

Learning to Love the Pearl of Great Price

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An Introduction to The Pearl of Great Price

Through the prophet Joseph Smith the Lord has mercifully revealed to us, in this last dispensation, priceless insights into eternal doctrines and into the lives and ministries of prophets of the distant past. Many of these insights appear in the collection of scripture we have come to know as the Pearl of Great Price. This book of scripture is perhaps the least understood and least appreciated of the church's "standard works." Yet in its pages are some of the most sublime and profound doctrinal truths anywhere.

In this precious collection of scripture we are introduced to, and given remarkable insight into the lives and teachings of seven major heads of gospel dispensations: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith. Each of these was called of God to minister to a generation that had been traveling for a time in darkness. Each stood as a restorer of truth and a legal administrator for the introduction of a new and everlasting covenant. Each has imparted to us invaluable insights into the scope of the eternities and the very purposes of this earth's existence.

Learning to Love the Pearl of Great Price has been written to hopefully enrich the reader's understanding of this marvelous book of scripture. This commentary is written from a bias of belief. Your author knows with all his heart that the Pearl of Great Price contains the word of God as it was revealed through the prophet Joseph Smith.

For a discussion of just how we came to possess this book of scripture, see the supplemental article, *The History of the Coming Forth of the Pearl of Great Price*.

An Overview of the Book of Moses

The Book of Moses consists of Joseph Smith's inspired revision or "translation" of part of the book of Genesis—actually Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 6:13. For many years Joseph's inspired revision of the Bible was called "the Inspired Version," but it is now more properly named the "Joseph Smith Translation" (abbreviated JST). It is suggested that the reader review the supplemental article in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible*. This historical connection between the Pearl of Great Price and the JST has eluded most members of the Church since the Book of Moses has been published by the Church separately in the Pearl of Great Price, and since the Church is not the publisher of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Doctor Robert J. Matthews has observed: "The original manuscript of Joseph Smith's translation leaves no doubt on the matter . . . the two are the same" (*Studies in Scripture, Volume Two, The Pearl of Great Price*, 25). The Book of Moses is 250 verses longer than the corresponding King James account.

At this point it is important to pause and note an important insight into what is meant by the term "translation" and what the process was. When the prophet Joseph Smith "translated" the Bible, he was not limited to what was found on the working page in front of him, whether that page was a sheet from the King James Version or a handwritten draft of his own early revision. The text seems to have been a "starting point," but the spirit of revelation was always an additional source of information. In the case of the Bible translation, the manuscript source was the King James Version. This suggested certain ideas, but the spirit apparently suggested many enlargements, backgrounds, and additional concepts not found on the page. Thus the term "translation," when referring to Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible, differs somewhat from that normally used when one thinks of translating languages. To a prophet, a revelation is a more vital and dependable source than a written text. This revelatory, progressive, open-ended process that was used in translating the Bible may give us a more instructive clue in understanding Joseph Smith's "translation" of the Egyptian papyrus from whence came the Book of Abraham. It may not have been a literal translation at all, and the Book of Abraham may go far beyond what was actually written on the papyrus.

What is now called the Book of Moses originally consisted of three separate revelations. The first is dated June 1830. The original manuscript is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. It was recorded at the beginning of the process of Joseph's inspired revision of the Bible at Harmony, Pennsylvania, and in the JST manuscript it was originally given the title "A Revelation given to Joseph the Revelator." This is the same information now published as Moses chapter 1.

The second revelation is also taken from the JST manuscript where it is entitled: “A Revelation given to the Elders of the Church of Christ on the first Book of Moses, Chapter First.” This was also in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. This revelation covers Moses 2, 3, and 4. There is no date given on this part of the manuscript, but from other evidences, it is determined that it was received and recorded partly in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and partly in Fayette, New York, between June and October 1830.

The third portion was also received in the process of making the JST and in that manuscript is titled: “A Revelation concerning Adam after he had been driven out of the Garden of Eden.” The content actually goes considerably beyond what is suggested in the title, for it not only deals with Adam but carries the biblical story from Adam down to Noah, with an especially long section about Enoch. This material makes up what is now Moses 5:1 to 8:12. Several dates are given in the manuscript itself for these materials, and also several scribes were involved in recording them. While the details of scribes and dates of these materials are not overridingly important, the dates are included in the Book of Moses, and they will be summarized here as written by Brother Robert J. Matthews:

The material comprising what we now call Moses 1:1-5:42 was recorded by Oliver Cowdery between June 1830 and October 21, 1830, at Fayette, New York. In October, Oliver Cowdery left New York on a mission to Ohio and Missouri (see D&C 32). Significantly, at this point in the manuscript the handwriting changes from that of Oliver Cowdery to that of John Whitmer. Whitmer recorded a few verses on 21 October 1830 (comprising what we now call Moses 5:43-51) and some additional material on 30 November 1830 (comprising what is now Moses 5:52-6:18). After John Whitmer had served as scribe for less than two months, he left for a short while because of a personal matter. Joseph Smith, anxious that the work continue as rapidly as possible, enlisted the help of his wife, Emma, who had already been called to act as scribe when necessary (D&C 25:6). She penned Moses 6:19-52. John Whitmer returned to his duties, and on 1 December 1830 he recorded what is now Moses 6:19-7:1. This also was done at Fayette, New York. At this time John Whitmer, having been previously called, left New York to engage in a mission to the Kirtland, Ohio area.

At this point Sidney Rigdon came into the picture. [It should be noted that much of the Moses material was already recorded before Sidney Rigdon entered the picture. He was neither the genius for, nor the recorder for, the early part of the Bible translation.] Brother Rigdon had joined the Church in Ohio a few weeks earlier (on 24 November 1830) and had arrived in Fayette, New York, on or about 7 December 1830. Soon after his arrival in Fayette he was appointed by revelation to be a scribe for the prophet Joseph (D&C 35:19-20). Sometime after Sidney’s arrival and before the end of December, in connection with the translation of the Bible, the prophet Joseph received an extended revelation about Enoch. The manuscript shows that this revelation was

originally recorded in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon. It is the material now printed as Moses chapter 7 and is the first known contact that Sidney Rigdon had with Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible. The translation was then interrupted long enough for Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to move their families to Kirtland, Ohio. As soon as they were settled, they began again to work on the new translation, completing what would become the book of Moses in February 1831.

The two continued to work on Genesis for another three months, ending their efforts in Genesis 24 because of instruction from the Lord. On March 7, 1831, the Savior commanded Joseph Smith to concentrate his efforts, for a time, on the New Testament (D&C 45:60).

The document the Prophet and his scribes had produced up to that point is now called Old Testament 1 (OT1). The Prophet then enlisted John Whitmer to make a backup copy of the whole. He completed that task on April 5, 1831. This copy is known today as Old Testament 2 (OT2). Though initially a backup, OT2 became the primary document on which Joseph Smith's scribes took his dictations and eventually finished his work on the Old Testament. Over the next two years, he edited OT2, trying to get the exact wording for the spiritual impressions he felt. This edited document became the primary source for our current book of Moses.

There is an interesting historical fluke regarding the translation of the Bible at this point. When Oliver Cowdery returned from the Lamanite mission in 1831, Joseph again enlisted his help on the translation. The Prophet dictated a number of changes, which Oliver recorded on OT1. Joseph himself made six additional changes to that text. All of these, however, were never transferred to OT2. Because of that, they were overlooked by later editors and thus never became part of the book of Moses (Jackson, Kent P., *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts*. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005], 2).

The amount of editing, emending, and correcting to OT2 reveals the hard work undertaken by the Prophet and his scribes as they sought to make a smooth-flowing text that reflected the whisperings of the Spirit. Since nearly all the corrections were made by Sidney Rigdon, it would appear that OT2 came into its final state by July 2, 1833, when Sidney ceased to work as the Prophet's scribe.

Though Joseph Smith wanted to publish his new rendition of the Bible, circumstances continually hindered his efforts. A number of people, however, took interest in the work, and at least two, John Whitmer and Hyrum Page, made personal copies of some parts of what would become the book of Moses. The first glimpse that most of the saints received of portions of the future book, however, came when they were printed in some of the church's early newspapers (*Ibid.*, 6-7).

It was Franklin D. Richards who brought the largest portions of Joseph Smith's work to the attention of church members, publishing them in Great Britain. As part of his Pearl of Great Price, he printed two excerpts drawn primarily from a copy or copies

of OT1. The first, titled “Extracts from the Prophecy of Enoch,” included Moses 6:43 through 7:69. The second, titled in part “The words of God, which he spake unto Moses” included material from Moses 1 through 4 and some of chapters 5 and 8. Therefore, the saints’ first exposure to the book did not contain Joseph Smith’s latest revisions. Even so, the flaws did not hinder the genuine work of the Spirit or the enthusiasm felt by the thousands of saints who read and rejoiced over the material.

By 1878, as noted earlier, church leaders decided to make an American edition of the Pearl of Great Price. They selected Orson Pratt to do the work. To him goes credit for creating the book of Moses as such. That he did not copy the material published by Elder Richards suggests he knew that his colleague did not use the latest drafts of Joseph Smith’s work. Having received a copy of the Inspired Version of the Holy Bible, produced by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, he felt that it was based on a more accurate and complete draft and therefore copied it into the new edition of the Pearl. He was correct. The RLDS editors had used the Prophet’s latest changes of OT2 and were very careful, if not perfect, in making their copy.

The RLDS 1869 published text has remained the basis of all editions of the Pearl since Orson Pratt first chose it, though some editorial changes have been made to the book of Moses since then. Thus, OT2 has served the Church well. In recent years, however, with the cooperation of the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), LDS scholars have gained access to the original documents once possessed by Joseph Smith. The most prominent of these scholars are Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews. The product of their efforts is *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, Utah: The Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004). This access has allowed these scholars to make careful comparisons and corrections.

The Church has been blessed by Orson Pratt’s work in producing the book of Moses almost as it stands today. Though a few editorial changes have been made, his efforts gave church members their first continuous reading of material so important to God that he restored it by direct revelation.

In speaking of the persecution of the infant Church of Christ, the prophet Joseph expressed his gratitude for the first of the three revelations which constitute the Book of Moses:

Amid all the trials and tribulations we had to wade through, the Lord, who well knew our infantile and delicate situation, vouchsafed for us a supply of strength, and granted us “line upon line of knowledge—here a little and there a little,” of which the following was a precious morsel (*HC,1:98*).

And it is a “precious morsel” indeed! It is the missing introduction not only to Genesis, but to the entire Bible. It is the key to a correct understanding of the scriptural accounts of Earth’s creation, in that it makes plain by whom, and by what power, and for

what purpose it was organized. Further, it establishes the now-disputed reality of Satan and exposes his on-going efforts to supplant Christ through his lies and deceptions. It also reveals the spiritual greatness of Moses and verifies the historicity of his divine appointment to “deliver my people from bondage, even Israel my chosen” (Moses 1:26). But most importantly, it provides a firm foundation of doctrine concerning the true character of God and the grand objective of his unending labors vis-a-vis mankind not only on this planet but on countless other worlds as well. In doing so, it topples the confining wall of scientific and religious ignorance surrounding man’s origin and reveals him to be a far-ranging citizen of the cosmos.

The Book of Moses has contributed great doctrinal principles that are of inestimable value to members of the Church. These include doctrines concerning the creation of the earth and the lives of Adam, Cain, Satan, Enoch, and Noah. This material, especially as pertaining to Enoch, constitutes some of the most significant evidence of Joseph Smith’s divine calling as a prophet. There are today apocryphal and archaeological evidences that tend to corroborate what Joseph Smith has given us about Enoch. These were not available in Joseph Smith’s day.

We have all noticed that the Book of Moses ends rather abruptly, and many have wondered why Elder Orson Pratt did not include more, especially to round out the story of Noah and the Flood. The answer is simple: What he published is what he had.

One additional point seems pertinent. In our discussion of the Joseph Smith Translation (again, see the supplemental article in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible*, we made the point that, generally speaking, it does not appear that we should regard the material in the JST as a “correction” of the scripture in the sense of restoring the text to its original autograph manuscript (the manuscript actually written by the hand of the original author) form. Rather, it should be understood to contain additional revelations, alternate readings, prophetic commentary or midrash, harmonizations, clarifications, as well as corrections to the original. It seems likely that in the case of the Book of Moses, Joseph felt that the Lord was restoring the writings of the Prophet Moses to their original form—that is, he was correcting the first six chapters of the book of Genesis. Or, at least, he was revealing to us in pure form a separate document actually written by Moses.

A Brief Early History of the Prophet Moses

Moses was born in secret to an unnamed Levite couple (Exodus 2:1-10). Because of the Egyptian decree to kill all newborn Hebrew males, the child was first hidden by his mother and then cast adrift on the Nile in a watertight container. As his sister Miriam watched a short distance away, Pharaoh's daughter found him, whereupon the sister stepped forward to suggest an appropriate nurse for the infant—none other than his natural mother. Thus the child was raised by his own mother and then returned to Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him and named him Moses, which the Bible explains as meaning “because I drew him out of the water” (Exodus 2:10).

Nothing is known of Moses's childhood. He reemerges as a young man who identified himself with his brethren, the enslaved Israelites. In an attempt to protect one of them, he killed an Egyptian and was forced to flee Egypt. He sojourned in exile in Midian (in the Arabian Peninsula), married Zipporah, a daughter of Jethro, a Midianite priest.

Apparently unprepared for his prophetic mission, Moses's attention was caught by a burning bush. Slowly his reaction changed from curiosity to awe as he realized that he was in God's presence (Exodus 3:1-6). Yet Moses was reluctant to accept the task of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and gave a series of excuses for which God provided retorts ranging from assurances of God's help to the appointing of Aaron as Moses's assistant.

Moses finally relented and the Lord allowed miraculous signs to the Israelites and to the Egyptians to convince them of his divine commission. To convince the Israelites, Moses, when asked, said the name of God: “I am that I am” (Exodus 3:12). He was also shown a series of signs he could show to the Israelites. To try to convince the Egyptian Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Moses changed a rod into a serpent and back to a rod again, changed the Nile River into blood. The latter was the first of ten plagues brought upon the Egyptian people including frogs, lice, flies, locusts, boils, a fatal illness among the Egyptians' cattle, a destructive hail mixed with fire, and a thick darkness. The final plague was the destruction at midnight of the firstborn son of each Egyptian household including the Pharaoh's. Then Pharaoh let the people go.

Moses was about eighty years old when his call came to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He led Israel for forty years and died [was translated] at the age of one hundred twenty (see Deuteronomy 29:5; 31:2).

Selections from the Book of Moses

An extract from the translation of the Bible as revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet, June 1830–February 1831

Moses Chapter 1 (June 1830) The Visions of Moses

Both scripture (Moses 1) and tradition hold that Moses received at least one vision not recorded in the biblical text. According to both Jubilees 1, a pseudepigraphical text, and Moses 1, this vision concerned the inhabitants of the earth throughout time, apparently until the coming of the messianic age (see Jubilees 1:4; Moses 1:8, 27-29, 35).

The book of Jubilees locates the “extra” vision after the exodus, during one of Moses’s two forty-day sojourns on Mount Sinai (see Jubilees 1:1-5). For a discussion and summary of Moses’s visits with the Lord on Mount Sinai, see the supplemental article, *Moses and Mount Sinai*). Moses 1 places the vision after the call at the burning bush (see Moses 1:17) and before the Exodus (see Moses 1:25-26). Following Moses’s call from the Lord to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, it seems plausible that the Lord felt Moses needed more mentoring before he would be qualified to become the prophet and leader of Israel. Perhaps the visions in Moses 1 were part of that instruction. As we consider Moses 1, it will become evident that the Lord is providing an “orientation” for Moses by means of the two visions recorded in that chapter. There is a precedent for this “orientation session” in the calls of other prophets. One who is called to serve in a prophetic position must obtain the divine point of view in order to serve fully and effectively, and to serve as God would have him serve.

Moses 1 describes an experience carefully orchestrated for Moses. In addition, it is a skillfully crafted introduction to the Creation account and what results from the Creation.

The First Vision of God (Moses 1:1-11)

1 The words of God, which he spake unto Moses at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain,

verse 1 “The words of God” There are a few expressions that are used in Hebrew texts as introductory words or opening phrases. These are called incipit titles. The word *incipit* is from the Latin meaning “here begins.” This phrase is one of those titles. These expressions also include “in the beginning” (see Genesis 1:1) and “in the land” (see Abraham 1:1).

“caught up” There is an implication that the place to which Moses was carried was sacred. The verbal phrase “caught up” implies both exaltation and being near the

presence of God, for God is always understood as “up” (Satan was cast “down”—Moses 4:3).

“into an exceedingly high mountain” This phrase suggests a place of revelation, a virtual temple. The location remains unknown (see verse 42; compare 1 Nephi 11:1).

2 And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence.

verse 2 “And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him” Seeing and hearing (“see with their eyes” “hear with their ears”) are the basis for absolute knowledge or absolute testimony. They obviate the need for faith. The phrase “face to face” implies intimacy in the form of an embrace or touch, that is, face next to face (see the reference to *touching* in Abraham 3:11-12). Seeing God evidently involves much more than a simple act of looking upon him. We are reminded of the promise that those who “see my face” will “know that I am” (D&C 93:1). Other Old Testament prophets who shared in this blessed experience include Enoch (see Moses 7:3-11), Abraham (see Abraham 3:11-21, and the brother of Jared (see Ether 3:13-28). We are thus reminded that “face to face” meetings with the Lord are filled with more than simply beholding him.

We must never regard the doctrine of the Godhead—that the Father and the Son have eternal bodies of flesh and bone—as merely an interesting and isolated feature of our understanding of God. The true nature of God is fundamental for understanding ourselves, our relationship with God, and our eternal future and possibilities. God is an exalted man in whose image we are. It is often said that God is an anthropomorphic being, meaning that he is in the image of man. While this is not incorrect, it is more accurate to say that man is a theomorphic being (in the image of God), since the human body is literally patterned after the body of the Father.

It should be noted that “moral anthropomorphism”—that man is in the moral image of God—is generally accepted by Christian theologians in lieu of the physical anthropomorphism intended in Genesis 1:26 and elsewhere (compare Genesis 5:3). Moral anthropomorphism implies that what God considers right and wrong applies fully to man.

The Latter-day Saint concept of salvation stands or falls on the declaration: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit” (D&C 130:22). If God is the immaterial, omnipresent, spirit essence affirmed by traditional Christianity, then the Latter-day Saint doctrine of exaltation with its component elements of eternal marriage, endless spirit progeny, and progression toward godhood is manifestly untenable. On the other hand, if the Latter-day Saint definition of God is correct, then the god of the creeds is exposed as nothing more than a myth conceived in the minds of theologians of the fourth and later centuries. Because these men co-mingled

philosophy with scripture, millions of Christians have been robbed of the instinctive, intuitive truth they possessed in their childhood. They may never recover this truth until they stand before the Lord at the last judgment.

Addressing this thought, Rodney Turner wrote:

Knowing who and what God is is the key to the mystery of man's own identity and potential. For as Joseph Smith observed: "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves" (*TPJS*, 343). To know what God is is to know what man is—and what he may become. The loss of this knowledge goes far to explain the present plight of humanity. Man, like water, cannot rise higher than his beginnings. If an ever-increasing number of men and women are choosing to wallow in the mire of carnality, we must not forget that they are taught that the human race was spawned in mire. We have little desire to reach for the stars if we do not believe that we came from the stars. That we did is the message of the Restored Gospel. This is why The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints testifies that the origin of man is the potential destiny of man (*Studies in Scripture, Volume 2, The Pearl of Great Price*, 45).

Brother Turner's comment is based in part on the idea that, without the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, man has traditionally been taught that the origins of mortal man are steeped in wickedness and carnality. This is a carry over from the Gnostic philosophic teaching that this world was created by one of the arrogant and rebellious sons of God. He was considered to be a lying demon and not god at all. Gnostics called him by many names—all of them derogatory—names like "Saklas," the blind one; "Samael," god of the blind; or "the Demiurge," the lesser power. This Gnostic doctrine declares man to be a union of (1) a body, which, being the creation of the Demiurge, is essentially evil, and (2) a spirit, which, being derived from Deity, is essentially divine. The spirits thus imprisoned in evil bodies will be finally liberated, the power of this evil creator god will cease, and the earth will be dissolved into nothingness.

"the glory of God" The central theme of Moses 1 is the glory of God—the Father's continuing increase in it, his desire to endow his children with it, and Satan's efforts to rob men of it. See *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15.

