserable dupes of their licentiousness, for the purpose of defiling the fame of this goodly 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 defense of our rights, for the glory of our mothers fathers; for the honor of our Mothers; for the happiness of our husbands; and for the well fare of our dear children, to rebuke such an outrage upon the sanctity 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, ... 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 Mother's of Israel kick the blood thirsty pimp from the pale of social communion. Let the widows and wives who tread in the foot steps 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 pestilence that walketh in darkness, and spurn 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 mean men die of the rot...

"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:

"...Wherefore,

"Resolved unanimously 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 unqualified 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, slanders 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 aspersions assassins

"Resolved unanimously that while we render credence to the doctrines of Paul, that neither the man is without the woman; neither is woman without the man in the Lord, yet we raise our voices and hands against John C. Bennett's 'Spiritual Wife System,' as a 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 in the gulf of fallen nature, 'where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!' and let all the Saints say: Amen!"

⁵⁷ Hales wrote a three volume series titled *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*. In it he accepts and advocates Joseph was a secretive polygamist. Adrian Larsen, in a private email exchange with Hales, described the effect of that work best: "But having looked at the evidence, rather than taking Joseph's side, you have sided with the Nauvoo Expositor in calling Joseph's statements lies, designed to conceal the truth that he was secretly practicing polygamy while publicly condemning it. You have taught he was, therefore, a liar, deceiver, adulterer, and the worst kind of hypocrite. You have provided the most volatile fuel to the anti-Mormon fire, and robbed the Lord's prophet of all credibility in other areas,

from anti-Mormons, and Christian ministers, and fundamentalists who have created a caricature they claim to be Joseph. There is little difference between these people and William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*. There is an immense chorus of fools holding Joseph in derision, even among those who claim to be devout followers of the faith he restored.

I think the voice Joseph heard in Liberty Jail *was* God's. If I am right, then God's advice to the pure in heart, wise, noble and virtuous is to seek counsel, authority and blessing from Joseph. God's advice leads me to adopt a view of Joseph that is consistent with nobility and virtue. I do not believe you can regard Joseph as a sexual predator, liar and adulterer without holding him in derision. The chief and unavoidable result of thinking of Joseph so has been a legacy of excusing institutional lying, and promoting adulterous thoughts, and inappropriately entertaining the concept of women as mere breeding stock for the use of men.

It is not possible to harbor lustful, deceitful and adulterous thoughts in your heart and claim to be pure in heart. I do not believe you can conspire to commit bigamy and adultery and claim to be virtuous. I do not believe you can decide to trust the words of traitors and villains who contradict Joseph's account of his marital fidelity to Emma and claim to seek

including scripture. All arguments to the contrary fall on deaf ears, who point to you as an authority. You have contributed in major and direct ways to the apostasy and loss of many thousands of souls, based on your agenda-driven analysis of very equivocal evidence.” (Email from Adrian Larsen to Brian Hales, May 15, 2018-copy in possession of author; used with permission from the author.) Rock Waterman likewise is critical of the Hales' approach: “The story of The Angel With The Flaming Sword is a perfect example. (*Joseph Smith's Polygamy* Vol 1: History, beginning on pg 194.) That story has a number of permutations, depending on the person 'remembering' Joseph telling it to him. But ultimately it evolves into a story about an angel with a flaming sword appearing to Joseph threatening to slay him unless he can get Emma to accept plural marriage. Brian's research on this matter is painstaking; he's documented every source, every version of the telling of it, until what we wind up with is a tale that gets embellished and more fantastic with every telling.

“If such an incident actually HAD occurred, it was the most fantastic event in Joseph's life since the First Vision (but it does starkly contradict everything we know about God allowing Joseph his free agency). Fantastic as it is, we hear absolutely nothing of this incredible tale from Joseph Smith himself; there are no records of him telling anyone any version of this story whatsoever when he was alive. The stories don't begin circulating until a decade after his death, and the story kept changing and getting more fantastic every time it was repeated.

“What all this reminded me of was a party game they used to call 'Gossip' or 'Chinese Telephone,' where someone whispers something into the ear of the person next to him, the next person whispers what he thought he heard into the ear of the next person, and on down the line until what the last person repeats aloud is hilariously mangled. I told Brian his research was invaluable, but that in my view it tends to prove the opposite of what he thinks it does. I think this Angel story, like so many others that did not surface until long after Joseph's death, tends to cast serious doubt on Brian's thesis, rather than confirming it. I felt Brian had an obligation to deconstruct the rumors for his readers and help them see the absurdity of it all, but this he did not do. The prophet spent the last months of his life constantly denouncing the insidious 'spiritual wifery' that had begun to infest Nauvoo, yet we don't find those vigorous denunciations in any of our official histories. Instead we are bombarded with hearsay and silly rumors that don't hold up under critical examination.” (Rock Waterman email to Denver Snuffer on July 24, 2018.)

counsel from Joseph. In short, those who claim to accept the restoration, but believe Joseph was a sexual predator, do not qualify as noble, wise, virtuous or pure in thought.

All the restorationist groups that descend from the Brighamites are religious polygamists. Whether they think it right to practice that abomination at present, or only think it a true part of their religion,⁵⁸ they are polygamists. Their faith descends from a great whore, and her daughters are likewise whores. It is time for those involved to awaken to their awful situation and admit their mother is a whore.

Joseph said and wrote a great deal publicly to condemn plural marriage. He said nothing in public to defend or justify it. Clearly he did not want to be known as its advocate. He wanted to be understood as a staunch opponent of it.