"and the glory of God was upon Moses" Whenever a man or woman comes before the Lord in his glory, they must be transfigured or glorified by the Holy Ghost in order to endure the divine Presence. "For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God. Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God" (D&C 67:11-12). Joseph Smith stated: "God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire" (*TPJS*, 367). In verse 11 of this chapter, Moses reports that had he not been transfigured, "I should have withered and died in his presence" (Moses 1:11). An impenetrable shield of glory preserves the holiness of the celestial world and its

inhabitants from all corruption. The “natural man”—being devoid of the inspiration and higher influences of the Spirit of the Lord—can only understand and partake of the glories of this world and not of the celestial realm (1 Corinthians 2:14; Mosiah 3:19; Alma 26:21). For additional discussion of the phenomenon of transfiguration see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 14, *Transfiguration*.

We do not, of course, understand the actual physical nature of the process of transfiguration or glorification. This verse suggests that perhaps Moses was temporarily surrounded or enveloped with God’s glory or light as a protection to him while he was in the presence of God.

In a strictly worldly sense, the word *glory* has many connotations. It is commonly associated with the trappings of wealth, power, artistic and intellectual gifts, and those like factors which so often play such critical, yet capricious, parts in the lives of men and women. In the main, such glory is short-lived. What is fame today is forgotten tomorrow. For no glory can be more enduring than its source. Mortal men and mortal worlds can only produce mortal glory. Consequently, the “glory of the world” (D&C 10:19) is, by its very nature, a passing vanity. Being but the reflection of a transient state of affairs, it possesses no enduring existence of its own. It is a facade of reality, an illusion of the moment destined to be replaced by still another illusion when time and circumstance overtake it. Wealth, power, and the honors of men are rarely predicated upon one’s inherent moral and spiritual qualities. Regardless of how the world bows before these “idols,” they are deceptive measures of an individual’s real worth. They reveal what men possess, rather than what men are. In doing so, they fail the critical test of true glory: they do not originate with, nor bring us to, God.

An extreme example of one who thought that glory can be had without virtue is Lucifer, who “sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (D&C 76:28). In his lust for power, he would have dethroned God himself! He is the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the god of all those in it who would gratify their desires without regard to the cost to themselves or to others. Cain—who shares the title of Perdition with Lucifer (Moses 5:24; D&C 76:25-26)—“gloried” in his murder of Abel and in the acquisition of his sheep (Moses 5:33). But the price was high: Cain lost his very soul. And in the end it was all for naught. His brother’s flocks have long since crumbled to dust, and Cain is now doomed to wander in torment the dark, empty places of the second death (Jacob 3:11). Indeed, death will eventually claim everything that is not infused with life by the Spirit. For whatever is not of God must inevitably succumb to its own mortality (D&C 132:13-14). Only that which is endowed with immortal glory is immune to death.

In an immortal sense the word *glory* describes the light, spiritual intelligence, or spiritual attributes an individual possesses (D&C 93:36). Again, see the *The Concept of Light* in volume 1, chapter 15 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

3 And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?

verse 3 “And God spake unto Moses” It is clear that Moses is talking face to face with Jehovah, Jesus Christ, who speaks as though he were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority. See for example verse 6 of this chapter when the Savior refers to “mine Only Begotten” who “is and shall be the Savior.”

“I am the Lord God Almighty” The titles for Jesus Christ all have unique and rich meanings. The title “I am” is the divine title. In some of the revelations to Joseph Smith, our Savior introduces himself as “the Great I AM,” (D&C 29:1), or “the Great I AM, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (D&C 38:1). The title *Almighty* is linked to God’s creative acts. *Lord God* is associated with covenant making. The title *Endless* refers to God’s characteristic of being “without beginning of days or end of years” (see D&C 19:10-12).

4 And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease.

verse 4 “thou art my son” Here is the literal confirmation to Moses that he is a son of God. Some have viewed the use of the expression “thou art” as especially forming a bond between man and God. The divine name for God is I AM, and the mortal equivalent is “thou art” (see also verses 6, 7 and Moses 6:68).

“but not all” In contrast to Abraham’s vision of the cosmos (see Abraham 3:12), Moses’s visionary view was to concern only this earth (verses 33, 35). Again, we have here an example of Jehovah’s speaking as though he were the Father—by the principle of divine investiture of authority.

“works . . . and . . . words . . . never cease” All that the Lord does and says is forever pertinent and applicable.

5 Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth.

verse 5 “no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh” Beholding all of God’s glory is the same as being in the physical presence of an eternal celestial being who appears in his glory. Only a celestial eternal being, or a lesser being who is temporarily protected by being “transfigured” can tolerate this. Another implication of this verse is that such a vision as this will only come to the man whom the Lord is ready to bring into his presence permanently. Hence, “no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth.”

6 And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all.

verse 6 “I have a work for thee” The Lord reiterates Moses’s call, received initially at the burning bush (Exodus 3:10) to go to Egypt and bring the captive people of Israel out.

“thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten” Here Jehovah refers to himself in the third person by the principle of the divine investiture of authority. He comments upon a similitude, undoubtedly both physical (Moses 2:26-27; Ether 3:15-16) and spiritual (the scriptures speak of a spiritual comparison—see Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22-23) between Moses and Jesus Christ.

The phrase “Only Begotten” anticipates Christ’s future conception into mortality (see John 1:4).

“is and shall be” Perhaps these two forms of the verb “to be” connect to the divine name I AM. It is interesting to note that here, centuries prior to his atoning sacrifice in Gethsemane and on the cross, he refers to himself as the Savior. By virtue of his commitment to go down and atone for the sins of the world, his atoning sacrifice was already functional in the lives of all of God’s children at whatever phase of existence they were in.

“there is no God beside me” The Father and the Son are, in a profound way, “one God,” and besides this one God, there is no other supreme God.

“all things are present with me, for I know them all” This statement can have two possible meanings. First, “all things” may refer to others of God’s works (other than the earth) of which he is constantly aware. The second possible meaning is that “all things” refers to all things of the earth and that God is constantly aware of all things of the earth past, present, and future.

As a side note, Greek thought—Platonic and Neo-Platonic—holds that God exists and acts outside of a *temporal* or *time* frame of reference. God is held to be independent of or beyond time. The words used to define this condition include transtemporal, supratemporal, or nontemporal. This thinking has been accepted into the dogma of most Christian and non-Christian churches. The thesis that God is beyond time has sometimes been introduced to account for God’s omniscience or foreknowledge. Only if God is somehow transtemporal, it is argued, can he view past, present, and future as “one eternal now.” This traditional concept of “out-of-time” omniscience does not derive either from the Old or the New Testament but is borrowed from Greek philosophy.

The LDS understanding differs in this regard from almost all other religious dogma. We understand that God exists in eternity and eternity is time which goes on forever. At God’s own supreme and unsurpassable level, he has a past, a present, and

a future. Neither he nor his creations can return to or change the past. He has become what he is through eons of time gone by. God anticipates the future. It is “present” before him, but it is still future. When the future occurs, it will occur for the first time to him and to his creatures. Eternity consists of any number of specific “times.” When we use the phrase “time and all eternity,” we mean now and forever. The word *time* often refers to this mortal phase of our existence. In this sense, the time will come when “time shall be no longer” (D&C 84:100; 88:110). In other words, this mortal phase will be no longer. Time had no beginning and will have no end. It unfolds continually in one direction and never repeats. In a cosmic sense, the reckoning of time is according to the rotations of the spheres. It is presumed that God, angels, men, and prophets reckon time differently depending upon the sphere on which they reside (see Abraham 3; D&C 130:4).

7 And now, behold, this one thing I show unto thee, Moses, my son, for thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee.

verse 7 “this one thing I show unto thee” Here God sets the limits of the vision that he is about to open to Moses. It will refer to this world and not to all of God’s creations (see the commentary on Moses 1:4; 33-35).

8 And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered.

verse 8 “Moses beheld the world” We may distinguish between the “world” which refers to the human inhabitants of this earth—“all the children of men”—and the “earth” which refers to the physical earth itself.

This phrase becomes “beheld the earth” in Moses 1:27. Note there that “there was not a particle of it which he [Moses] did not behold.”

9 And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.

verse 9 “And the presence of God withdrew from Moses” As previously noted, in order to endure God’s presence, Moses had to be enveloped in that presence—which is to say his glory or light. It was this protective divine presence that withdrew from Moses.

“And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.” Obviously the process of being transfigured is an enervating one. Moses lost his physical strength as a result of the intense spiritual manifestation. We see Ezekiel suffering from the same temporary disability following his first vision, wherein he was unable to do much for a

week (see Ezekiel 3:15), as well as Joseph Smith's weakened condition after his first vision (see JS-H 1:20).

10 And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.

verse 10 “for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed” Moses is obviously overwhelmed and overpowered by the grandeur and majesty of his experience. Many have wondered about the literal truth of this phrase since whatever man is, it seems to be the focus and purpose of God's very existence (Moses 1:39). This phrase likely refers only to the fact that Moses realized his mortal strength is puny, and he was entirely overpowered by God's presence.

11 But now mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him.

verse 11 “mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes” In an inspired reflection, Moses concludes that his vision involved more than his natural eyesight. He also concludes with a further truism that, without divine help, without being transfigured, he “should have withered and died in [God's] presence.”

One may observe that it is remarkable that the Lord himself, the person most in demand in the universe, was willing to spend time with Moses. There was not only divine self-disclosure, and also conversation, teaching, and tutoring, as well as further revelation and visions. The sheer amount of divine time spent and divine energy used in this meeting indicates the depth of love that the Lord possesses both for Moses and for those whom the Moses will lead and instruct.

The Vision of Satan (Moses 1:12-22)

Moses now has an encounter with Satan. It would seem that in the training of prophets by the Lord, Satan almost seems to demand “equal time.” In being tried and tested to become prophets, these chosen servants experience, doubtless under the tutelage of the Lord, sublime highs and hellish lows (see also Moses 7:35-44, 67-69; Abraham 1:12-15; 3:12; JS-H 15-16). The Lord provides them with experiences that give them a divine perspective. These experiences both sober and sanctify them and provide them a perspective that prevents them from ever viewing the world and its inhabitants in quite the same way as before.

12 And it came to pass that when Moses had said these words, behold, Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me.

verse 12 “Satan came tempting him” Unlike most secular biblical scholars in the world today, we do accept the notion that Satan is a real personality. It seems apparent that because of Moses’s weakened condition, Satan chose this moment to reveal himself in an effort to turn Moses from the path the Lord had set him on. It is also apparent that Satan’s actions were evidence of his desperation, since he rarely makes such appearances. On this occasion Satan sought to reverse the Lord’s efforts both to free an enslaved people from bondage and to reveal the creative processes to Moses. We may easily see the correlation between Satan’s overt temptation of Moses and that of the boy prophet Joseph Smith. In both cases, much of profound significance was hanging in the balance.

While the verb *to tempt* can mean to entice, it also carries the meaning to test or to try. Perhaps both meanings are pertinent here. It is not clear how Moses learned the identity of Satan.

“Moses, son of man, worship me” The phrase “son of man” is a negative one, emphasizing here that Moses is a mere mortal. This title is unrelated to that title by which the Savior is occasionally referred to in the scriptures—the “Son of man.” This latter title emphasized that Jesus’s earthly Father is “Man of holiness.” Satan is here addressing one of God’s mightiest prophets. Moses had been taught of his true eternal importance by the Lord: “Thou art my son; . . . in the similitude of mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:4, 6). In typical fashion, Satan challenges that divine testimony and tries to drag Moses down to the level of unregenerate humanity. Moses was alert to Satan’s ruse, and rejected his salutation.

verses 13-18 In these verses Moses will lecture Satan which will cause Satan to become so angry that he loses control of himself and reveals himself as the miserable desperate creature he really is.

The inner strength of Moses and his and commitment to justice are evidenced here, as they were also evidenced previously in Moses’s life by his reaction to the Egyptian overseer who was punishing the Hebrew slave (see Exodus 2:11-12). This same strength was also made evident by the fact that he was not cowed by the voice of God during his call at the burning bush, as illustrated by his perceptive questions (see Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10).

13 And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?

verse 13 “Moses looked” In the second handwritten manuscript of Joseph Smith’s new translation of the Bible, which was copied in March 1831 and became the

working copy for the JST, this expression is “Moses lifted up his eyes and looked”—a more Semitic or Hebrew rendering.

“Who art thou?” This classic question, which appears in other contexts at crucial moments (compare Exodus 5:2; Mosiah 11:27; Alma 18:18), stands as a challenge to Satan’s demand “worship me” (verse 12), and it underscores Moses’s courage.

“For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten” Moses here expresses one of the most important doctrinal concepts about the relationship between humans and God.

Moses would not be robbed. He knew who he was. He had been told in verse 6. He would not be made less. Nor would he worship any God but “the God of glory” (Moses 1:20). Here is an important lesson for the saints of our dispensation. They must not forget who they are by yielding themselves to the influences of the world and their fallen nature.

“where is thy glory?” Moses had personally experienced, through the influence of the Spirit of God, the glory of God (verse 2). While glory may refer mainly to the light of Christ, experiencing God’s glory is far more than a visual experience. Once an individual has had that experience, he is far better able to detect its imitations. Light can judge darkness, but darkness is incapable of judging light. Moses could discern Satan’s veiled darkness because he had experienced true light. To some degree, this same ability extends to all who “have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide” (D&C 45:57).

Since most of mankind is ignorant of true glory, the vast majority of them are easily deceived by Satan’s counterfeits. They are blinded by the many false doctrines with which Satan has “veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness” (Moses 7:26). The spiritually blind will worship darkness in the name of light.

Satan longs to have the Lord’s noble and great ones bow down to him. It is not so much the number as it is the quality of his victories that seems to please him the most. The ignorant worship of the masses of mankind is probably less satisfying to Satan than the knowledgeable submission of a single son of God. Elder Wilford Woodruff observed: “When he [Satan] overcomes a man that has made a covenant with God, who has been baptized in this Church and kingdom, he gains a greater victory over him than over one who never made any profession” (*JD*, 2:198). Our human nature causes us to feel that *who* praises us matters more than the mere fact that we are praised.

14 For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him. But I can look upon thee in the natural man. Is it not so, surely?

15 Blessed be the name of my God, for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me, or else where is thy glory, for it is darkness unto me? And I can judge between thee and God; for God said unto me: Worship God, for him only shalt thou serve.

verse 15 “for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me” The process of transfiguration or glorification of Moses involved somehow the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God. The implication here is that the conditions and effects of Moses’s transfiguration had not entirely passed.

“I can judge between thee and God” Also, we learn that transfiguration is more than just a protective process. A person who is transfigured is better able to discern spiritual light and spiritual darkness.

“for God said unto me: Worship God, for him only shalt thou serve” This command had been received by Moses on a previous occasion. It could have come during the call at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-4:17) or during God’s earlier appearance to him (Moses 1:2-8). The mortal Christ had the same rejoinder for Satan when he was being tempted by him (Matthew 4:10; compare Deuteronomy 6:13).

16 Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not; for God said unto me: Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten.

verse 16 “Get thee hence, Satan” This demand is the first of Moses’s four orders that Satan depart, illustrating Satan’s persistence and unwillingness to leave (see Moses 1:18, 20, 21). In fact, Satan leaves only when commanded “in the name of the Only Begotten” (Moses 1:21).

17 And he also gave me commandments when he called unto me out of the burning bush, saying: Call upon God in the name of mine Only Begotten, and worship me.

verse 17 “he also gave me commandments” The commandments quoted here by Moses from his call at the burning bush form one of those pieces that has been lost or excised from the biblical text—“Call upon God in the name of mine Only Begotten, and worship me.” Here we can test the observation that the text of the Bible has suffered at the hands of those who have knowingly or unknowingly altered it (see Moses 1:23).

“when he called unto me out of the burning bush” This phrase places Moses’s present experience at a point following God’s call to him to lead the Hebrew slaves to freedom. We have previously speculated that Moses’s experience in Moses 1 might have occurred shortly following his call rather than following the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

18 And again Moses said: I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan.

verse 18 “his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee” See the commentary for verse 15.

19 And now, when Moses had said these words, Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me.

verse 19 “Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth” The actions of Satan illustrate one of his methods for achieving his purposes—that of intimidation. It seems to have worked—at least momentarily—when “Moses began to fear exceedingly” (verse 20).

20 And it came to pass that Moses began to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell. Nevertheless, calling upon God, he received strength, and he commanded, saying: Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory.

verse 20 “as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell” As with the vision of God, which typically expands to reveal more than God’s countenance or personage, the vision of Satan now expands to include a view of hell itself. It is not clear exactly which “hell” is referred to here—outer darkness or the spirit world. It would seem that Satan’s motive for opening this view to Moses was to increase Moses’s fear. It is a vision that few have seen.

The reader should also make note here of the juxtaposition between revealed light and smothering darkness. A key example of the manifestation of good and evil close together is that of Jesus, who received an affirming spiritual witness at his baptism and then was beset by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Similarly, in the case of Moses in Moses 1, darkness in the form of Satan followed the initial, illumining vision from God. By contrast, in the case of Joseph Smith, the power of darkness tried to discourage him from praying before the light came and delivered him (see JS-H 1:15-16). What is the conclusion? To each person who seeks divine light, darkness may also come in one form or another—either before or after, according to these models—to test whether that person can stand more of the light.

“calling upon God, he received strength” Receiving strength is exactly what happened to Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36, 38).

“Depart from me, Satan” Notice here that Satan does not depart when Moses commands him. He does so only when Moses invokes the name of the “Only Begotten” in the next verse.

21 And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook; and Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan.

verse 21 “Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook” Now it is Satan’s turn to fear and tremble. Does Satan have influence over the elements? Does he have power? Can he, in fact, command the elements so that they will obey him or at least tremble in sympathy with him? Satan has power only because there are some intelligences who are willing to obey him. It would seem that a part of the intelligences which make up the inanimate materials of the earth are basically disobedient and inclined to follow Satan (Moses 7:48). Likely the majority of these intelligences are, however, disinclined to follow Satan. Interestingly, God’s power also comes from those intelligences who obey him.

22 And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and he departed hence, even from the presence of Moses, that he beheld him not.

verse 22 “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth” The very agony of Satan in hell is unmasked before Moses’s very eyes. One of the most profound aspects of Moses’s encounter with Satan, is watching Satan’s emotional deterioration and his unmasking of his own miserable self in response to Moses’s rejection of him. Satan betrays his innate frustration and misery as he undergoes a transition from an arrogant would-be god, into a raging liar (“I am the Only Begotten, worship me”), and then into a tormented creature overcome “with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth” when he is commanded to depart “in the name of the Only Begotten”—the one title that Lucifer had so desperately wanted to hold (Moses 4:1).

23 And now of this thing Moses bore record; but because of wickedness it is not had among the children of men.

verse 23 “because of wickedness it is not had among the children of men” The account of this incident on Moses’s own “mount of temptation” was expurgated from Moses’s writings “because of wickedness.” But whose wickedness? It is the wickedness among those who potentially might have been recipients of this record. Because of a general wickedness among the people the record could not be left in human custody. Satan has succeeded in suppressing the record. Generally speaking, he has covered his tracks rather well. So well, in fact that most of the learned scholars of our day are quite amused by the “naive” notion that such a being as Satan actually exists (2 Nephi 28:22).

The Second Vision of God, the earth, and countless other earths (Moses 1:24-41)

24 And it came to pass that when Satan had departed from the presence of Moses, that Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven, being filled with the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son;

verse 24 “the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son”

We will learn in Moses 6:61 that one of the titles of the Holy Ghost (his titles reflect his various roles) is the “record of heaven.” His spiritual light or influence contains in abundance a confirmation or witness or testimony of the reality of the Father and the Son. He is inclined to give (to “bear”) this confirmation to those who seek it in righteousness.

25 And calling upon the name of God, he beheld his glory again, for it was upon him; and he heard a voice, saying: Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God.

verse 25 “he beheld his glory again” Moses again saw God and his light or glory.

“he heard a voice” Some scriptural scholars have noted a correlation between a specific mention of the Lord’s voice and important spiritual moments in the history of mankind such as the beginning of a new dispensation. At other times it correlates with especially far reaching actions by the Lord. Compare the characterization of John the Baptist as the “voice” (Mark 1:3-4; see also D&C 1:1). Here the Lord’s voice announces the beginning of a grand revelation about the earth, a new dispensation, and the beginning of the Exodus.

“thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God” This promise is a prophecy which likely alludes to the miraculous parting of the Red Sea.

“as if thou wert God” God avers a truism about all who act with God’s authority in his name and in his stead, as Moses is about to do. They truly function as if they were God (D&C 1:38).

26 And lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days; for thou shalt deliver my people from bondage, even Israel my chosen.

verse 26 “I am with thee” What does it mean that God is *with* an individual? One is reminded of the Lord’s promise to his twelve Nephite apostles: “Verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 27:28). Such an individual is divinely favored even to the point of being sealed up to eternal life.

“thou shalt deliver my people from bondage” We will speak on a few occasions in this commentary on the prophet Moses’s being a metaphorical symbol of

the Savior who will come to deliver his people from bondage, both spiritual and physical (see Acts 3:22-23; Deuteronomy 18:15).

The Lord speaks of the Exodus as being yet in the future. Again, we are reminded that the visions in Moses 1 likely occurred between the time of Moses initial call at the burning bush and the Exodus.

27 And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God.

verse 27 “cast his eyes and beheld the earth” Moses was allowed to see as God sees, allowing him to behold “all of it [the earth]” (compare the descriptions of God’s sight in Moses 2:4, 10, 12, 18, 31).

“there was not a particle of it which he did not behold” Now Moses experiences a magnification of his first vision (see verse 8). He again beholds the earth, the physical earth itself (see verse 8), but this time with the penetrating powers of the Spirit. There was not a particle of it which he did not behold. Perhaps this portends the great visions of the creation of the earth which we will read in Moses chapters 2 and 3.

28 And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore.

verse 28 “And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof” In addition to seeing the earth, he also saw the *world*—the inhabitants of the earth. There was not a living soul upon the earth he did not behold. Nor did he simply view them en masse as one might look at a vast concourse of people without discerning any one individual. By the incomprehensible power of the Holy Ghost, he perceived each man, woman, and child comprising the human race at one and the same time! In doing so, he experienced something of the omnipresent nature of the Spirit of the Lord.

29 And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof.

verse 29 “he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth” Perhaps there are two ways we might interpret this phrase. One way might be that as part of this second vision, Moses beheld many earths. It would then appear that the term “earth” is reserved for those worlds which are organized to provide habitations for the children of the Gods. This interpretation seems the more likely.

Alternatively, some might object to this interpretation because of Moses 1:35 which suggests that the Lord intended to give to Moses only an account of this earth. In

this case then we must interpret the “many lands” as parts of this earth, and each of these lands then would be called earth.

30 And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?

verse 30 In this verse Moses asks two most profound and searching questions. It has just been suggested to Moses that God had created other worlds and that there were many inhabitants thereof. Furthermore, these mighty works were done by the deliberate action of God. Moses then asks two questions: (1) “Why did you do it?” (“Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so.”) and (2) “How did you do it?” (“and by what thou madest them?”) These are two of the most fundamental questions of existence, and we must be impressed with the depth of Moses’s perception and presence of mind even to think to ask such things.

In answer to Moses’s first question as to the “why” of things, the Lord replied that he had made all these things because “this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). In other words, building worlds and populating them with people is the kind of work that God does. And why does he do it?—for the salvation and exaltation of his children.

In answer to the second question as to the “how” of things, Moses was informed that all things were done by the power of the Only Begotten, but that only an account of the creation of this world would be given to Moses. Also, subsequently he will be told of the six creative periods of the formation of the earth. Thus, much of the information in the early chapters of Genesis actually seems to have been given to Moses in answer to these two specific questions—“Why?” and “How?”

Answers are always more meaningful to us if we know what the questions are. These two basic questions are not to be found today in our current text of Genesis, but fortunately they have been made available to us through the visions of Moses as revealed to Joseph Smith. We cannot overestimate the value of Moses 1 as an introduction or preface to the book of Genesis.

31 And behold, the glory of the Lord was upon Moses, so that Moses stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face. And the Lord God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me.

verse 31 “**Moses stood in the presence of God**” The answers to Moses’s questions “Why?” and “How?” are so sacred that he is brought into the presence of God to receive them. Further, the answers will open up the revelation to Moses about the creation recorded hereafter in Moses chapters 2-3. This sequence is suggestive of temple worship, as temple celebrations are orchestrated to bring a worshiper into the presence of the Lord and to commemorate the creative acts of God (see Psalm 24).

“Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me” God possesses perfect wisdom. But what is wisdom? How is it different from knowledge? Wisdom consists of abundant knowledge possessed by an individual who places all of his knowledge in a correct eternal perspective. The knowledge consists of the practical and the theoretical, but it is consistently applied correctly according to God’s purposes. The eternal perspective can only come by the influence of the Spirit of God. It is a revealed perspective and can come in no other way. He who possesses knowledge without an eternal perspective often becomes skeptical and even cynical about the possibility of any eternal or spiritual application of his knowledge. He is the intellectual. The wise individual fully realizes that his knowledge is limited, even puny compared to all the knowledge that is now available or that will become available. On the other hand, the intellectual feels that his knowledge is all that is available on any given subject, and he is proud of his knowledge. He resists spiritual concepts, as they may suggest that earthly knowledge is not yet complete, and he wants badly to have the last word on any subject.

In the context of this verse, God’s eternal perspective may be simply summarized in Moses 1:39: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” God obviously possesses all knowledge, but he utilizes that knowledge for his own eternal and spiritual purposes. Therein is his wisdom.

32 And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.

verse 32 “by the word of my power” Here the Father defines the phrase “word of my power.” The phrase refers to his Only Begotten Son—Jesus Christ. Though the Father was ordained by the council of the Gods to be the Creator, he has delegated the actual labor or creation to his Only Begotten Son. Another phrase with identical meaning is “the power of my Spirit” (see D&C 29:30 and its commentary).

“Word” is a translation of the rich Greek word *Logos*. *Logos* is a word with great depth and many nuances. It is not merely an assemblage of sounds—a “word” in the usual sense. *Logos* is the outward active expression of a deep inner meaning. That inner meaning may be much more than a single thought or group of thoughts. It may be a book, a group of books, a library, a group of libraries, or much more. In this particular case, the inner meaning is the essence and the will of the Father. Jesus Christ is and ever will be the outward and dynamic expression of both his Father’s essence and his Father’s will.

“who is full of grace and truth” Two of the Savior’s most important virtues are grace and truth. Grace is the love which God has for each of the Father’s creations, particularly that aspect of that love which inclines him to extend to all intelligences blessings which they do not actually deserve, according to the criteria of the law justice. Truth is the completeness of knowledge and attributes he possesses.

33 And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.

verse 33 “worlds without number have I created” Though the Lord will not reveal, to the prophets who minister to this earth, much about these worlds (see verse 35), he does make it clear to us that they exist and that he delegated their creation to his Son, Jesus Christ. See also Abraham’s declaration “I saw those things which his [God’s] hands had made . . . and I could not see the end thereof” (Abraham 3:12). Though we know little about them, other than that they exist, it is an interesting question to ask: Do they know much about us? For a discussion of this question, see *Our Unique Earth* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 19.

34 And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many.

verse 34 “Adam, which is many” There are two ways in which we might interpret this phrase. First, it could refer to the many first men on the “worlds without number.” Or, it may point to all men of the earth. Because God had restricted Moses’s vision to “this earth” (verse 35), the latter explanation may be the most correct. In this connection, it is worth noting that the noun *adam* in Hebrew means “human being” (Frances Brown et. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 9).

35 But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.

verse 35 “only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you” The extent of the Lord’s creations is vast beyond our comprehension. Moses, however, is to be given only an account of the creation of this earth.

“there are many worlds that have passed away” The creation of the earth came long after the creation of numerous other worlds whose histories had already run their course (see verse 38).

36 And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content.

verse 36 “tell me concerning this earth” In light of verse 35, Moses appropriately petitions the Lord regarding this earth and its inhabitants.

“and also the heavens” And also the rest of thy universe.

37 And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

verse 37 “they are numbered unto me” God knows individually all of his creations.

38 And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

verse 38 Some have found in this verse the suggestion that another earth had previously occupied our present orbit around our sun. It was removed to make room for our earth.

The concepts of the birth and death and evolution of stars and other heavenly bodies with lifetimes in the billions of years are familiar to the modern astronomer. This modern knowledge has been slow to come, however, and it has been arrived at only after long, tedious research. Scarcely fifty years ago little was known of such matters, or even suspected by astronomers. When the Pearl of Great Price was published, a little more than a century ago, these concepts would have been regarded as little more than idle, fanciful speculations. It is remarkable, therefore, that they were known by the prophets of old.

39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

verse 39 This verse is the most oft quoted verse from among the modern-day scriptures of the Restoration. It is simply a cogent and powerful explanation of why our universe was created.

40 And now, Moses, my son, I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which thou standest; and thou shalt write the things which I shall speak.

verse 40 “I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which thou standest” Lest Moses should desire to know more about the other worlds he had seen, the Lord cautions him that he will speak to him only of this earth. In this way, the Lord introduces Moses to an account of the creation of this world which follows in Moses 2-3.

41 And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe.

verse 41 “I will raise up another like unto thee” The Lord prophesies of Joseph Smith. The latter days are a time when many plain and precious truths shall

have been removed from the Bible—"the book which thou shalt write"—and when even the incomplete scriptures will be ignored. In the latter days, Joseph will bring forth the completeness of the Lord's word to the people through the Book of Mormon and other latter-day revelations, including the writings of the Pearl of Great Price and other writings in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. How blessed we are to have access to a true account of those marvelous things that happened so long ago!

42 (These words were spoken unto Moses in the mount, the name of which shall not be known among the children of men. And now they are spoken unto you. Show them not unto any except them that believe. Even so. Amen.)

verse 42 This verse is an inspired editorial insertion made by the prophet Joseph.

"the mount, the name of which shall not be known" These words affirm that the mountain where Moses received the visions really exists. Perhaps it is the holy mount where Moses received his call at the burning bush or one near it.

"Show them not unto any except them that believe" These are the Lord's instructions to Joseph Smith. The materials in the book of Moses are not intended for those without the Church, rather for those in the Church who desire further knowledge. This verse has the spirit of Matthew 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

"now they are spoken unto you" These words are spoken unto you, Joseph.

Moses Chapter 2 (June–October 1830) The Spirit Creation of the Earth

In this chapter, we will consider Moses 2 and Genesis 1 concomitantly. Though there is some opinion to the contrary, I will make the case that these two chapters provide us with a description of the spirit creation of the earth. I have come to believe the evidence for this is compelling.

It is suggested that, prior to beginning a study of this chapter and its commentary, the student read carefully *The Creation in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 3.

The creation is best understood when it is separated into three creative periods or epochs:

1. The first creative period is the spirit creation of all the earth. It includes the spirit births of all “living” things—plants, animals, humans. It also includes the spirit creation of all the inanimate things of the earth. In a sense these inanimate things are also “born” in that the intelligences designated to inhabit the inanimate materials of the earth are embodied with spirit matter.

2. The second creative period is the preparatory physical creation of the earth and all things on the earth except for the family of Adam. This period likely required millions and even billions of years to complete. When the earth was finally completed—when it contained “enough and to spare” (D&C 104:17)—it was ready for the third creative epoch.

3. The third creative period was the final preparation of the earth wherein it was readied for habitation by the family of man. All modern life forms were placed upon the earth. This period also included the preparation of the Garden of Eden and the introduction of man to the earth. This period of creation was far shorter in years than the second preparatory creation.

Unless one acknowledges these three distinct creative periods, the scriptural accounts of the creation can be confusing. The first creative period, the spirit creation, is described in Genesis 1 and Moses 2. The second creative period is described only in Abraham 4. Neither the book of Genesis nor the book of Moses describes this period. The final or third creative period is described in Genesis 2, Moses 3, and Abraham 5.

God divides each of the three creative periods into separate periods of time that he calls “days.” We are never told how long these days were. Neither do we learn whether or not they were equal in length.

The First Creative Period: The Spirit Creation of the Earth

The supposition that Moses 2 and Genesis 1 are accounts of the *spirit* creation of the earth is foundational and fundamental to this commentary. Not all students of the scriptures feel that there is an account of the spirit creation to be found in the scriptures.

The two creation accounts in the book of Moses—(1) Moses 2 (corresponds to Genesis 1) and (2) Moses 3 (corresponds to Genesis 2)—as we have discussed, are accounts of two different creation events. Moses 2 is an account of the spirit creation of the earth and Moses 3 is the account of the final preparation of the earth and the placement of modern life forms, including man, upon the earth. The student who first studies these two creation accounts in Moses—particularly if he or she fails to acknowledge that these accounts are describing two distinct creative periods—is often confused by the inconsistencies and even contradictions in the two accounts.

Some schools of biblical inquiry have explained away these differences in Moses's creation accounts (Genesis 1 and 2) by assuming that Moses found two different accounts of the creation among the myths of his people and included both of them in his history. Since these myths most likely came from different sources, they reason, there must have been some errors in one or both of them, and this accounts for their differences. We know this is not a valid explanation of the differences since Moses chapters 2 and 3 (two chapters which correlate most closely with Genesis 1 and 2) were both directly revealed to the prophet Joseph by the earth's very Creator.

Let us look at these contradictions and inconsistencies between Moses 2 (Genesis 1) and Moses 3 (Genesis 2):

1. The order of creation: In Moses 2 the order of creation is plants, animals, man and woman. In Moses 3 the order is different—man, plants, animals, woman.

The order of creation is different simply because the two accounts relate the sequences of two entirely different creation processes. Moses 2 speaks of the creation of the spirit earth and the introduction to the spirit earth of the spirits of men and women whose spirits births was part of the creation of the spirit earth. Moses 3 describes the “creation” of Adam—actually, his physical birth and his placement on the physical earth. This is obviously an entirely different event that the placement of all spirit men and women on the spirit earth described in Moses 2. Moses 3 then continues with the account of the “creation” or placement on the earth of modern life forms—plants and animals—followed by the appearance of Eve.

The description of the “creation” of plants and animals during this third creative period is incompletely understood. We know it refers to the placement on the earth of modern life forms that were to inhabit the earth concurrently with the human family. Archaeologists have convincingly demonstrated that in the early or “prehistoric” age of the earth—the second creative period—there were many plant and animal life forms that have long since become extinct and have not been known to exist on the earth since man has been on the earth. It is possible, I suppose, that the Lord removed, by divine edict, the early life forms from the earth between the second and third creative periods. But it seems more likely they simply become extinct due to natural forces prior to the onset of the third creative period.

During the third creative period in Moses 3, the modern life forms were initially placed on earth in a “paradisiacal” or immortal form. They would become mortal only after the fall of Adam and Eve. It is not clear whether the description of the third creative period applies to the world at large, or only to a localized area—the Garden of Eden. Eve’s advent onto the physical earth, as mentioned, is described following the organizing of the paradisiacal plants and animals.

2. A scripture often quoted as referring to the spirit creation requires a bit of explanation, particularly when it is closely examined. The passage is Moses 3:5:

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air.

This verse of scripture is found at the transition between the first creative period (the spirit creation) and the two periods wherein the physical or “natural” earth is created. The phrases “in the earth,” “it grew,” and “flesh” all apply to the natural or physical earth and not the spirit earth. It is only when God’s spirit creations are embodied with mortal physical matter that they are “flesh” and “naturally upon the face of the earth.” Apparently on the spirit earth every environmental necessity was in place for animal and plant life to thrive, but there was no need for rain. Apparently rain is a feature only of the physical earth and is not needed on the spirit earth. As we shall learn, there was rain on the physical earth during the millions of years of the second creation epoch (the preparatory creation). Also, on the spirit earth, was there no need for anyone to “till the ground.”

As part of the period of creation of the spirit earth—the first creative period—all of the human spirits were born to heavenly Parents and resided, at least initially, on the celestial planet. Whether or not these spirits actually resided on the spirit earth is not clear. It is clear, however, that during the long period of the preparatory creation of the earth—the second creative period—there were no humans in physical form. They may have resided there, however, in a spirit realm. This idea is not unprecedented since the post-mortal world of spirits is generally held to be located on this earth. It is therefore possible that the creation of man and woman, as part of the first creative period, included their placement on the spirit earth after they were born “in heaven.”

Recall that Moses did not record any details of the second creative epoch. After the onset of rain, during the second and third creation epochs, plant and animal life thrived on the earth.

3. Both Moses 2 and Moses 3 mention the creation of plants, animals, and man and woman, but only Moses 2 includes the creation of the sun and moon—see Moses 2:14-18 and the commentary for those verses.

Moses 3 only contains a partial creation account: It only recounts the events required to place modern life on the earth. In addition to Moses 2:14-18, the physical creation of the sun and moon is repeated in Abraham 4. Abraham 4, you will recall, gives an account of the preparatory physical creation or the second creation epoch. By the onset of the third creation epoch, at Moses 3:6, the physical sun and moon had already been created and apparently didn't need much "tuning up" for the arrival of the modern life forms on the earth.

4. Moses 3 begins by saying that "the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (verse 1). The word *host* refers to the people (and perhaps the plants and animals) that inhabit the heaven and the earth. Though "the heaven and the earth were finished," Moses will continue on, in Moses chapter 3, to describe the creation of man, plants, animals, and woman. At the onset of the third creative period, the process of creation was not actually completed. The spirit earth had been created. The spirit sons and daughters had been born. Also, the physical earth was created and had been prepared for millions upon millions of years (the second creative period) for the arrival of the modern physical life forms upon the earth. The creation was really completed only after the final preparation of the physical earth and the arrival of the modern life forms. These modern life forms included plants, animals, and physical man.

5. When was woman created? Moses 2 describes woman being created on the sixth day along with man. However, early in Moses 3 (verse 7) Adam is created; then several important events occur before Eve is created.

This is simple to explain. The creation of "male and female" on the sixth day in Moses 2 was the spirit creation or spirit birth of the Father's children. Eve's arrival on the physical earth, described in Moses 3 (the third creative epoch), occurred later and was therefore an entirely separate event. This "creation" of Eve does not refer to her creation or birth in the spirit. Rather, like the "creation" of Adam in Moses 3, it simply refers to her being born into the physical earth.

6. There are two different Creators directing the work of the creation in Moses 2 and 3. Throughout Moses 2, "God" (the Father) is the Creator. The Father personally directed the spirit creation. Following the birth of his spirit family, the Father selected the Firstborn, Jehovah, to direct the physical creation. Hence, in Moses 3, beginning with verse 4, "the Lord God" (Jehovah) speaks as the Creator instead.

1 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

verse 1 “write the words which I speak” Moses is commanded to write the very words the Lord speaks. This means that what we will read is not Moses’s personal interpretation of what he saw, but is exactly what the Lord told him to write down. Keep in mind that Moses is speaking with Jehovah or Jesus Christ who is speaking as though he were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority.

“I created these things” Though it was Jehovah who spoke to the prophet Moses and spoke of his creating the earth, we learn that the Father himself was the Creator of the spirit earth. And here in Moses 2, we read a description of the spirit creation. Following the spirit birth and training of the Firstborn, the Father assigned him the primary role of Creator. Jehovah or Jesus Christ, then, was the Creator of the physical earth.

“in the beginning” This phrase is an *incipit title* of the book. For the meaning of the phrase “incipit title” see the commentary for Moses 1:1. *Our* title for the book—Genesis—comes from the Septuagint Greek word meaning “origin, source, beginning; production, generation, coming into being; creation.”

The three available scriptural accounts of the creation (Genesis 1-2, Moses 2-3, and Abraham 4-5) all agree that “in the beginning” God (or the Gods) created the heavens and the earth. But is this the account of the beginning of the entire universe? Apparently it is not. Here the Lord says, “Behold, I reveal unto you concerning *this* heaven, and *this* earth” (italics added, see also Moses 1:35). God told both Abraham and Moses that his creations were innumerable to man, and that this earth is not the first of his creations. Thus, the scriptural accounts describe the creation only of this earth and this heaven—perhaps our solar system.

When the scriptures speak of “in the beginning,” we must remind ourselves that there never was an absolute “beginning.” Thus, any such designation is arbitrary and usually refers to the start of the round of creation to which we belong. Obviously there was a finite time when our round of creation began.

“I created the heaven, and the earth” What is the “heaven” and what are the “heavens”? The *heaven* seems to be the atmosphere of our earth. The term *heavens* seems to represent all of the proximate organized bodies of our cosmos—the other planets and the moons (Moses 1:37).

There exists in the Church a general notion that the earth’s creation—from its beginning up until the fall of Adam—occurred with the earth in the immediate vicinity of Kolob and not in its present solar system. This belief includes the idea that the earth took its place in our current solar system following the fall of Adam (see, for example, Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, 200-01). The creation account, therefore, might be expected to include an account of the creation or preparation of our own sun and the planets and moons in our solar system. While the creation account in Moses 2 does include the account of the creation of the sun and

moon, it is not possible to determine from Moses 2 or 3 the location of the earth at the time.

verses 2-5 The first day: The spirit earth is born. A globe covered by water is formed and begins rotating; it is encompassed with the light of day and the darkness of night.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and my Spirit moved upon the face of the water; for I am God.

Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

verse 2 “the earth was without form, and void” At the outset of the spirit creation the spirit matter that was to become the spirit earth, within its watery womb, was “without form, and void.” Joseph Smith also taught that it was “empty and desolate,” that is, devoid of any surface life such as plants or animals (Ehat & Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith, Extracts from William Clayton’s Private Book*, 5 January 1841, 60).

“I caused darkness to come” For some reason it was necessary to create an unnatural state of darkness which temporarily encompassed the earth’s watery womb. This statement implies that prior to this point there was light. This may have been the light given off by Kolob or other stars in the universe. The process of organizing the existing materials into the sun and other heavenly bodies of the solar system in which the earth then resided apparently resulted in a local darkness for a period of time.

“the face of the deep” Apparently the spirit creation or organization of the earth took place with the earth covered with water analogous to a watery maternal womb. Orson Pratt wrote:

There is also a similarity in the process of creation between the earth and its inhabitants. The earth when created, according to the accounts we have, was covered with a flood of waters . . . by and by emerging from the waters. This was the birth of creation, the same as we are born here into this world, from one element into another. After having been brought forth from the element of water, the process of creation, or the further development of the earth continued (*JD*, 16:314).

“And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” The Hebrew word in Genesis translated as “moved,” *m’rahepet*, is better translated as “brooding and fertilizing” This seems clearly to be describing the life-giving and life-sustaining power of the light of Christ that makes possible all life, not only on this earth but throughout all of God’s creations. The light of Christ “proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. It is also “the light which is in all things, which given life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:11-13).

3 And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

verse 3 Apparently the earth was allowed to emerge from its dark watery womb and the Lord's "light" or creative power shown upon the earth. Also the light of the surrounding heavenly bodies were allowed to play upon the earth.

4 And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 And I, God, called the light Day; and the darkness, I called Night; and this I did by the word of my power, and it was done as I spake; and the evening and the morning were the first day.

Genesis 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

verses 4-5 The spherical earth was caused to start rotating which created a day/night cycle with each rotation. If the earth's creation did not take place in this solar system, but somewhere near the great star Kolob, the light that shown on the newborn spirit earth perhaps came from Kolob or one or more of its neighboring stellar companions.

verses 6-8 The second day: The waters are divided and the firmament or atmosphere is created.

6 And again, I, God, said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and it was so, even as I spake; and I said: Let it divide the waters from the waters; and it was done;

Genesis 1:6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7 And I, God, made the firmament and divided the waters, yea, the great waters under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, and it was so even as I spake.

Genesis 1:7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

verses 6-7 "And I, God, said: Let there be a firmament" The *firmament* is the sky, or, more broadly, the atmosphere surrounding the earth. Sometime after her birth, on the "second day," the illuminated and rotating earth was surrounded by a gaseous spirit atmosphere. This is the atmosphere of the spirit earth where spirit fowl fly.

“in the midst of the water” “Let it divide the waters from the waters” This atmosphere was apparently placed between two layers of water. Thus there were waters below the firmament and waters above the firmament.

There has grown up a feeling among some in the Church that water did not exist on the spirit earth. This belief probable stems from the fact the baptism by immersion in water can only occur on a physical earth and not in a spirit environment. There obviously was water on the spirit earth, as we know that the Lord created spirits of a host of aquatic creatures, obviously intended to inhabit the waters of the spirit earth (Moses 2:20-22). It is the ordinance of baptism, not water, that is limited to the physical earth. Birth into mortality is associated with physical water, and the ordinance of baptism, which is symbolic of that birth, must also involve physical water (Moses 6:59-60).

What are these two layers of water spoken of—the waters below and the waters above? The waters below will become the spirit oceans and lakes in which the aquatic creatures live. The waters above the firmament or spirit atmosphere are apparently the embryonic waters from which the spirit earth had been delivered. These are referred to only briefly, as they likely ceased to exist soon after the earth was born or delivered from these waters.

As the reader will note in the following verse, the firmament or spirit atmosphere is also call “Heaven.” Later on, the Lord will call it “the open firmament of heaven (verse 20).”

8 And I, God, called the firmament Heaven; and the evening and the morning were the second day.

Genesis 1:8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

verses 9-13 The third day: Dry land appears and spirit plant life begins to flourish. The land is surrounded by one ocean of water. Spirit plants such as grass, herbs, and fruit trees begin to grow on the land.

9 And I, God, said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so; and I, God, said: Let there be dry land; and it was so.

Genesis 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

verse 9 “Let there be dry land” On the “third day” the waters below the atmosphere—those “under the heaven”—were separated from the dry land. This resulted in a single body of water (the waters were gathered “unto one place”) and a single land mass or continent.

10 And I, God, called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, called I the Sea; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good.

Genesis 1:10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

11 And I, God, said: Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself upon the earth, and it was so even as I spake.

Genesis 1:11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

verse 11 “and it was so even as I spake” Moses’s account suggests that God placed plant species on the earth without any preparatory period (compare Abraham 4:11-12 and the commentary for these verses). This is, of course, because Moses is describing the spirit creation.

12 And the earth brought forth grass, every herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed should be in itself, after his kind; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good;

Genesis 1:12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

verses 11-12 “after his kind” A careful consideration of this expression suggests God is not creating new life forms (see also verses 21, 24, 25). If a life form is created “after his kind” then each life form must have come from pre-existing life forms, or parents. This presents a problem since we know that spirit beings do not possess the power of procreation. “Only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring” (James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:34). Therefore, resurrected parental stock had to be brought to the new spirit earth where, by a process of procreation and germination, they produced the host of spirit offspring that Moses describes. This is the real meaning of the phrase “and the earth brought forth.” But where did the resurrected parental stock come from? We do not know. They might have come from the Father’s home planet or from any number of other resurrected celestialized planets.

“whose seed should be in itself” You will note that this peculiar expression is found in both verses 11 and 12. In Genesis 1:11-12, this expression is rendered, “whose seed is in itself” (verse 11) and “whose seed was in itself (verse 12). These expressions imply that the spirit plants on this spirit earth already contained the seeds of reproduction. They did not, of course, since spirit bodies are incapable of reproduction. Joseph Smith amended these expressions in Moses 1:11-12 and placed them in a form that implies that the seeds of reproduction would in the future be contained within the

plant bodies—“whose seed should [at a future time] be in itself.” We know that this will be when they receive a physical body in the physical creation that is yet to occur.

It is a readily observable law of nature that apple trees only produce apples and seeds that are capable of germinating into new apple trees. This law of procreating according to “kinds” or “his kind” is equally applicable to the animal kingdom. This law prevails not only in the physical world, but also among resurrected beings who produce spirit offspring.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

Genesis 1:13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

verses 14-19 The fourth day: The earth is assigned a future place among the stellar bodies. The physical sun, moon, and solar system are organized to eventually provide signs, seasons, days, and years for the spirit earth.

These verses describe the creation of the solar system in which our earth now resides. Again, it is possible the spiritual and physical creations of the earth took place while the earth was in orbit near Kolob and did not fall into our present solar system until after the fall of Adam. Our sun and moon and stars were created for our earth well in advance, in preparation for the earth’s eventual arrival. Thus, Genesis 1:14-19; Moses 2:14-19; and Abraham 4:14-19 all describe the same thing—the physical creation of our present solar system, minus our earth.

14 And I, God, said: Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years;

Genesis 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

verse 14 “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven” God arranged the positions and motions of the various heavenly bodies to provide light, heat, and a means of keeping track of time. A day, of course, is the time for the earth to rotate on its axis; a month the time for the moon to orbit the earth; and a year the time for the earth to orbit the sun. Moreover the various seasons—winter, summer, spring, and fall—are the consequence of the tilt of the earth’s axis with respect to its orbital plane, as well as the eccentricity of its orbit about the sun. All these aspects of the motion of the earth and moon had to be fine-tuned to produce the times and seasons we now have. D&C 88:42-45 describes this very process:

And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons; And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets.

And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years—all these are one year with God, but not with man. The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God.

“the firmament of the heaven” Here, obviously, the phrase “firmament of the heaven” refers to the cosmic realm of our present solar system.

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so.

Genesis 1:15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And I, God, made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the greater light was the sun, and the lesser light was the moon; and the stars also were made even according to my word.

Genesis 1:16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

verse 16 “to rule” The sun and moon “rule” the day and the night in the sense that they are the brightest objects in the day and night skies, respectively.

17 And I, God, set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

Genesis 1:17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

18 And the sun to rule over the day, and the moon to rule over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good;

Genesis 1:18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

verse 18 “to divide the light from the darkness” God caused the earth to rotate on its axis, producing the variation of day and night, thus “dividing” the light from the darkness.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

Genesis 1:19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

verses 20-23 The fifth day: Aquatic and flying creatures appear. The oceans are filled with spirit aquatic creatures like whales and fish. Winged fowl fly in the atmosphere. The marine and aerial life forms are commanded to multiply.

20 And I, God, said: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl which may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Genesis 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

verse 20 “Let the waters bring forth” Since these spirit life forms were produced from resurrected beings, this phrase actually means “Let resurrected celestial parental stock bring forth their spirit offspring.”

21 And I, God, created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind; and I, God, saw that all things which I had created were good.

Genesis 1:21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

verse 21 The term “great whales” probable refers to a multitude of large creatures of the sea.

22 And I, God, blessed them, saying: Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the sea; and let fowl multiply in the earth;

Genesis 1:22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

verse 22 “fill the waters in the seas” Even today, more than 90 percent of all life on earth is found in the oceans.

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

Genesis 1:23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

verses 24-31 The sixth day: The creation of spirit animal life and the spirit family of man moves to the spirit earth. Cattle, beasts and other animals appear on the land. Man is created in God’s image, both male and female. They are commanded to multiply and to have dominion over all other earth life. God concludes his work, calling it all “good.”

24 And I, God, said: Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind, and it was so;

Genesis 1:24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25 And I, God, made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything which creepeth upon the earth after his kind; and I, God, saw that all these things were good.

Genesis 1:25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

verses 24-25 “Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind”

Again, we see the direct and simple bringing forth of spirit creatures upon the earth as is possible during the spirit creation. No particular preparation is necessary. Contrast this verse with Abraham 4:24 which gives the account of the second creative period, the preparatory creation of the earth, preparatory to the eventual introduction of modern life forms upon the earth.

Just a reminder that spirit animals were not created “from scratch” by the Lord; rather they were born “after their kind” to resurrected celestial animal parents.

Joseph was taught by the Lord that spirit animals look just like their physical counterparts on the earth today: “That which is spiritual [was created] in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and every other creature which God has created” (D&C 77:2).

26 And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so. And I, God, said: Let them have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

verse 26 “Let us make man in our image” This is a statement the Father made to the Son. The Father, of course, is directly involved in the birth of his spirit children. His Firstborn Son, Jehovah, had been born previously. It is true that we know nearly nothing about the divine birth process by which the intelligence of man was combined with a body of spirit matter. We would presume that it somehow involved the Father and a Heavenly Mother. We only know that the spirit family of man is the literal birth product of Heavenly Parents, and that our spirit bodies were in the very likeness and image of those Parents. What role, if any, the Son had in this process is simply unknown, but the scriptures suggest that he did have a role (see D&C 93:10 and its commentary).

27 And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

verses 26-27 Because we know that Moses 2 is the account of the spirit creation of the earth and all of its hosts, we must therefore conclude that these two verses do not given an account of the “creation” of Adam and Eve (their placement on the earth). Rather, these verses speak of the spirit creation, or spirit birth, of the entire human family.

The first operation of creating a world is to beget a spirit family. Brigham Young wrote:

After men have got their exaltations and their crowns—have become Gods, even the sons of God are made Kings of kings and Lords of lords, they have the power then of propagating their species in spirit; and that is the first of their operations with regard to organizing a world. Power is then given to them to organize the elements, and then commence the organization of tabernacles (*JD*, 6:275).

Brigham Young taught that the apostle Paul’s declaration “we are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:28-29) referred to the spirit creation, or birth, of man described in Moses 2:26-27, also confirming that these verses describe the birth of the spirit offspring of the Father (*JD*, 11:122). Speaking of these same two verses (actually Genesis 1:26-27 which correlated with Moses 2:26-27), Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “This [Genesis 1:26-27] was a spiritual creation, man was created in the image of God, male and female, first in the spirit, and told in that spiritual creation that they were expected to multiply and replenish the earth when they were placed upon it” (*Organization of the Reorganized Church and the Question of Succession*, 99).

28 And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

verse 28 In this verse the Lord gives four vital commandments:

1. **“Be fruitful, and multiply”** This commandment was to be obeyed once the spirit offspring had received their physical or mortal bodies, and then only under the conditions of the sacred order of marriage. Those capable of bringing children into mortality through marriage and family, but refuse to do it for any reason, are guilty of disobedience of this important command.

2. **“replenish the earth”** The Hebrew word in Genesis translated as “replenish,” *male’*, means “to fill,” without the implication of “refilling” which “replenish” suggests in modern English. This is an extension or expansion of the first commandment. We are not just to “multiply,” that is, to have children, but to have as many as our circumstances will permit. This ensures that earth will be filled with the spirit inhabitants of heaven who are anxiously awaiting their turn to receive a physical body.

Some of those who refuse to raise up a family complain that we are already suffering from a “population explosion” that will surely exhaust the earth’s capacity to sustain them all. The Lord has revealed that the earth’s resources are more than sufficient to comfortably sustain all the human beings assigned to it: “I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork . . . For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves” (D&C 104:14, 17).

3. **“subdue it [the earth]”** This means to render the physical earth usable and useful for the human race. This would include farming the soil and domesticating the animal life of the earth to bring forth the necessary resources for humanity’s food and clothing. It would also include drilling and mining out the mineral resources from the earth’s crust. It would also include building highways and railways for the transportation of people and resources. It might also include employing the earth’s river systems for transportation and the generation of energy.

4. **“have dominion . . . over every living thing”** This is the Lord’s command for man to take control of and maintain dominion or lordship over the earth’s plant and animal life. This dominion must be a “righteous” and wise one. Perhaps “stewardship” best describes this dominion of man over the rest of creation. There should be no wanton or purposeless destruction of animal or plant life. The Lord has warned: “And wo be unto that man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need” (D&C 49:21). He has also cautioned that animal life is to be taken “only for meat, and to save your lives.” Further, “the blood of every beast [killed otherwise] will I require at your hands” (JST Genesis 9:11). The antithesis of those who would wantonly abuse the earth’s life forms is those who would elevate the plants and animals of the earth above the needs of the human race. Motivated by the dogmas of heathen religions or popular movements of the day, some have sought to deify non-human life forms, both in the name of “religion” or “the environment.” These are also apostate doctrines.

29 And I, God, said unto man: Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which shall be the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

Genesis 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

verse 29 Here the Father extends his promise that the earth will contain sufficient food for every mortal inhabitant who will ever live here. Again, we note the profound verse: “The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare” (D&C 104:17).

Notice the verb tense “shall be” which suggests that these foods will be used in the future after the human family’s arrival on the physical or mortal earth.

“to you it shall be for meat” The Hebrew word translated as “meat” is *’oklah*. This word is better translated as “food” or “eating.” In King James English, “meat” has the broader sense of “food” rather than just “flesh” as it now does. Thus, God will tell Adam and Eve that plants will provide the food they will eat. Only after the fall do they eat animal flesh.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein I grant life, there shall be given every clean herb for meat; and it was so, even as I spake.

Genesis 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

verse 30 “every clean herb for meat” As in verse 29, here “meat” means “food.”

The promise of sufficient food is also extended to all animal life that will inhabit the mortal world. When modern life forms were initially placed on the physical earth, they apparently ate herbs and fruits. Some animals became carnivorous only after the fall of Adam and Eve. Then animals began to consume one another’s flesh. “Animals, in the providence of the [earth’s] creation have been intended [subsequent to the fall] as a prey upon one another. They preserve a safe balance for the benefit of man” (Joseph F. Smith, David O. McKay and Stephen L. Richards in a lead editorial in the *Juvenile Instructor*, April 1918). Apparently a vegetarian pattern of consumption will resume among carnivores during the Millennium.

31 And I, God, saw everything that I had made, and, behold, all things which I had made were very good; and the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

verse 31 “all things which I had made were very good” Are not all things which God has made good? The fact is that not everything made by God turns out to be good. Many of God’s finest creations have turned against him, including one third of his spirit children. Even entire planets can sufficiently rebel and pass “out of existence through self-destruction” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Spiritual Communication,” *Improvement Era*, June 1962, 426). This verse, then, teaches us a profound truth. This earth is good. This planet both “filleteth the measure” of her creation and “transgresseth not the

law” (D&C 88:25) and thus the vast majority of those intelligences who are combined with the elements of this earth are qualified for a celestial resurrection (D&C 88:18-20). We may certainly regard it a privilege to be associated with this earth now and forever as she progresses toward her final celestial glory.

Moses Chapter 3 (June–October 1830) The Creation

Moses 3 and Genesis 2 will be considered together in this chapter. These two chapters plus Abraham 5 are likely the accounts of the third creative period, namely the final preparation of the mortal earth. They provide an account of the introduction of modern life forms including man to the earth after millions or perhaps billions of years of preparatory creation—the second creative period.

When did this third creative period begin? When did the Garden of Eden story occur? When were Adam and Eve placed on the earth? How long did they live in the garden prior to the fall? When were they forced out of the garden? We do not know for certain the answers to these questions. The traditional chronology of the Irish Anglican archbishop James Ussher (AD 1581-1656), places the fall of Adam at 4,004 BC. To arrive at that number, Ussher worked back from known dates using the data for births and deaths given for the various patriarchs in the text of the book of Genesis. Unfortunately, these numbers are not consistent in the various manuscripts and versions of the Bible, and we have no way of knowing which, if any, of these that have come down to us are accurate, except as they may occasionally appear in modern scripture (see D&C 107:42-53). One interesting statement by the prophet Nephi, son of Helaman, in the Book of Mormon, seems to indicate that the fall may have occurred considerably earlier than 4,000 BC. Speaking around 20 BC, he states, “There were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God [called to the priesthood]; yea, even after the order of his Son; and this that it should be shown unto the people, a great many thousand years before his coming, that even redemption should come unto them” (Helaman 8:18). Nephi describes the existence on the earth of men “a great many thousand years” before the coming to earth of the Mortal Christ. A mere 4,000 years does not seem to qualify as “a great many thousand years.”

Also we must not be confused by scientists’ claiming to have found fossil evidence here on earth of *hominids*—manlike creatures—who lived on the earth several millions of years ago. Undoubtedly there were such “men,” but these were doubtless high order animals which do not now live upon the earth. These were not the descendants of Adam. It seems clear that we should date the advent of Adam and Eve upon the earth in terms of thousands and not millions of years ago.

From the scientific perspective, the first appearance of fossils of *Homo sapiens* (human beings) seems to have been about 125,000 years ago. This happened to be at about the temperature maximum of the last interglacial (between ice ages) period. By 18,000 years ago, the last ice age reached its peak, with glaciers covering large areas of northern Europe and North America (Emiliani, Cesare, *The Scientific Companion*, [New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1988], 195). About 11,600 years ago, there was a rapid

warming, and the ice sheets melted, producing catastrophic floods down the Mississippi Valley and other places (*Ibid.*, 617).

verses 1-5 Moses 3 and Genesis 2 actually begin with commentary on the account of the creation periods that occurred just prior to the third. That is, the first five verses of Moses 3 and Genesis 2 comment on the state of the newly created earth following the first two creative periods. The actual accounts of the third creative period begins in Moses 3:6 and Genesis 2:6.

1 Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

verse 1 “the heaven and the earth were finished” Here the Lord states that the creative process described in Moses 2 (and Genesis 1), the spirit creation, and the long preparatory creation of the physical earth (the second creative period to be described in Abraham 4) are completed or “finished.” Yet he will now continue on in Moses 3 (and Genesis 2) to relate another creation story. This will be the third creative period wherein the final preparations of the earth were made and man and other modern life forms will be introduced to the earth. The reader will note that the creation account in Moses 3 (and Genesis 2) will have a different sequence than the accounts in Moses 2 and Genesis 1. In Moses 2 (and Genesis 1) the order of creation is plants, animals, man and woman. But in here Moses 3 (and Genesis 2) the sequence will be man, plants, animals, woman.

We have discussed previously that the solution to the incompatibility of Moses’s two creation stories (in Moses 2 and Moses 3) is simple and is provided by the Lord himself. He will explain in verses 4 and 5 that the account in Moses 2 is the Lord’s account of the spirit creation. It will become apparent that the events of Moses 3:6-25 are a description of an entirely different creation, one in which modern physical life forms, including man, were placed on the physical earth. To make certain that Moses would not miss the importance of this fact, the Lord re-emphasizes the fact in verse 7: “All things [that is, all the physical life forms whose arrival on the earth was imminent] were before created; but spiritually were they created and made according to my word.”