It is important to realize the restoration was hijacked by polygamy and has never regained the momentum Joseph envisioned. That abomination has darkened men's hearts and broken women's hearts. It is used to justify looking upon women with lust in men's hearts, contrary to the Lord's command in the Sermon on the Mount.⁵⁹

I hold Joseph in some considerable esteem. On the lightning-rod issue of plural wives, I've decided the historical record does not convict Joseph of polygamy, lying, deception, sexual improprieties, or exploitation of women. If I thought of Joseph Smith capable of such things I would join his traitors in deriding him. I prefer to think him virtuous and noble. I think it is only possible for any person whose heart is pure, and who prizes virtue, wisdom and nobility to respect Joseph Smith by regarding him as pure, wise, noble and virtuous. To me, adultery, promiscuity and deceit are none of those things.

I reject adultery by any name or description. It is morally wrong if you call it plural wives, polygamy, "celestial marriage" or any other misnomer. Adultery is prohibited in the Ten Commandments, and remains an important prohibition for any moral society.

Mormonism should never have been saddled with Brigham Young's program of making adultery a sacrament. But Mormonism should not have been saddled with many institutional accretions. Between June 27, 1844 and today, there have been too many incorrect subtractions, and far too many uninspired additions. Mormonism today requires both dramatic subtractions and necessary additions. No-one seems willing to do that with the precision required to "Strive to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."⁶⁰

Brigham Young was not the only one who betrayed Joseph and caused his memory to be held in derision. David Whitmer betrayed Joseph in 1838, testified against him, and helped

⁵⁸ Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants makes plural wives a tenet of their religion.

⁵⁹ "Behold, it is written by them of old time that you shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her in his heart already. Behold, I give unto you a commandment that you suffer none of these things to enter into your heart; for it is better that you should deny yourselves of these things, wherein you will take up your cross, than that you should be cast into hell." (NC Matt. 3:21.)

⁶⁰ NC 2 Tim. 1:6.

cause his Missouri imprisonment. Many years later, Whitmer's testimony as a traitor and accuser was published in *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. Though he had been excommunicated in 1838 and never lived in Nauvoo, he accepted and echoed the *Nauvoo Expositor's* claims about polygamy.⁶¹

Bastille posed the question, "Where do we begin? The rubble or our sins?"⁶² I think it begins with our sins. They first have to be set aside through Christ. But afterwards we have a Mormon landscape filled with rubble, out of joint, out of level, out of plumb, collapsed or collapsing. Mormonism's founding text tells us this is as it should be for the present. We were never supposed to see Zion before we witnessed gentile failure and apostasy.

Christ declared to the Nephites a warning to the gentiles:

"And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel and shall reject the fullness of my gospel and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings and of deceits and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy and murders and priestcrafts and whoredoms and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all those things and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them."⁶³

This is not phrased as a possibility but as an inevitability. It was never a question of "if" the gentiles would reject the fullness. It has always been only a matter of "when" it would take place. The various institutions quarrel over whether it has happened. Some of them deny it can or will happen. The soothing mantra "we will never lead you astray" defies the message Christ was commanded by the Father to declare to us.

Joseph Smith has been held in derision for too long. Even those who claim to follow the commandments from God that came through him, deride his memory. This has gone on unchecked for far too long. The saints fell under condemnation in 1831 for taking lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments given through Joseph Smith.⁶⁴ Then eight years later were warned it was foolish to hold Joseph in derision.⁶⁵ Reclaiming the restoration requires repentance. First, recovering and accepting the text of the Book of Mormon, and restoring the former commandments to what God originally spoke. That has been done by a small group of repentant believers. But second, we need to end the derision of Joseph and acknowledge he was pure of heart, noble and virtuous and to act accordingly. It is foolish to magnify his errors to justify our own. It is wicked to attribute uncommitted sins to him to

⁶¹ He had no reason to question the Nauvoo Expositor once Brigham Young's organization publicly advocated plural wivory from 1852.

⁶² Daniel Smith, *Pompeii*.

⁶³ NC 3 Ne. 7:5.

⁶⁴ T&C 88:20.

⁶⁵ T&C 139:7.

give ourselves a license to sin. Generations have been cursed for this error.⁶⁶ We *have* been led astray. All of us in every branch of Mormonism err.

We stumble, and we have fallen down. We have discarded the expansive theology of Joseph Smith. The earliest dispensations had truth from heaven as their guide. Joseph began reassembling what was lost, but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of heaven, and are capable of reuniting with heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods.

Now it is time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust.⁶⁷

Some will awaken, arise, shake off the dust and push forward to recover the restoration. God will set His hand a second time to accomplish His covenants. We are promised there will be a last-days' Zion established on this, the American continent. We know that when it is here:

“[E]very 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.”⁶⁸

The restoration has indeed squandered many opportunities by those who went before. Most of those who accept Joseph Smith as a founder of their religion are still squandering the opportunity to see the work continue. But God's purposes do not fail and we have the option to proceed now. Some generation, at some point, still has a glorious, promised completion to anticipate. As long as some, even a very few, are willing to walk in God's path, they will see the completion of this glorious, final work. “This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against my anointed, says the Lord, and cry, They have sinned, when they have not sinned before me, says the Lord, but have done that which was meet in my eyes, and which I commanded them. But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves, and those who swear false against my servants, that they might bring them unto bondage and death, woe unto them because they have offended my little ones. They shall be severed from the ordinances of my house, their basket shall not be full, their Houses and their barns shall famish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.” (T&C 138:13.)

⁶⁷ NC 2 Ne. 5:11.

⁶⁸ T&C 31:15.

⁶⁹ OC Isa. 6:7.

Why not now? Why not us? All that is required is to repent and return. The promise we have in exchange for our returning to the path is the stuff all the prophets and righteous from the days of Adam have eagerly anticipated.

~The End~