“and all the host of them” The Hebrew word translated as “host” is *saba’* which has the root meaning of “army” and the extended meaning of “organized body” of men or other things. The word host, then, refers to the people, and perhaps the plants and animals, that inhabit the heaven and the earth.

2 And on the seventh day I, God, ended my work, and all things which I had made; and I rested on the seventh day from all my work, and all things which I had made were finished, and I, God, saw that they were good;

Genesis 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

verse 2 “I rested on the seventh day from all my work” It is heartening to learn that God, like the rest of us, can enjoy periods of rest and relaxation. We would presume that the Lord speaks here of the “seventh day” of the second creative period.

3 And I, God, blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it I had rested from all my work which I, God, had created and made.

Genesis 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

verse 3 “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” The Sabbath day is consecrated as a time to rest, spiritually renew, and re-commit ourselves.

We will learn later on in this chapter that the Lord also “sanctified” the earth, or at least a localized part of the earth, with a paradisiacal state that was to be the temporary setting for the first of the Father’s spirit children to abide on the earth—Adam and Eve.

4 And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth,

Genesis 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

verse 4 “these are the generations” The Hebrew word translated as “generations” means literally “begettings”, and it refers to a genealogical account of a man and his descendants. Here it is used to refer the account of the spirit creation of the heaven and earth—the account the readers of the book of Moses have just read in Moses 2.

For clarification of the meaning of this verse, we might add a phrase to this verse and include the rest of the sentence from the following verse: “I say unto you, that these [things about which you have just read] . . . were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew.” It seems clear that the Lord is explaining that Moses 2 is the account of the spirit creation of the earth (see also verse 5).

5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in

heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air;

Genesis 2:5 And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

verse 5 “I, the Lord God, created all things . . . spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth.” See the discussion of Moses 3:5 in the introductory commentary for Moses 2. See particularly the material under the heading, “The First Creative Period: The Spirit Creation of the Earth.” Elder Orson Pratt taught that God made the spiritual part of this creation during the six days’ work we read of [in Genesis 1]. Before Joseph Smith’s restoration of Moses’s creation account “we used to read the first and second chapters of Genesis which give an account of the Almighty, but did not distinguish between the spiritual work and the temporal work of Christ. Although there are some things in the King James’ translation that give us a little distinction between the two creations [in Genesis 1 and in Genesis 2], yet we did not comprehend it. The light shone, in some measure, in darkness, but so dark were our minds, through tradition, that we did not comprehend the light—or the few feeble glimmerings of light, contained in these first and second chapters of the uninspired translation. But our heavenly Father inspired his servant Joseph smith, to translate several chapters more in the Book of Genesis, in December 1830, which gave a more full account, down to the days of the Flood [the book of Moses]” (*JD*, 21:200).

Elder B. H. Roberts was especially pleased with the contribution to the creation story made by Moses chapters 2 and 3. He wrote: “To learn that the first account of the creation in the Bible [Genesis 1] is of a spiritual creation and the second [Genesis 2] of an actual or natural one, gives some comfort, from the fact that it removes all appearances of inconsistency or contradiction between the two accounts. For since they are descriptions of two different things instead of one thing, there is nothing in the law of consistency requiring the accounts of different events to be alike” (*Gospel and Man’s Relationship to Deity*, 277).

“for I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth”
We have just completed Moses’s account of the spirit creation of the earth, the first creation epoch, in Moses 2 and Genesis 1. Moses does not provide us with an account of the second creation epoch which likely took place over millions and even billions of years. This was the preparatory physical creation of the earth and its preparation for the reception of modern life forms. We are now just beginning Moses’s account of the third creation epoch which is the account of the final preparation and sanctification of the earth and the introduction of modern life forms including Adam and Eve.

The phrase “I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth” has led some to the mistaken conclusion that it had not rained at all on the physical earth before this time. More likely this phrase refers to the fact that rain is not

necessary during the period of spirit creation of the earth. At the conclusion of the spirit creation, as the physical creation was being contemplated, it would have been appropriate, therefore, to suggest that it had not yet rained upon the earth.

Another possible interpretation of this phrase is that following the conclusion of the second creative period and up to this point in the narrative, it had not rained. Of course it had rained as many times as necessary during the preparatory or second creation epoch that had ended not long before. Rain was withheld until the planting of the modern plants and trees was complete. When the rain did fall, it moistened a freshly-seeded soil.

The Third Creative Epoch: The Placement on the Earth of Modern Life Forms

6 But I, the Lord God, spake, and there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

Genesis 2:6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

verse 6 “there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground” The Hebrew word translated in the KJV as “mist” is *‘ed*, which refers to a freshwater stream or fountain. The word occurs only here and in Job 36:27. The Septuagint (Greek version) has *pege*—“spring or well.” A better rendering here might be “fresh water welled up and watered the entire surface of the ground.”

7 And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also; nevertheless, all things were before created; but spiritually were they created and made according to my word.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

verse 7 “God, formed man from the dust of the ground” Joseph Smith taught that this verse refers to the creation of the physical bodies of both Adam and Eve (*Words*, 203; see also *Moses* 6:8-9). The “dust of the ground” means simply that the physical body of man was formed from the elements found in the earth, as clarified by *Moses* 6:59. From this verse’s brief description, one may mistakenly assume that Adam’s creation simply consisted of molding a manlike form from the dust of the earth and placing Adam’s spirit into it. Both Adam and Eve were born to celestial parents. President Joseph F. Smith taught that “Adam, our earthly parent, was . . . born of woman, the same as Jesus and you and I” (*Deseret News*, December 27, 1913, section III, 7). Just who was it that fathered the physical immortal bodies of Adam and Eve? There is abundant evidence that it was the Father himself (see especially *Moses* 6:10-22 and the commentary for these verses).

“and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” The placing of man’s preexistent spirit into this physical body produces a living being, a “soul.” The Abrahamic account is more detailed: the Gods “took his spirit (that is, the man’s spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” The official definition of the “soul” is the combination of the body and the spirit (D&C 88:15-16). “Breath of life” in Genesis corresponds to the Hebrew *nismat hayyim* which means “breath” and refers to the observed fact that living things breathe. When a living thing stops breathing, it is dead.

“the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also” If there had already been a host of preparatory life forms (animals and even “pre-adamite” manlike creatures) on the earth before Adam was placed in the garden, how could Adam become “the first flesh upon the earth”? This statement actually presents two problems since Moses says that Adam was not only the “first flesh” on the earth, but that he was the “first man also.” Let us consider these two problems one at a time.

1. Concerning the fact that Adam is called the “first flesh,” certainly mortal flesh had inhabited the earth in the form of animals for millions of years, some of whom were the man-like animals that pre-dated Adam by millions of years. Joseph Fielding Smith taught that the word “flesh” refers specifically to the mortal bodies of Adam and Eve and their mortal offspring (see *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:72-91). This is confirmed by a careful study of the word “flesh” wherever it occurs in Moses’s creation story. *Flesh*, then, refers not only to mortal flesh, but the mortal flesh of the family of Adam.

2. What of the statement that Adam was “the first man” on earth? “First man” is actually a title of honor. Brigham Young taught that every earth-like planet has an Adam, or “first man” When Moses saw a countless multitude of inhabited planets, the Lord said: “The first man of all men [on each world] have I called Adam, which is many” (Moses 1:34). Therefore, when the archangel Michael had entered mortality, he was given the title “Adam,” or “first man of all men” on this earth. He was the first of God’s spirit children to inhabit the earth. An pre-Adamite hominids that may have lived in earth fail to qualify as “the first man.”

In summary then, on our planet, Adam was both the “first flesh” (first mortal man after his fall) and the “first man” (title of honor by being the first). But, certainly, preparatory life forms, including man-like creatures, had preceded him.

8 And I, the Lord God, planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there I put the man whom I had formed.

Genesis 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

verse 8 “a garden eastward in Eden” It would seem there are two possible explanations for the immortal, paradisiacal condition that existed in the Garden of Eden. First, it is possible that the Lord removed all of the early life forms from the entire earth

and then sanctified the entire earth (converted it to a paradisiacal state) in anticipation of the third creation epoch. Thus, it might have been that all plant and animal life forms on the earth, including of course, Adam and Eve, were immortal at the time of the Eden story. The other possibility is that the rest of the world was mortal (as it had been for millions or even billions of years) and only in the Garden of Eden did an immortal, paradisiacal condition prevail.

“there I put the man whom I had formed” Adam was placed in the garden.

9 And out of the ground made I, the Lord God, to grow every tree, naturally, that is pleasant to the sight of man; and man could behold it. And it became also a living soul. For it was spiritual in the day that I created it; for it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it, yea, even all things which I prepared for the use of man; and man saw that it was good for food. And I, the Lord God, planted the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and also the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

verse 9 “And out of the ground made I, the Lord God, to grow every tree, naturally . . . and it became also a living soul” Plants consist of an immortal spirit plant which is placed into a physical mortal body. This combination of spirit and body produce a soul. Thus every plant has a soul. And every plant live in its own kingdom and can hear, understand, and obey (D&C 88:36-38).

“it was spiritual in the day that I created it” Apparently this phrase does not refer the tree in its spirit state. The Lord has explained in D&C 29:34: “Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created.” Something that is “spiritual” in this context is not just temporal but has eternal implications. In this case many of the trees were in the garden not just because they were “pleasant to the sight of man,” but because they were sources of food and sustenance for Adam and Eve and the animal life in the garden. Not only does the tree have a crucial role in the happenings of mortality, but it also is on trial here and will live forever in a kingdom of glory.

“it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it” All things, including man, would remain in the paradisiacal state in which God placed them, unless and until something changed. That “something” was the fall of Adam and Eve.

“pleasant to the sight and good for food” God created the various forms of plant life not only for food but also to appeal to our esthetic sense of beauty.

“the tree of life” The fruit of the tree of life, when ingested, had the power to restore immortality to a mortal body, which is why the fallen Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden—so they could not partake of the fruit of this tree.

“the tree of knowledge of good and evil” It is not clear whether the story of this tree is literal or figurative. If it is literal, then an immortal being’s ingesting the fruit of this tree resulted in a state of mortality and a cessation of the immortal state. But perhaps it is only a figurative story as Elder Bruce R. McConkie has implied: “What is meant by partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is that our first parents complied with whatever laws were involved so that their bodies would change from their state of paradisiacal immortality to a state of natural mortality” (“Christ and the Creation,” *Ensign*, June 1982, 15).

verses 10-14 In these verses Moses describes a river that the Lord caused to pass through Eden in order to water the garden. He also describes four tributaries that fed it. Modern revelation tells us that the Garden of Eden was located in present-day Missouri and is the place where Adam in the last days, will come and meet with his righteous posterity (see D&C 116; 117:8). The four rivers converging to form the river that ran through Eden bore names that were later applied to rivers in the eastern hemisphere. Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that the Abrahamic account omits the details about the names of the four rivers that come together to make the river that flows through Eden (Abraham 5:10).

Dr. Eric N. Skousen (*Earth In the Beginning*, 197-200) has suggested a modern-day counterpart for the river system that was found “eastward in Eden.” Before him the same system of rivers had been suggested by Dr. Milton R. Hunter (*Pearl of Great Price Commentary*, 108). In the scriptures the major river is unnamed, but this river is fed by four major “heads” or tributaries that are named (see Moses 3:11-14). Both Brothers Hunter and Skousen suggest that the main river, which is unnamed, is the lower Mississippi. Its four major tributaries, from west to east, are:

1. The Missouri River. This is the “Pison” that “compasseth the whole land of Havilah” in which God had created great deposits of gold. “Pison” is Hebrew for an “unknown river.” “Havilah” is Hebrew for an “unknown land.” Furthermore the gold of Havilah “was good, and there was bdellium and the onyx stone” (Moses 3:11-12). Bdellium is a fragrant but bitter-tasting gum resin used in medicines and perfumes. “Onyx stone” is a type of agate gemstone consisting of thin alternating layers. In fact, the largest gold mining operation in North America, the Homestake Mine in South Dakota, is located in the Missouri River drainage basin.

It is this river that runs directly through the site once occupied by the Garden of Eden.

2. The upper Mississippi River. This river originates in an enormously widespread feeder system of streams. It corresponds to the “Euphrates” which means

“dispersion.” As with all other rivers in the Eastern Hemisphere, the Euphrates, which flows into the Persian Gulf, cannot be the original river out of Eden but was named after that earlier river (Euphrates or “dispersion”).

3. Illinois River. This is the “Hiddekel” and it “goeth toward the east of Assyria” (Moses 3:14). In Hebrew the “Hiddekel” is the Tigris River. Here again, the Tigris in Mesopotamia cannot be the original one near Eden.

4. Ohio River. This is the “Gihon” which encompasseth (runs out of) the whole of Ethiopia” (Moses 3:11-12). “Gihon” is Hebrew for “a bursting forth.” A spring of water near Jerusalem had the same name. Ethiopia (the same as the biblical Cush) is nowhere near the river system in the Mesopotamia, as ancient Ethiopia is thought to be south of Egypt in the area of present-day Sudan.

How did the names Assyria, Ethiopia, and the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers get to be located in the Middle East and in Africa? Brigham Young explained:

The Lord commenced his work upon what is now called the American continent, where the Garden of Eden was made. In the days of Noah, in the days of the floating of the ark, he took the people to another part of the earth: the earth was divided, and there he set up his kingdom (*JD*, 8:195).

This means that the original location of the ancient Edenic rivers and the territories called “Havilah,” “Assyria,” and “Ethiopia” were in North America. Noah and his family were taken by the ark almost halfway around the hemisphere. Undoubtedly, they named the newly settled territories in and around Mesopotamia and in northern Africa after those they had known back in their former place of habitation on the American continent.

10 And I, the Lord God, caused a river to go out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

Genesis 2:10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

verse 10 “[the river] was parted, and became into four heads” The idea here is that four different rivers came together to form the river that flowed through Eden rather than that river splitting into four separate rivers. The latter normally does not happen.

11 And I, the Lord God, called the name of the first Pison, and it compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where I, the Lord God, created much gold;

Genesis 2:11 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

12 And the gold of that land was good, and there was bdellium and the onyx stone.

Genesis 2:12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

13 And the name of the second river was called Gihon; the same that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

Genesis 2:13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

14 And the name of the third river was Hiddekel; that which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river was the Euphrates.

Genesis 2:14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

15 And I, the Lord God, took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.

Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

verse 15 “to dress it, and to keep it” Paradise is not a place of idle rest and relaxation but a place where meaningful and necessary work is done.

16 And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

Genesis 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

verse 17 “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it” This is the second of the two commandments given to Adam and Eve while in the garden—the first being to bear children (Moses 2:28). It is vital for the reader, at this point in our study of the Pearl of Great Price, to review *Understanding Eden—The Fall* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 1. Please do so before continuing.

“in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” Adam is told that he will “die” if he partakes of the forbidden fruit, suggesting that he will continue to live forever if he refuses to eat the forbidden fruit. Just what kind of death is being spoken of here? Spiritual? Physical? One may well argue that both spiritual and physical death were brought into the world by Adam and Eve’s transgression in the garden. Both of these turn out to be temporary consequences that befall each man.

Adam’s physical death did occur within a “day” his transgression. He died at 930 years of age which is within a “day” of the Lord’s time (1,000 years).

There is no indication by either Moses or Abraham that everything else—Eve, the plant and animal life, and the earth itself—were immortal at the time. However, we learn from the prophet Lehi that when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, the processes of death and decay for all living things had been completely suspended. Lehi explained that until Adam fell: “All things which were created . . . remained in the same state in which they were after they were created” (2 Nephi 2:22). In fact, if Adam had not undergone the fall, “all things must have remained forever, and had no end” (2 Nephi 2:22).

Just when did these conditions of immortality begin to prevail among the earth’s life forms? Joseph Smith revealed that after the completion of the earth’s second creative epoch in which the earth had been prepared for modern life, the earth and all on it were “sanctified.” That is, all things were brought into a state where the processes of death and decay were temporarily suspended. Referring simultaneously to this sanctification and to the Millennium, he said: “We are to understand that as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, even so, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth [again], and complete the salvation of man” (D&C 77:12). At first glance, the Lord’s reference to sanctification here seems to be a reference to the sanctification or blessing of the seventh day as a sabbath or day of rest and not to a sanctification of the earth at all. However, in the case of the physical creation, not only was the seventh day set aside as a day of worship, but the earth and everything on it were sanctified. The process of sanctifying the earth has consisted of two parts—sanctification of the earth itself, and sanctification of the inhabitants of the earth:

Just as the earth was sanctified during its creation, so will it be sanctified in the Millennium. As Brigham Young explained, after God had “formed and organized it as it was in the beginning,” God then made the earth “perfect, pure, and holy” (*JD*, 2:300). That is, it was sanctified. And during the Millennium, the earth will be just like it was “when the Lord finished the earth and pronounced everything to be ‘very good,’” that is, it will return to the perfect, pure and holy state that prevailed when it was first sanctified (*JD*, 19:4). Unlike the paradisiacal state of the Millennium in which some death and minimal decay will be present (D&C 101:29-31; D&C 63:51; Isaiah 65:20), the earth’s first paradisiacal state was perfect in which nothing died or decayed (2 Nephi 2:22-23). This is the Millennial state, as Joseph Smith said, when “the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory” (Article of Faith 10).

Just as the last remnants of preparatory flesh were removed from the earth before its first sanctification, so will the earth’s wicked inhabitants be removed when the earth is brought into a paradisiacal state and sanctified in preparation for the Millennial reign of the Lord. Now we can understand why the Gods interrupted their planning council in Kolob (Abraham 4:26) at the end of the sixth time (Abraham 4:27) and came

to the earth. This change in venue was to remove any preparatory life that remained and to sanctify the earth in preparation for the modern life forms that were to shortly arrive.

A careful study of Lehi's statement about conditions in the Garden of Eden (2 Nephi 2:22-23) reveals that he does not say that there was no death on the earth at any time before the fall, only that beginning when Adam and Even arrived in the Garden of Eden, then all things would "continue forever." Again, we are reminded of the possibility that the post creation sanctification of the earth may not have applied to the entire earth, but rather to a localized area of the earth—Eden.

18 And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten, that it was not good that the man should be alone; wherefore, I will make an help meet for him.

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

verse 18 "it was not good that the man should be alone" A person's eternal potential can be realized only within the bonds of eternal marriage (see D&C 131:1-4).

"I will make an help meet for him" The Hebrew for "help meet" is *ezer k'negdo*, which literally means "a help corresponding to him," one that is "equal to and adequate for him." Adam needed a mate who was complementary to him, who would make him complete.

19 And out of the ground I, the Lord God, formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and commanded that they should come unto Adam, to see what he would call them; and they were also living souls; for I, God, breathed into them the breath of life, and commanded that whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that should be the name thereof.

Genesis 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

verse 19 In Abraham 5, a chapter that describes the same creative period as Moses 3 (the final preparatory creation), the creation of Adam and the figurative story of the creation of Eve both predate the introduction of animals and birds into the garden. Here in Moses's account Adam is created, then the animals and birds are placed on the earth, and then Eve is placed in the garden. It is likely that Abraham's account contains a more temporally accurate order of creation. Perhaps Adam (and Eve) were intended to play a role in the placement of modern animals and birds on the earth (this is in the same spirit as Adam's role in naming of the animals—see verse 20).

“out of the ground . . . formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air” Like man, the spirits of all living things are provided a body composed of physical, mortal elements that make up the earth.

The location of this statement about the creation of the animals and birds in Moses 3 is not to be taken as meaning that the animals were actually created at this time—after the creation of Adam but before the creation of Eve. We know they were actually born in the spirit during the first creative period. The “creation” here simply means that they, like Adam and Eve, were placed on the earth at this time as part of the work of creation during the third creative period.

“commanded that they should come unto Adam, to see what he would call them” This emphasizes the preeminence of man in the world. Adam had dominion over the animals (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28) and thus had the right to give them names.

“they were also living souls” Animals also were living souls—the combination of eternal spirits and mortal bodies.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but as for Adam, there was not found an help meet for him.

Genesis 2:20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

verse 20 “as for Adam, there was not found an help meet for him” As mentioned in the commentary for verse 19, this verse is also anachronistic, that is out of proper temporal sequence. It seems likely that in this third period of creation, both Adam and Eve were placed on the earth and then the animals and birds were brought here.

verses 21-23 This account of the “creation” of Eve is, of course, purely figurative. Adam and Eve were both literal, physical children of God the Father. President Spencer Kimball emphasized that this account of the creation of Eve is intended to be figurative (“The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, March 1976).

21 And I, the Lord God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and I took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof;

Genesis 2:21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib which I, the Lord God, had taken from man, made I a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Genesis 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said: This I know now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.

Genesis 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man

verse 23 “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” Again, this does not mean that Eve’s physical body was derived in any way from Adam’s body but rather that the bodies of Adam and Eve derive from a common source—they are genetically related. They at least had a common Father (God the Father) and perhaps a common mother who gave birth to their paradisiacal bodies. This interpretation is supported by the account of ancient Jacob’s initial meeting with his uncle Laban. When Laban learned that Jacob was his sister’s son, he said, “Surely thou art my bone and my flesh” (Genesis 29:14).

“she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” There is a play on words here. In Hebrew “man” is *‘is*, and “woman” is *‘isah*—the same word but with the addition of a feminine ending. The word for woman is derived from the word for man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

verse 24 “shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife” Marriage is to be a decisive alteration of the earlier family relationship. A new household is set up, and one’s spouse has priority over any earlier familial relationships. One of the primary purposes of mortality is to form an eternal companionship in the bonds of celestial marriage. Adam and Eve were the first on this earth to be sealed together for eternity.

“they shall be one flesh” This can be understood both literally and figuratively. Figuratively, it refers to the unity that should be an integral part of the marriage relationship. Literally, it is a reference to sexual relations between husband and wife, in which the two become “one flesh.”

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

verse 25 Adam and Eve before the fall were in a state of childlike innocence, and they felt no shame or embarrassment when they were both naked.

Moses Chapter 4 (June–October 1830) Adam and Eve in the Garden

Moses 4 is the continuing account of Adam and Eve’s experiences in the Garden of Eden, particularly their experiences with Satan.

verses 1-4 Generally speaking, most members of the Church understand that there was one Grand Council held in the premortal world in connection with the creation of the earth. Another view is that there is scriptural evidence of two separate Grand Councils of the Gods. It is notable that the verses that describe these two grand councils have no counterpart in the book of Genesis. From the writings of Joseph Smith, we have evidence of another three grand councils. Let us summarize these five grand councils.

1. The first Grand Council of the Gods. Prior to our earth’s existence, a council of the Gods was held, and we were not in attendance. We have no scriptural record of this council, but the prophet Joseph Smith was permitted to see this first council in open vision. He observed that it convened “in Kolob” (James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, volume 1, 161). He taught that it was there that “the Gods came together and concocted the plan of making the world and the inhabitants. . . . The Grand Councilors sat in yonder heavens and contemplated the creation of the worlds that were created at the time. . . . [Then] the heads of Gods appointed one God for us” (Ehat & Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith Diary*, by W. Richards: 7 April 1844, 341). After experiencing untold eons of preparation and training, our Father in Heaven was invited to this first Council of the Gods to receive his ordination as our God and Creator. He was, among other things, given the power to beget a family of spirit children. Brigham Young described this process: “After men have got their exaltations and their crowns—have become Gods, even the sons of God—are made Kings of kings and Lords of lords, they have the power given them of propagating their species in spirit; and that is the first of their operations with regard to organizing a world” (*JD*, 6:275). We may speculate that our Father was then assigned a place and sufficient intelligences and unorganized matter to create his universe.

2. The second Grand Council of the Gods was held when it was time to relocate the Father’s spirit family to a spirit globe of their own. In this council our Father was ordained with the authority to organize a spirit earth.

3. The third Grand Council was convened after our Heavenly Father had received his formal assignment to create a physical mortal earth. Here the entire earth experience was laid out in a comprehensive planning session involving the Master Creators of the universe. Physical details of the earth had to be determined. For example, how large was the earth to be? The size of the physical earth was not arbitrary. Its dimensions and proportions were determined beforehand (Job 38:4-5).

Joseph Smith referred to this planning council when he wrote that “those things which the Father ordained of old, before the world was or a system had run [were planned for, including], what was, and now is, and is yet to be” (James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, volume 1, 161).

4. The fourth Grand Council of the Gods was held after the plans for the creation of the physical earth were completed. The spirit creation was complete, and the Father’s spirit family was settled on the spirit earth. It was now time to embody the spirit earth with physical matter. Before this process could be begun, another Grand Council was necessary. Moses did not record the proceedings of this Council. However, Abraham was permitted to see it and report that all of us were present at this convocation (Abraham 4:1-25). This council likely was not convened until a very long time had elapsed following the creation of the spirit earth. This council could have been held on the spirit earth, or perhaps it was held on the celestial planet. Moses was told that this fourth council occurred “in heaven.” One of the uses for the term “heaven” is to designate the spirit earth (Moses 3:5), but the celestial home of the Father may also be so designated. He is, after all, our Father in heaven. Two important subjects were on the agenda. First, someone had to be chosen to direct the creation of the physical earth. This same individual would eventually be called upon to atone for the sins of mankind so that the children of God would have the opportunity to eventually return to their celestial home. Second, we needed to consider the details of the creation of the physical earth itself. This physical earth was to be a carefully designed planetary environment where the human family could obtain a physical body and experience for themselves the lessons of mortality. Little did we know that this family council would provoke an all-out war. For a detailed discussion of this council and its aftermath, see Abraham 3:24-28 and the commentary for those verses.

The only account of the physical preparation or creation of the earth is found in Abraham 4. Actually this account is really an account of the council that planned the physical earth. Since the details of the physical earth were reviewed, we may use this council agenda as the scriptural account of the physical creation.

5. The fifth Grand Council of the Gods (Moses 4:1-4; Abraham 4:26 through 5:3) convened on the celestial planet during the sixth creative period of the physical or preparatory creation (Abraham 4:26). The purpose of this Grand Council was to plan for the final (third) creation epoch—wherein the final physical preparations were made for the mortal earth and plans were made to introduce man and all the modern life forms into the earth. This council adjourned to the physical earth later in the sixth creative period (Abraham 4:27), and did not end until sometime during the seventh creation period (Abraham 5:3). It was during this council that Jehovah was selected to become the Savior of the world. The prophet Moses was shown this part of this final Grand Council (Moses 4:1-2). It was also during this council that the war in heaven occurred, and Satan and his minions were cast down to the earth (Moses 4:3-4). Since the

beginning of the physical creation, Lucifer had been plotting and planning to gain control over the planet earth. We know that when he was rejected as the overseer for the construction of the physical earth, he became “angry,” and “many followed after him” (Abraham 3:27-28).

Lucifer was emboldened in his quest for power by a few factors: (1) He had widespread support among the Father’s spirit family. We can surmise from the scripture that fully one-third of them supported him. (2) He was a “son of the morning,” meaning that he was likely one of the earliest born spirits, and therefore one of the more accomplished, among the Father’s family. (3) He was also an “angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God” (D&C 76:25). The forces of righteousness that opposed Lucifer and his followers from the beginning of his rebellion were led by Michael, the archangel (Revelation 12:7). This is, of course, the same Michael who would soon descend through the veil of forgetfulness and become Adam, the first father of the human family on the physical earth. The culmination of this ideological confrontation was a “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7).

It is notable that the writings of Moses (and Abraham) are brief on the subject of the premortal existence of man. Both sets of writings assume, on the part of the reader, a knowledge of pre-existence, foreordination, and heavenly councils. Joseph F. McConkie has written:

Though these doctrines are lost to the theology of the churches of our day they were common to the understanding of the ancient Saints and were well known to those of Abraham’s and Moses’ day. Indeed we find potsherds from these vessels of truth almost everywhere we start digging into the past. The Old Testament is replete with references to such doctrines, though they have been obscured by the ignorance of Bible translators. They are even more evident in Old Testament apocrypha; they are common to old Jewish sources; we find them woven into Greek thought, and even with surprising frequency in the Quran. They are also common to the New Testament and the writings of the apostolic fathers, though since the middle of the sixth century AD they have languished in a papal prison. In AD 553 the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul was dropped from Christianity by an edict known as the “Anathema against Origen.” This was the work of the Roman Emperor Justinian; the Pope consented under extreme duress. Thereafter these doctrines have quietly slipped from the attention and interest of the religious world (*Studies in Scripture, Volume 2, The Pearl of Great Price*, 63).

How difficult it must be for the religious world to interpret Old and New Testament passages that refer to the premortal world, to the war in heaven, and the casting out of Satan and the third of the hosts of heaven. Consider the following passage from Isaiah: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon

the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isaiah 14:12-15). Consider a passage from the Book of Revelation. It declares that there was a “war in heaven: “Michael [meaning Adam] and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9). Then John the Revelator also said: “I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power [authority] of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10). The Revelator noted that the battle ground for a war that commenced in heaven had shifted to the earth, but the adversaries remained the same. Satan and his army, which consists of “the third part of the stars of heaven” or a third of that heavenly host that joined him in his rebellion, being cast out with him, continue their efforts to get all others to worship him as their Redeemer and their God (Consider also Jeremiah 1:5; Ephesians 1:1-4).

1 And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

verse 1 “I, the Lord God” Again, the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to Moses here, but he is speaking as though were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority.

Here the Lord narrates as the first person, in contrast to the Genesis account (Genesis 2:8 to Genesis 3:24) which is narrated in the third person. The title “Lord God” refers to Jesus Christ and is associated with covenant making. This title characterizes the narrative from Moses 3:4 to 5:1 and Genesis 2:4 to 3:24. It is notable that the Creator in Genesis 1 and Moses 2 is “God” who is the Father, as opposed to “Lord God” who is the Son. The Creator for the spirit creation was not the Son, but rather the Father.

“whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten” This phrase seems to refer to Moses’s encounter in Moses 1:15-18. Moses commanded Satan to “get thee hence” (Moses 1:16) and “depart hence” (Moses 1:18).

“That Satan . . . is the same which was from the beginning” This phrase suggests that in “the beginning” Satan enjoyed unusual access to the presence of God, a status hinted at in his title “a son of the morning” (D&C 76:27). It also hints that Satan,

at the time of this revelation to the prophet Moses, did not enjoy that same favored status.

“here am I, send me” Satan is speaking. This same expression also appears in Abraham 3:27, where it is also spoken by Satan. The same phrase is also found in Isaiah 6:8 where it is spoken by the prophet. This Hebrew phrase forms a simple response to a question such as “Where are you?” Often this phrase carries the sense that the speaker is in the right path, ready to do the Lord’s bidding (see Genesis 22:1, 7; Acts 9:10). Such is not the case here obviously.

Here Lucifer brazenly approached the throne of the Father and demanded to be appointed to be the Savior of the earth. This confrontation between the Father and Lucifer is not the same one that occurred earlier described in Abraham 3:24-28. In this earlier confrontation, which occurred during the fourth Grand Council in heaven (see the introductory commentary for verses 4:1-4 above), Lucifer presented himself “second” while in the current confrontation, the fifth Grand Council, Lucifer presented himself first. This is one piece of evidence that these scriptures represent different grand councils.

“I will be thy son” What Satan seems to be seeking is more than a title of respect. Here, the title “son” designates the one who will redeem, as his following words indicate—“I will redeem all mankind.” We also detect some of the sibling jealousy that Satan held for the “Beloved Son” (Moses 4:2).

“one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it” Satan’s plan included the idea of coercion—the removal of agency: effectively to force all God’s children back into his presence. Moreover, we sense in these words an underlying arrogance that Satan is the only one capable of carrying out such an effort.

2 But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.

verse 2 “my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning” Here Jesus Christ refers to himself in the third person as if he were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority. Jesus refers to himself as “my Beloved and Chosen.” Jehovah has been both beloved of the Father and chosen of the Father since “the beginning.” And when was “the beginning”? It was in the early stages of this round of the Father’s creation.

“thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” Note the deferential tone of the Lord which is much different than the tone of Satan who, in self-serving tones, affirmed, “I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor” (verse 1).

3 Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give

unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

verse 3 “Satan rebelled against me” Moses’s recounting of this episode does not actually contain a direct account of the Father’s choosing of Jehovah over Satan, as does Abraham 3:27. But his decision is implied in that he “caused that he [Satan] should be cast down.”

“Satan . . . sought to destroy the agency of man” Lucifer’s plan was to send us all to the earth as robots lacking agency; that is, without any capacity to act except as dictated by Lucifer himself. Since the Law of justice mandates that only “perfect” individuals without sins can return and live with the Father in his kingdom (D&C 1:31; 76:69), Lucifer suggested, by virtue of his flawed logic, that we be sent to the earth and forced to adhere to the law. By his plan, there would be no risk of disobedience, and hence all would return to the Father’s presence. While Lucifer promoted this as the perfect plan, he certainly knew in his heart that it was untenable. The principle of agency is absolute and sacrosanct our universe and even God himself cannot suspend our agency, let alone Satan. His preaching of this plan was largely a ploy to convince others and to get them to follow him and rebel against the Father. It was never a plan that was even considered by the Father. It was never in the running. Satan certainly must have been aware of that fact.

It is likely Satan’s plan had roots in his own profound fears of coming into mortality. He had been informed of the basics of the impending mortal trial. He must have sensed his own profound character flaws and knew he would fail to return to his celestial home. If he were to consent to pass into mortality, he knew he would forfeit the ostensibly lofty position he enjoyed there. It seems likely that the “statistics” regarding the number of God’s children who would successfully negotiate mortality and then return home (“strait is the gait and narrow is the way” and “few there be that find it”—Matthew 7:13-14) were well known to him, and he was frightened to risk it. Simply stated, Satan’s “plan” originated in his own cowardice.

If we were to give Satan credit for being well informed and intelligent in a secular sense, we would credit him with knowing full well the nature of the agency of all intelligences. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he sought not to remove man’s agency because that would have been impossible, but rather he sought to render it invalid or unusable by completely removing men’s freedoms; that is, by making all choices unavailable to them (see *Agency and Freedom* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 13).

“which I, the Lord God, had given him” Did actually give to man his agency? Is man’s agency a gift of God? Strictly speaking the Father did not give agency to mankind; as each of us has always existed and has always possessed our agency. But the Father, in his plan for us, is wont to allow many personal freedoms to mankind, so that each individual may work out his own salvation. While God does not give us our

agency, he allows the free exercise of it by granting us the potential for possessing many freedoms.

“Satan . . . sought . . . that I should give unto him mine own power” It would not have been possible for God to have given to Satan his power, even if he had so desired. The basis of God’s power is his “honor,” that is the respect and obedience that is voluntarily given to God by all the intelligences in his universe (see *The Power of God in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 14).

Since Lucifer’s plan involved compulsion, it was rejected. He was therefore “angry” (Abraham 3:28), and he launched a campaign, even an all-out ideological war, for control of the planet earth and all of God’s children.

“by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down” It is interesting to note that it was by the power of Jehovah and not by the power of the Father that Satan was “cast down.” What does this really mean? Did Jehovah exercise his power to ensure that Satan was “cast down”? What is the nature of that power? What does it mean to be “cast down”?

The phrase “cast down” indicates that Satan was forced to a lower position, far from the exalted place of God. From other sources, we know that Satan took others with him: “at that day, many followed after him” (Abraham 3:28); “he had drawn away many after him” (Moses 4:6); and “a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he [Satan] away from me [God] because of their agency” (D&C 29:36; compare Revelation 12:4). It is not clear as to whether Satan and his followers were actually cast “down” from a heavenly realm to earth. It could be that the premortal spirits already lived on this earth rather than on the heavenly planet. In that case the phrase “cast down” would only refer to a loss of status. Are Satan and his followers confined to a certain place or station on this earth? Some have worried that he does not seem to be confined at all but has the ability to range freely over all the earth. He does not seem to be confined or imprisoned, even though he lives under certain eternal condemnation. It does seem likely, however, that he and his angels are excluded physically from the society of other spirit groups here on earth such as the premortal spirits and the post mortal spirits.

As we study the nature of God’s power and the nature of agency and freedom, we learn that there is not much of actual coercion in the Father’s plan. There is, however, some. This coercion occurs as freedoms (not agency) are limited through an individual’s disobedience to law.

And what is the Savior’s role in this loss of freedom? Because of the principle of freedom, there are choices which an individual simply cannot make. Even if he wanted to he could not. Thus, the use of his agency is compromised. Agency never was the God given right to do anything one wishes. Agency, again, is the right to choose among available alternatives. For example the unrepentant sinner is absolutely prevented from choosing to be resurrected with a celestial body and residing in the celestial kingdom. For the sinner, there are many spiritual options that are closed to him. And why should

this be? Why is it right for some choices to be out of reach to any given individual? The answer is that it would not be fair, and it would violate the law of justice, if any individual had all choices automatically open to him.

And who is it that closes some choices to certain individuals? First, it is the Savior himself, into whose hands all judgment is placed (John 5:22). He will designate those who are worthy of exaltation, and he will plead their cases before those who enforce the demands of justice. He will also designate those who are unworthy for exaltation and must inherit a lesser degree of glory. Second, it is those who enforce the demands of justice. Justice must always be satisfied—in other words, every matter must be decided with perfect fairness. If an individual is unrepentant and eventually is worthy only of a lesser degree of glory, then he will receive that lesser degree of glory. There is no choice. The demands of justice must be met. Alma 42:22 reads: “But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.” The demands of justice will be met; this is absolute. Here is the coercion that exists in God’s universe. We see evidence of some coercion otherwise. For example, “power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children” (D&C 29:46-47), suggesting that God has the ability to circumscribe or interfere with Satan’s freedoms. We know that during the millennium he will be bound, and then loosed at the end of that period (see Revelation 20:2-3, 7; also D&C 43:31; 45:55; 88:110-111). We might say that the millennial binding of Satan is only due to the righteousness of the people alive on the earth during that period. It seems likely, however, that in some ways and in some circumstances, the Father and the Son may deliberately act to limit the choices Satan possesses.

4 And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.

verse 4 “he became Satan . . . the devil, the father of all lies” Evidently Satan became fully who he is after his dismissal from the heavenly realm. In Hebrew, the root letters for Satan mean “adversary”—in this case the adversary of God. Lucifer became Satan following his rebellion. See *The Role of Satan in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 16.

“to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” Actually, to follow Satan and to fail to hearken unto the voice of God are not two separate things, but one and the same thing. Satan only has persuasive power over man when the man disobeys the law. As long as the man is obedient, or at least strives to be obedient, Satan has no power over him.

5 And now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which I, the Lord God, had made.

verse 5 The Genesis account resumes here at Genesis 3:1. The reader will note that we are no longer listing the verses in Genesis along side the verses in Moses. Genesis 3:1-24 correspond roughly to Moses 4:5-31, though the Moses account adds much that is not recorded in Genesis.

“the serpent was more subtle than any best of the field” The meaning of *subtle* here is cunning, wily, crafty. Satan will speak to Adam and Eve through the mouth of the serpent.

6 And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.

verse 6 “Satan put it into the heart of the serpent” According to Genesis 3:1, the serpent was the sole agent for tempting Eve. But this expression places Satan squarely at the center of this effort and affirms that he can exert some influence even in the animal kingdom (see verse 7).

Joseph Smith gave further information regarding the serpent and the fall. It is found in a report of Josiah Quincy, one time mayor of Boston, regarding his visit to Nauvoo in 1844, during which occasion he was shown a parchment by the prophet Joseph Smith:

The parchment . . . showed a rude drawing of a man and woman, and a serpent walking upon a pair of legs. I ventured to doubt the propriety of providing the reptile in question with this unusual means of locomotion. “Why, that’s as plain as a pikestaff,” was the rejoinder. “Before the Fall snakes always went about on legs, just like chickens. They were deprived of them, in punishment for their agency in the ruin of man (*Figures of the Past* [Boston, 1883], 386-87).

Whether the serpent is literal or figurative is really immaterial as far as the outcome is concerned. Eve was tempted and yielded. Adam yielded also, and the fall was initiated.

“he had drawn away many after him” This aside refers back to earlier events when Satan enticed others to follow him out of heaven.

“he sought also to beguile Eve” Satan singles out Eve, away from her husband, in an effort to undo God’s purposes. Perhaps he sensed that she would quickly grasp the desirability of acquiring knowledge and would then be willing to take necessary action.

“he knew not the mind of God” Here is a profound truth regarding the condition of Satan. We are taught that “light and truth forsake that evil one” (D&C 93:37). Satan and his people are excluded from knowing spiritual truths and excluded from the promptings of the Holy Ghost which reveal the mind of God to man.

“he sought to destroy the world” Even though Satan’s motive is clearly to thwart the purposes of God, we will learn that his actions sometimes inadvertently assist with God’s purposes. Undoubtedly this is, as we have already learned, because he does not know the mind of God. For example, he will entice Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of life, which will turn out to be essential for God’s purposes here on earth.

7 And he said unto the woman: Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (And he spake by the mouth of the serpent.)

8 And the woman said unto the serpent: We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;

9 But of the fruit of the tree which thou beholdest in the midst of the garden, God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

verse 9 Eve is still the speaker in this verse.

“in the midst of the garden” This expression, and particularly the word *midst*, denotes a most sacred spot (see the commentary for Moses 7:69).

“Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it” God had previously warned Adam not to eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Moses 3:17; Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve also understood that they should not even touch the fruit of the tree. This understanding indicates that they comprehended enough about the nature of temptation to know that they should avoid any contact with that which tempts.

10 And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not surely die;

verse 10 “Ye shall not surely die” We will learn that in his conversation with Eve, Satan will mix truth with lies. This statement is, of course, a lie. Partaking of the fruit will result in Adam and Eve’s becoming mortal, and hence they will eventually die.

It would seem that Satan is attempting to appear to Adam and Eve as the Messiah, offering a promise that only the Messiah can offer, for it is the Messiah who will control the powers of life and death and can promise life, not Satan (see John 5:25-26; 2 Nephi 9:3-26). In this context is notable that Satan may well have chosen to speak to Adam and Eve through the mouth of the serpent because of the association of Jesus Christ with the symbol of the serpent. One obvious example, is the story in Numbers 21:4-9 wherein Moses uses the symbol of a serpent on the pole as a metaphor for the need for his people to look to Christ and live. The serpent’s being placed upon a pole typified the eventual hanging of the Savior upon a cross. Moses was, in effect, lifting Christ up for all Israel to see. He was teaching them Jesus Christ. All those that look upon or accept Christ and his gospel shall be saved or exalted. Those who fail to do so will not. It is interesting to note that throughout the history of the world, many cultures have used the serpent as a symbol of either Deity or the devil.

The symbol used by physicians today of the snake coiled about a pole likely had its origin in this story in the book of Numbers.

11 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

verse 11 “then your eyes shall be opened” This is a truth. As a result of partaking of the fruit, Adam and Eve will acquired a more complete knowledge of good and evil. They then will be better able to exercise their moral agency. They will then become able to grow toward godhood by their obedience to the law.

“ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” In this statement there is some truth and some lie. This makes for an egregious deceit. Adam and Eve will not be as gods, rather will be merely fallen mortals. On the other hand, they will be as the gods in one sense—like the gods, they will have a full knowledge of good and evil. Eating the fruit of the tree will make her “wise.”

12 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it became pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make her wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

verse 12 “when the woman saw” In the Genesis text, the Hebrew verb translated *saw* in this passage (Hebrew *ra’ah*) is the same that describes God’s earlier acts of seeing (see Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31). The implication is that, in this instant, Eve saw with celestial sight or discernment and thereby knew what she must do.

“a tree desired to make her wise” The “innocence” that characterized Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was not so much a freedom from blame or sin, but rather it was a limited knowledge of good and evil which prevented them from growing spiritually. Eve apparently understood the vital need to acquire spiritual wisdom at any cost (see D&C 6:7: “Seek . . . for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you”).

“she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat” The verb *took* clearly points to the initiative of the woman (see also Genesis 3:6). The fruit was not forced on her by another. While the sectarian religious world tends to view the actions of Eve and Adam as an egregious sin, we know that in fact it was a courageous deliberate choice with far-reaching consequences. The reader should keep in mind that Eve had to decide even though she did not possess full knowledge of good and evil. She was in a state of “innocence” which simply means that she lacked the knowledge of good and evil which would allow her to grow spiritually. Eve, then, weighed her choices and in her “veiled” condition chose to partake of the fruit and then persuaded her husband to do likewise.

“and he did eat” This implies that Adam also realized the necessity of their deliberately breaking this commandment so that they could bring children into the world. Their actions are typically referred to as the fall of Adam and Eve, meaning that they consequently fell from the presence of God and introduced mortality into the world.

13 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they had been naked. And they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons.

verse 13 “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew” Eating of the fruit had obviously led to further knowledge, and the immediate result was they both discovered their nakedness, and their natural reaction was to cover themselves.

“they sewed fig-leaves together” The presence of fig trees indicates that the temperatures in the Garden of Eden were moderately warm, with little chance of frost. Fig leaves are broad, making them suitable for making aprons.

14 And they heard the voice of the Lord God, as they were walking in the garden, in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife went to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

verse 14 Adam and Eve were now obviously uncomfortable with their nakedness in the Lord’s presence.

“as they were walking in the garden” This detail clarifies that Adam and Eve were walking in the garden when they heard the Lord’s voice. The Genesis account leads the reader to think that God was walking in the Garden when overheard (see Genesis 3:8). Both meanings are possible.

“from the presence of the Lord” This expression, in the third person, seems to break the first-person narrative style of the surrounding verses. Actually, in the first handwritten language of Moses 3:14, that first-person style is preserved in a somewhat awkward wording: “from the presence of I the Lord God.”

15 And I, the Lord God, called unto Adam, and said unto him: Where goest thou?

verse 15 “Where goest thou?” Although the question addresses Adam alone, it seems plain that God was also addressing Eve. Further, the Genesis report repeats the question as “Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). From the Moses account, evidently God saw them moving “amongst the trees of the garden” (verse 14). We know from other hints that there were pathways in the Garden (see the commentary on verse 31).

16 And he said: I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I beheld that I was naked, and I hid myself.

verse 16 “because I beheld that I was naked” This realization on the part of Adam and Eve was apparently a trigger mechanism that, when confessed, would make it plain to all parties, including the Lord and the couple, that something was seriously

amiss. The Genesis text records words of Adam that exhibit less self-consciousness on his part: “because I was naked” (Genesis 3:10).

17 And I, the Lord God, said unto Adam: Who told thee thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, if so thou shouldst surely die?

verse 17 “Who told thee thou wast naked?” The question intimates that the Lord was letting Adam know that he knew of Satan’s activities in the garden.

“if so thou shouldst surely die?” This expression does not appear in the Genesis account. Here it serves as a link backward to Moses 3:16-17 which contains the original commandment.

18 And the man said: The woman thou gavest me, and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat.

verse 18 “The woman . . . gave me of the fruit” Adam evidences his truly human nature by initially deflecting blame from himself.

“I did eat” To his credit, Adam finally accepted responsibility for his act. So did Eve (see verse 19). These acts stand in contrast to Cain’s deceitful effort to appear blameless before God. Moses 5:34 reads: “And the Lord said unto Cain: Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said: I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

19 And I, the Lord God, said unto the woman: What is this thing which thou hast done? And the woman said: The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

verse 19 “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” Like Adam, Eve exhibits the fully human inclination to shift the blame for her action to another. Also like Adam, she finally took responsibility for her decision and subsequent action by saying, “I did eat.”

verses 20-25 In these verses the Lord pronounces the “curses” of mortality. The first curse is pronounced upon the head of the serpent.

20 And I, the Lord God, said unto the serpent: Because thou hast done this thou shalt be cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;

verse 20 “I, the Lord God, said unto the serpent” Again we meet the problem of whether the serpent is a figurative representation of Satan, or whether there was a literal cursing of the serpent. In other words, who is it that is being cursed here? Is it Satan or is it the snake? From the context, it seems there is both a literal and a figurative interpretation. The serpent is being cursed, and the serpent is a type of what will happen to Satan and his followers. Evidence for the literal interpretation in this

verse is seen in the comparison to all other beasts is made (“thou shalt be cursed above all cattle”). The literal cursing of the serpent then is, “upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” The following verse will extend the curse to Satan and his followers.

21 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

verse 21 This verse extends the Lord’s curse to Satan and his followers. We may regard this verse as one of the few recorded verbal exchanges between the Lord and Satan following the expulsion of the latter from heaven.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman” The Lord places enmity between Satan’s minions and the offspring of the woman Eve. There is a natural division between those who exemplify the darkness of the world and those who maintain their inherent light of Christ (John 1:9).

“thy seed” This is a reference to Satan and all of his minions. The offspring (“thy seed”) of Satan, those who choose to follow Satan as did the serpent, will become his sons and daughters.

“her seed” The offspring of Eve.

“he shall bruise thy head” The “he” in this phrase seems to refer to Jesus Christ, one of the “offspring” of Eve. He will bruise or crush the head of Satan through the atonement (see Romans 16:20).

“thou shalt bruise his heel” The followers of Satan will have power to bruise the heel of Eve’s other seed by leading them to sin. This lesser injury may not cause a permanent disability.

22 Unto the woman, I, the Lord God, said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

verse 22 “thy sorrow and thy conception” “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” The meaning of the Hebrew term *sorrow* in Genesis 3:16 has to do with pain, suffering, misery, including mental pain. In Genesis 3:16, the meaning seems to point to the stress of family. While the privilege of bringing forth children is a great blessing, this blessing will be earned through significant hardship.

“thy desire shall be to thy husband” The woman is to abide by the righteous counsel of her husband.

“he shall rule over thee” The husband will preside over the wife. Her role is not to be inferior to that her husband but of a different nature. She is to receive joy through her children and is also to comfort her husband in his role. She is to “lay aside the things of this world” and delight in “the glory which [will] come upon him” (D&C 25:5, 10, 14). He in turn will rule over her—not in unrighteousness, but by revelation entitled

to him as a priesthood holder and in conformity with the principles of righteousness outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 121:36-46).

23 And unto Adam, I, the Lord God, said: Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying—Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed shall be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

verse 23 “cursed shall be the ground for thy sake” Cursing the ground for disobedience, and blessing it in other circumstances, occurs frequently in scripture because it directly affects a society that depends on agriculture for its basic needs (see Genesis 5:29; Deuteronomy 28:16-17; Isaiah 5:10; Moses 7:7-8; Mosiah 12:4, 6; Alma 9:13; Helaman 11:4-5, 17). To Adam and his male offspring, the Lord cursed the ground, but he did it “for [their] sake.” This suggests that his cursing would make it more difficult to raise crops, but that will work for the ultimate good of man. Because of the thorns and thistles which would grow upon the cursed ground, Adam and his posterity would have to labor “by the sweat of [their] face” to eat of their bread (Moses 4:23-25). Since the idle mind is the devil’s workshop, this commandment to work becomes a blessing in disguise.

“in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” In misery and hardship will you eke out your sustenance from the cursed ground for the rest of your life.

24 Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

25 By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground—for thou shalt surely die—for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou wast, and unto dust shalt thou return.

verse 25 You will surely die and your body will return to the dust of the earth from whence it came.

26 And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living; for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many.

verse 26 “Eve” In the Genesis account, Eve’s name derives from the Hebrew verb “to live” (*hayah*) thus giving meaning to the expression “she was the mother of all living.”

“for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many” This expression bears a major doctrinal message about the prior creative acts of God—they are many, and there have been many first women named Eve (compare Moses 1:33; Abraham 3:12).

27 Unto Adam, and also unto his wife, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed them.

verse 27 This verse is missing from the first handwritten manuscript but was included in the second. Its language resembles that of Genesis 3:21.

“I, the Lord God . . . clothed them” The clothing is sacred, because God made it. Thus we learn that the “coats of skins” represents the sacred garment.

“coats of skins” Obviously death is also in force in the animal kingdom, for the skins most likely came from animals.

28 And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten: Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil; and now lest he put forth his hand and partake also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever,

verse 28 “I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten” A reminder that both the Father and the Son collaborated to create the earth and all things on the earth. One of the ancient biblical questions has been, Who assisted God in his unfolding work? Genesis 1:26—“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”—does not identify God’s helper. Additional revelation has provided us the answer.

“the man is become as one of us” There is an implication in these words that the divine world was made up of many more personalities than the Father and the Son (see “Divine Assembly” and “Sons of God” in *The Anchor Bible*, 2:214-17).

By acquiring a knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve now possessed a celestial characteristic (compare Alma 12:31—“becoming as Gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act . . . according to their wills and pleasures”).

“lest he . . . partake also of the tree of life, and . . . live forever” In an inspired reflection on this scene, Alma placed God’s concerns in a larger perspective, declaring, “If Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever . . . having no space for repentance . . . and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated” (Alma 42:5; also 12:23, 26). This phrase proposes a hypothetical situation that could never have come to pass because the word of God has stated otherwise. If Adam and Eve had partaken of the fruit of the tree of life, they would have lived forever in sort of suspended state of eternal agony where they were guilty of sin but unable to repent. They would have a type of immortal body. Though they had transgressed in the garden and knew right from wrong, there would be no mortal period of probation available to them. There would be no opportunity to be tried and to repent. They would be unable to earn their exaltation. The rest of us would also suffer. We would be stuck in our pre-existent, unembodied state. Thus, “the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated.”

29 Therefore I, the Lord God, will send him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken;

verse 29 **“I, the Lord God, will send him forth from the Garden”** The banishment represented more than just a physical move for Adam and Eve. It meant that they were prevented from partaking of the tree of life. They were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord, and their state became a state of probation.

“to till the ground from whence he was taken” This phrase references the ground, or materials of the earth, from which Adam and Eve’s bodies were constructed or “taken.”

30 For as I, the Lord God, liveth, even so my words cannot return void, for as they go forth out of my mouth they must be fulfilled.

verse 30 **“my words cannot return void”** This verse finds no counterpart in the Genesis account. It states an important doctrinal principle—that God’s “words cannot return void” to him after he has spoken them. This means “they must be fulfilled.”

31 So I drove out the man, and I placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

verse 31 **“at the east of the Garden of Eden”** The east side of the garden is the place of sacred entry, as it was with most ancient holy sanctuaries, whose main gates faced the rising sun. In fact, Cain and his family settled “east of Eden” in an apparent attempt to remain close both to the original place of his parents’ residence and to the gate leading into the garden (Moses 5:41).

“cherubim” This plural term refers to creatures of the heavenly world who are not a part of the earthly realm. Their holiness, evidenced by their close association with God, appears in representations of them on various sacred objects as described in the scriptures (Exodus 25:18-22; 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35; 37:7-9; Numbers 7:89; 1 Kings 6:23-35; 8:6-7). In this scene, the cherubim are associated with the gate leading into the Garden, which is made holy by the presence of God. That God continued to come to this place is shown both by the prayers of Adam and Eve near the garden and by “the voice of the Lord,” which came to them from there (Moses 5:4).

“a flaming sword” The flame and the sword are, respectively, symbols for God’s justice and his power to inflict punishment. For fire as a symbol of divine justice or punishment, see Genesis 19:24-25; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; Matthew 3:10; 18:8; 25:41; Jude 1:7. For the sword, see Deuteronomy 32:41-42; 33:29; Romans 13:4; Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 1:16; 6:4.

“to keep the way of the tree of life” The term “the way” points plainly to a pathway or road that led to the tree of life, apparently running to the tree from the east entry into the garden (compare Alma 12:21—“lest our first parents should enter”—and

the note on Moses 5:4). In Genesis 3:24, the Hebrew term for “way” is *derek*, which means “a path.”

The Lord’s action here is best explained in the Book of Mormon. In answer to one Antionah, a chief ruler in the land of Ammonihah, Alma explained:

And now behold, I say unto you that if it had been possible for Adam to have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death, and the word would have been void, making God a liar, for he said: If thou eat thou shalt surely die. And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead. Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead; but there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken. And now behold, if it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life they would have been forever miserable, having no preparatory state; and thus the plan of redemption would have been frustrated, and the word of God would have been void, taking none effect (Alma 12:23-26; see also Alma 42:3-6).

In summary, the protection of the tree was for a two fold purpose: to bring about a guarantee of death as God had proclaimed, and to allow a probationary time for mankind to repent and serve God.

32 (And these are the words which I spake unto my servant Moses, and they are true even as I will; and I have spoken them unto you. See thou show them unto no man, until I command you, except to them that believe. Amen.)

verse 32 “these are the words which I spake unto my servant Moses”

Although God does not mention here the accompanying vision, we know that Moses saw one in preparation for receiving the revelation about the Creation and events that followed (see Moses 1:27-29). Evidently, the bulk of what Moses wrote came to him by dictation—“write the words which I [God] speak” (Moses 2:1).

“the words . . . are true” Although God does not swear an oath to affirm the truth of what he has said, as he does in other contexts (see Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13), his words alone carry the assurance of divine verity.

“show them unto no man . . . except to them that believe” This instruction repeats what God had said earlier to Joseph Smith, who was the recipient of the record of Moses (see Moses 1:42). It is thus plain that these materials bear a quality of holiness and will be appreciated by believers, but perhaps scorned by unbelievers.

Moses Chapter 5 (June-October 1830) The Family of Adam and Eve

This chapter documents the beginnings of Adam and Eve's life in mortality. Joseph Smith dictated a title for this section: "A Revelation concerning Adam after he had been driven out of the garden of Eden."

Two notable features of this chapter include (1) the way in which God revealed the gospel to Adam and Eve and their posterity and (2) the rise of sin among the human family including the rise of a secret, diabolical organization.

For Moses 5:1-15, there are no corresponding verses in Genesis. The Genesis account will pick up again in Moses 5:16. Moses 5:16-48 corresponds roughly to Genesis 4:1-24. Again, for Moses 5:49-59 and Moses 6:1, there is no Genesis account. The Genesis account will then pick up again in Moses 6:2 with Genesis 4:25.

1 And it came to pass that after I, the Lord God, had driven them out, that Adam began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, as I the Lord had commanded him. And Eve, also, his wife, did labor with him.

verse 1 "I, the Lord God, had driven them out" Again, we note the first-person narration by the Lord. Genesis, on the other hand, is narrated in the third person.

The agent for driving out Adam and Eve was the Lord rather than some other heavenly personality. During the time Adam and Eve were in the garden, they had enjoyed a personal relationship with the Lord. On the occasion of their banishment, apparently, he personally "escorted them to the door."

"as I the Lord had commanded him" The obedience of Adam is emphasized, as he accomplished all of those things the Lord had commanded him to do.

"I the Lord" Note that in this verse, the Lord refers to himself both as "I, the Lord God" and simply "I the Lord." We have commented previously that the title "Lord God" is often associated with issues having to do with the obedience of men and covenant making.

"Eve . . . did labor with him" This phrase emphasizes the nature of the partnership of marriage.

2 And Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.

verse 2 "Adam knew his wife" The verb *knew* here means that Adam had sexual intercourse with his wife.

"sons and daughters" The plural is significant here, as is the fact that there were children that preceded Cain and Abel (see verses 16-17). Genesis gives no hint

of earlier children until after the narration of the divine curse on Cain when the Genesis record says: “Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that *every one that findeth me* shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore *whosoever slayeth Cain*, vengeance shall be taken on *him* sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest *any finding him* should kill him” (Genesis 4:14-15, italics added).

3 And from that time forth, the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begat sons and daughters.

verse 3 “the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two”

The offspring of Adam paired off in marriage. Doubtless, centered deeply within their new family was the principle of eternal marriage.

“to till the land, and . . . tend flocks” The second generation has learned and applied the skills of the first and has also learned to work hard. It becomes obvious that Adam and Eve had been diligent in teaching the work ethic to their children. Rather than finding reason to rebel or take offense at the Lord’s firm actions, Adam and Eve responded willingly to his requirements and adapted readily to their new lives of hard work and child rearing, thus disclosing their true characters.

“they also begat sons and daughters” The third generation of Adam begins.

4 And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

verse 4 “they heard the voice of the Lord” Although banished from the Lord’s presence, he continued to guide them as they continued to pray to him.

“from the way toward the Garden of Eden” This expression hints strongly that Adam and Eve went to a certain spot near the garden to pray, perhaps on the east side where the gate was located (see Moses 4:31; Genesis 3:24). These words point to a sacred path (“way”) by which they would approach the place of prayer—a feature of ancient temples that is implicit, for example, in the words, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?” (Psalm 24:3). Thus, the phrase “the way” evidently forms the first indication that from the earliest generation, a sacred place was important in acts of worship on the human side and in acts of revelation on the divine side (see also the commentary for Moses 4:31).

“they were shut out from his presence” Modern scripture reveals that this banishment of Adam and Eve from God’s presence, and the similar descent of each of us into mortality, is called the “first death” (D&C 29:41). It is the “spiritual death” we all experience as we leave the premortal world and enter mortality. The cause of the first

death is the transgression of Adam and Eve. Each of the rest of us is not responsible. Hence, the first death has been overcome for each of us by virtue of the Lord's atonement. The practical implication of this universal overcoming of the first death is that each of us will return to the presence of God—and remain there at least long enough to be judged.

At the great final judgment, apparently only a relative few will be exalted—that is, return permanently to the celestial presence of God. The remainder will suffer what may be referred to as the “second death,” this time a permanent spiritual death.

5 And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

verse 5 “they . . . should offer the firstlings of their flocks” The word “firstlings” puts certain qualifications and restrictions and even determines the quality of faith that is used in offering the sacrifice. “Firstling” does not necessarily denote the oldest of the flock, but the firstborn of each particular mother. A “firstling” is a male, the “first to open the matrix” of its mother (Exodus 13:2; 34:19). Each female animal, in her lifetime, could produce none, one, or more firstlings, but an entire flock of sheep could have several firstlings born each year. In order to know which lambs were suitable for sacrifice, the owner would have to know his flock. Some notice would have to be made of mothers and of young. Otherwise, how could anyone know which mothers had produced male offspring for the first time? There is no way that a man, Adam or anyone else, could know which males were firstlings unless a record and some identification of mothers and offspring were kept. This requirement removes the element of chance and of haphazard obedience, or sometime obedience. Not only is one's faith shown in the willingness to offer a sacrifice but also in the care required and the preparation needed beforehand in making the selection of the proper animal. An analogous manifestation of faith for each of us is our careful accounting of our income and our meticulous determining of just how much tithing each of us owes the Lord. Living the law of tithing includes not only paying our tithes but also conscientiously determining just how much we owe.

We know that this type of offering foretold the atoning sacrifice of the Savior (see verse 7), but Adam did not realize at first the symbolic significance of the ordinance of sacrifice (see verse 6). He was obedient without having to know all of the reasons for his actions (verse 6).

“Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord” What splendidly simple praise for one of the most noble individuals in our round of creation. It is clear that Adam and Eve were painstakingly obedient to the Lord, even then they did not understand the reasons for a particular commandment. The result of their obedience

will be a benchmark revelation in which they will be told of the redeeming power of the Only Begotten, who will rescue them from their transgressions (see verses 7, 9-10).

6 And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

verse 6 See the commentary for verse 5.

7 And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

verse 7 “This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only begotten of the Father” As already mentioned there was a symbolic purpose to animal sacrifice. It is specified that the sacrifice must be a firstling of the flock, and the sacrifice is a similitude of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Adam was obviously the first man on this earth to offer animal sacrifice in this manner and for this purpose. Although blood sacrifices are repeatedly spoken of in the Old Testament, there is in the Old Testament no explanation as to their specific purpose; nor is there anything about Adam offering a sacrifice.

This verse provides us the first clear indication that Adam and Eve learned about the atonement of the Savior many millennia before it occurred in Gethsemane and on the cross.

8 Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

verse 8 “thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son” One of the powerful contributions of the Pearl of Great Price is a vital insight into Christ’s eternal gospel—the revelation to the Church and to the world that the gospel of Jesus Christ along with its ordinances have been taught by prophets since the days of Adam. Much of what has been delivered through Joseph Smith and his successors is a restoration—not just of the first century Church of Jesus Christ—but of those gospel principles that have pertained since Adam. Adam will also be taught, four thousand or more years before the mortal sojourn of Jesus, that Jesus Christ is “the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men” (Moses 6:52). Enoch will be taught the same principles (Moses 7:47). The collection of scriptures in the Pearl of Great Price provides confirming evidence that the Lord intended to “give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43), and that “none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11; compare John 5:39). This fact is almost entirely lacking in all other translations of the Bible available today. Indeed, the Pearl of Great Price is yet another witness for Jesus Christ.

Elder Orson Pratt expressed his understanding of the antiquity and unchanging nature of the Father's plan of salvation as follows: "The dealing of God toward his children . . . is a pattern after which all other worlds are dealt with. The creation, fall and redemption of all future worlds with their inhabitants, will be upon the same general plan. The Father of our spirits has only been doing what his progenitors did before him. . . . The same plan of redemption is carried out by which more ancient worlds have been redeemed" ("Pre-existence," *The Seer* [Washington, D.C.: 1853], 134). The reason Elder Pratt's statement makes doctrinal sense is because the plan of God is perfect, and perfection is unchanging. If the plan of redemption varied from time to time, from creation to creation, from world to world, or person to person, men would be saved by different means, and salvation would have its bargain days. The "sameness" of the plan of salvation does not mean that every world is an exact monotonous and unimaginative copy of every other, or that there are the same number of inhabitants on each. It means that the same eternal principles, the same kind of mortality, morality, and salvation are applicable wherever and whenever there are gods and devils and men.

The angel teaches Adam that all sacred things—all spiritual things—are to be done "in the name of the Son." This same teaching is found elsewhere in scripture. All personal acts of repentance and prayer are to be undertaken in the name of the Son. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "Jesus Christ [is] the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men" (Moses 6:52). "There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:17; cf. 2 Ne. 31:20-21). "And there is none other salvation save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you" (Mosiah 4:8). "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved; Wherefore, all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father" (D&C 18:23-24).

"the name of the Son" Here readers learn that "the Son" is one of the names of the Lord. The fact that this is the first mention of "the Son" in the record written by Moses about Adam may indicate that we do not possess the full report of this revelation, because, except for the prior mention of "the Only Begotten" (Moses 5:7), the mention here of "the Son" would not have connected to anything in Adam's known experiences with the Lord. We might have expected the Lord to provide for Adam and Eve more introductory and explanatory instruction prior to referring to "the Son."

9 And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the

beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.

verse 9 “the Holy Ghost . . . which beareth record of the Father and the Son” Here is one of the most important roles of the Holy Ghost—to testify of the Father and the Son (see Moses 6:61, 66 and the commentary for those verses). We will learn in Moses 6:61, 66 that a title for the Holy Ghost consequent to this role is “record of heaven” or “record of the Father, and the Son.”

“saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father” Here the Holy Ghost speaks as though he were the Son, a clear instance of divine investiture of authority. It is notable that this title is applied to the Son millennia prior to his actually being born in the flesh as the Father’s Only Begotten in the flesh. Incidentally, the reading in the first handwritten manuscript was “I am Jesus Christ,” which Joseph Smith changed in the second to its current reading.

“as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will” Adam is blessed to receive from the Holy Ghost a revelation of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

10 And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

verse 10 This verse constitutes the recorded response of Adam to the revelation of the atonement (see verse 9).

“Adam blessed God” In his gratitude to the Savior for his atoning sacrifice, Adam abjectly worshiped him: “Adam blessed God and was filled [with the spirit of the Holy Ghost]” (compare 3 Nephi 18:9; 20:9).

“Adam . . . began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth” It is notable that we do not have the content of this prophecy “concerning all the families of the earth.” Instead of providing us with the content of his prophecy, we have here in this verse only Adam’s words concerning his own future. It is interesting to note that the Doctrine and Covenants describes yet another prophecy of Adam’s to which we will not have access until a future date. This prophecy also concerns “whatsoever should befall his posterity.” We are told that this latter prophecy was “written in the book of Enoch, and [is] to be testified of in due time” (D&C 107:56-57). We must therefore conclude that the contents of both of these prophecies are being held by the Lord until a time that is appropriate for revealing them.

Doubtless this was Adam’s first experience at prophesying (Adam “began to prophesy”), an experience that communicated to him God’s acceptance of the way he was living.

“Blessed be the name of God” This phrase introduces Adam’s beatitude which reflects Adam’s pure and heart-felt gratitude to the Savior for his atoning sacrifice.

11 And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

verse 11 “Eve, heard all these things and was glad” Eve is a first-hand witness of the revelations that came to Adam.

“our . . . we . . . our . . .all” Note Eve’s use of plural pronouns which contrasts with Adam’s use of singular pronouns in Moses 5:10. This evidences her broad and instinctive concern for her family members.

Here Eve, seems to realize, after the fact, the eternal value and positive consequences of the couple’s partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and their being driven out of the Garden of Eden. But we have reason to believe that Eve concluded, even before she partook of the fruit, that it was a step she must take in order to further the purposes of God on the earth. She came to realize, as she was conversing with Satan in the garden, that if she and Adam were to become the parents of the human family—if they were to acquire the ability to procreate—that they would need to become mortal and be driven out of the garden. Consequently, the fall of Adam and Eve is looked upon differently by those in the Church than it is generally by the various denominations of the Christian world. The Christian world regards Adam’s fall as a shameful act that thwarted the plan of God and left mankind in a miserable state. On the other hand, the Church looks upon the fall as not only desirable but necessary in the plan of God. In the words of Elder Orson F. Whitney, a member of the Council of the Twelve, “Adam’s fall was a step downward, but it was also a step forward—a step in the eternal march of human progress” (*CR*, April 1908, 90). In other words, it was a step forward in the eternal plan of God to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (Moses 1:39). In the Book of Mormon, Lehi taught his son Jacob that “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

12 And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.

verse 12 “made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” Adam and Eve taught the content of the revelation, especially the doctrine concerning the atonement which would be wrought by the Only Begotten of the Father, to their children and grandchildren.

13 And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish.

verse 13 “Satan came among them” One senses that Satan entered the human drama at an early stage, though this is the first mention of his activities among mortals.

“I am also a son of God” While Satan is, indeed, a “son of God,” his words here are obviously intended to equate him with the Only Begotten. Compare this statement with his words to Moses in Moses 1:19: “I am the Only Begotten, worship me.”

“carnal, sensual, and devilish” These terms document the rise of evil among the descendants of Adam as they gave in to their “natural man” selves, an act in which Satan delights and which he is, through his skillful manipulations, able to facilitate.

In this state of probation, Satan’s sole purpose is to seek the misery of all mankind (2 Nephi 2:17-18). To be *carnal* is to seek to satisfy the appetites of the flesh. To be *sensual* is to follow one’s “natural” inclinations in satisfying things pleasing to the eye, smell, taste, touch, or sound. These in and of themselves are not bad. They may not, however, be pleasing to God if men are following what is natural to do but are directed otherwise by the Spirit. Elder Melvin J. Ballard wrote: “All the assaults that the enemy of our souls will make to capture us will be through the flesh, because it is made up of the unredeemed earth, and he has power over the elements of the earth. The approach he makes to us will be through the lusts, the appetites, the ambitions of the flesh. All the help that comes to us from the Lord to aid us in this struggle will come to us through the spirit that dwells within this mortal body. So these two mighty forces are operating upon us through these two channels” (“Struggle for the Soul,” *New Era*, March 1984, 35). Elder Ballard speaks here of the mortal enhancement of the pulls of our natural self. We know that each individual intelligence has always possessed a “natural” side that inclines the possessor toward immediate gratification, ease, and selfishness—the “natural self.” There is no question but what the receiving of a mortal body adds considerably to those natural inclinations because of the lusts of the flesh. Hence, we see the appropriateness of the term “natural man,” referring to earthly humans.

14 And the Lord God called upon men by the Holy Ghost everywhere and commanded them that they should repent;

verse 14 “the Lord God called upon men by the Holy Ghost” We have previously established the fact that spiritual and eternal concepts can have an affect on the thinking and behavior of man only when the influence of the Spirit of God is present. Conversely, without that influence, things of the spirit tend to appear foolish or are wholly disregarded by man (1 Corinthians 2:14). In other words, God is able to reach or

truly communicate with man only through the influence of the Holy Ghost. God's disadvantage (and Satan's advantage) in persuading men and leading them back to their celestial home is that the things of the world require no such mediation, but are readily effective in appealing to the "natural" side of man. On the other hand, the influence of the Holy Ghost does not come without some degree of righteous seeking for his ministrations. No wonder that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

"that they should repent" Again, the essence of repentance is to stop disobeying the Lord's commands and start obeying them. For a more complete discussion of the principle of repentance, see *Repentance in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 4.

15 And as many as believed in the Son, and repented of their sins, should be saved; and as many as believed not and repented not, should be damned; and the words went forth out of the mouth of God in a firm decree; wherefore they must be fulfilled.

verse 15 "as many as believed . . . should be saved" To be *saved* here means to be exalted in the celestial presence of the Father and the Son.

"as many as believed not . . . should be damned" To be *damned* means to be doomed to a lesser degree of glory. The essence of the damnation of these souls is not that they suffer eternal discomfort, but rather that they are limited or stopped in their eternal progression. It is for this reason that, in the Church, we sometimes speak of being "damned" as being stopped or limited in spiritual progress.

"the words went forth out of the mouth of God in a firm decree" The words here are the laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Verses 14 and 15 are the specific words, and again, the emphasis is on obedience to the law. The essence of repentance is obedience. The word repentance is used when a pre-existing pattern of disobedience exists and must be changed to obedience.

"wherefore they must be fulfilled" This phrase refers to the demands of justice which must be met.

verses 16-59 The story of Cain and Able is contained in verses 16-41 with additional verses about Cain in verses 42-59. This means that there are some 44 verses about Able and his brother Cain in the book of Moses. In Genesis 4 there are only 24 verses that discuss Cain and Abel (verses 1-24). There are seven verses which these two books (Moses 5 and Genesis 4) have in common. Sixteen of the verses in Moses 5 have additions compared to the Genesis account, nine of which are significant. There are twenty-one completely new verses in Moses 5 compared to Genesis 4. With these extra materials contained in Moses 5, much of the confusion concerning the account of Cain and Abel is cleared up.

16 And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?

verse 16 “Adam and Eve . . . ceased not to call upon God” This expression underscores again their faithfulness to God and his purposes.

“wherefore he may not reject his words” Eve hopefully reasons that since Cain (a “man” or male child) came from the presence of the Lord, he will surely keep the word of the Lord.

“But . . . Cain hearkened not” Cain obviously manifest a rebellious attitude doubtless from an early age.

“Who is the Lord that I should know him?” In Cain’s query, the verb “know” carries implications of a covenant relationship which Cain refuses to enter. He says, in effect, who is the Lord that I should feel obligated to enter into a covenant relationship with him? Cain’s arrogant question will be mirrored later by that of Pharaoh (see Exodus 5:2), as well as that of King Noah (see Mosiah 11:27).

17 And she again conceived and bare his brother Abel. And Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

verse 17 “Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground” There seems to be telling symbolism in the brothers’ occupations. As keeper of sheep, Abel seems to see the earth as a source of sustenance for his animals, a source that can be influenced by God for good or ill. Cain, however, believes that he owns the land and that God, though the creator of the land, has nothing more to do with it.

18 And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: Make an offering unto the Lord.

verse 18 “Cain loved Satan” In a complete departure from the Genesis story, Satan enters the scene as a companion to Cain. Cain’s love for Satan, we presume, rests on his knowing Satan in a covenantal sense, a notion that implies the worship of Satan. The covenant relationship between Satan and Cain is subtly implied in Satan’s command that Cain “make an offering unto the Lord,” in an obvious attempt to deceive the Lord.

19 And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

verse 19 “Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering” The appropriate offering, which Cain should have known but perhaps did not, was a blood offering of the firstling of the flock (see verse 5). It seems plausible that Satan

suggested that Cain make the offering of “the fruit of the ground” in an effort perhaps to taunt the Lord and to set Cain up for a fall.

20 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering;

verse 20 Regarding these two offerings of Cain and Abel, Paul wrote, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4). Why was Abel’s sacrifice more excellent than Cain’s? In addition to Cain’s offering being commanded by Satan, it was not in accordance with the Lord’s commandment to Adam to offer the firstlings of the flock (verse 5). Abel’s offering was an animal sacrifice, and thus it was respected by the Lord.

21 But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect. Now Satan knew this, and it pleased him. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

verse 21 Satan knew that Cain’s offering would be refused, though it appears that Cain perhaps did not. Cain seems to have been frustrated and angry by the Lord’s refusal to accept his offering, and Satan was delighted by Cain’s reaction to the rejection. It was a sure indication that Cain was now, or soon would be, tightly bound up in the “chains of hell” (Alma 12:9-11).

22 And the Lord said unto Cain: Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen?

verse 22 It is not obvious whether the Lord spoke directly to Cain or through an authorized intermediary such as Cain’s father. Would we, after all, expect such an individual as Cain to be blessed by direct voice communication with the Lord?

“**Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen?**” It seems likely that the Lord perceives, in Cain’s anger and in his fallen countenance that this episode with his offering is the final straw and that Cain now has his mind set against the things of the Lord. It seems that the Lord, however, in reacting to Cain’s first sin, is merciful, but he warns him of the peril in continuing to follow Satan. At this time there was still theoretical hope for Cain’s exaltation, though in the following verses we perceive a growing impression that the Lord feels that Cain is lost.

23 If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire. And thou shalt rule over him;

verse 23 “**If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted**” The Lord expresses again the theoretical hope that Cain might not be doomed to outer darkness.

“I will deliver thee up” Just as the Lord is able to seal an individual up to their exaltation (make their calling and election sure), so, apparently, is he able to seal upon them their eternal damnation, or deliver them up to Satan in outer darkness (some have said, with tongue in cheek, “made their ‘falling and rejection’ sure”). In some measure, then, Satan would exercise some degree of control over them.

“And thou shalt rule over him” This rather startling revelation suggests that a person with a body holds power over one who does not possess a body. Cain will, of course, as will all mortals, be eventually resurrected. In the words of Joseph Smith: “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power” (*TPJS*, 181).

24 For from this time forth thou shalt be the father of his lies; thou shalt be called Perdition; for thou wast also before the world.

verse 24 “from this time forth” Presumably, the Lord is referring here to the “time” when Cain fails to hearken unto his commandments.

“thou shalt be the father of his lies” From this time, Cain will not only be entangled in a wicked alliance with Satan, but he apparently he will preside over Satan himself in that alliance—Cain will be “the father of his [Satan’s] lies.” By Cain becoming the head of Satan’s organization, he joined, in a sense, the family of Satan and thus will receive his name also. As the head man in the flesh, he became the father of those mortals who later joined the organization. Those who so join become the sons of Cain as well as of Satan.

As has been mentioned, it is generally understood that in being delivered up to Satan, Cain is condemned to spend eternity in outer darkness. In other words, he is guilty of the unpardonable sin. It may seem a bit surprising that Cain is “qualified” to commit the unpardonable sin. Ordinarily only those who reach a lofty spiritual position and have been sealed up to eternal life are able to commit this sin. Then they must not only reject Christ and his gospel but turn against the Savior and contend actively against him. We will learn that Cain will certainly contend against the Lord, but did he ever achieve the requisite lofty spiritual status? We must presume that the nature of the relationship between the human family and the Lord at that time was such that they were all afforded a “sure knowledge” of the Lord and spiritual truths.

“thou shalt be called Perdition” Cain was further told that he would be called *Perdition*. Perdition is the title given to Satan when he was thrust down from the presence of God for his rebellion (D&C 76:25-26). The English word *perdition* derives from the Latin term *perditus*, which means “lost” and thus reinforces the idea that individuals are in God’s custody until he delivers them up to Satan. The same Latin term has ties to the verb *perdo*, which means to destroy or to ruin. Note that Cain’s title begins with an upper case “P” further suggesting that he may preside in that realm as

“the lost one.” Neither the Latin language nor the English language existed at the time of this revelation to Moses, and we don’t actually know the ancient term that is rendered here as “Perdition.”

“thou wast also before the world” This phrase seems to confirm the premortal existence of Cain and Satan and further implies that Cain’s being called by the same name as Satan—Perdition—is wholly appropriate, because Cain too had been present in the pre-mortal councils (“before the world was”) and had seen the results of Satan’s rebellion. Cain’s rebellion therefore had the trappings of a willful rebellion with full knowledge of the consequences.

25 And it shall be said in time to come—That these abominations were had from Cain; for he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent.

verse 25 “And it shall be said in time to come” The Lord threatens Cain with an unusual curse. If Cain does not repent of his iniquities, then the abominations that individuals hereafter commit in the face of direct and irrefutable spiritual knowledge (“the greater counsel which was had from God”) will be named after Cain—Cain will be regarded as the instigator on the earth of that combination of abominable sin in the face of sure knowledge, and perhaps the cursing that follows.

26 And Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord.

verse 26 “And Cain was wroth” But Cain did not repent. Rather, he continued to be angry and bitter, and he rejected any further counsel from the Lord. He also rejected all counsel from his younger brother Abel whose righteous example might have led him back to his redemption.

27 And Adam and his wife mourned before the Lord, because of Cain and his brethren.

verse 27 “mourned before the Lord” This expression may indicate that Adam and Eve brought their mourning to the altar in an appeal to God for help.

“because of Cain and his brethren” Here is the first suggestion that Cain had other followers, brothers and sisters, among the family of Adam and Eve. These rebellious souls will be further referred to in the following two verses.

28 And it came to pass that Cain took one of his brothers’ daughters to wife, and they loved Satan more than God.

verse 28 “Cain took one of his brothers’ daughters to wife” Apparently it became a widespread custom for men to marry a niece, as did Nahor, the brother of

Abraham (see Genesis 11:27-29). The pronoun *they* apparently refers to Cain and his wife.

29 And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.

verse 29 This verse documents the origin of the secret, “murder to get gain,” and counterfeit-covenantal organization consisting of Satan, Cain, and those who followed Cain, including his wife. All those in the organization were bound by oath of secrecy to Satan, and anyone in the organization who broke that oath would die. A central purpose of the secrecy surrounding this organization was to hide the existence of this organization from Father Adam.

It is apparent that Satan initiated this oath and organization, but Cain soon took control of the organization as verse 30 indicates.

“Swear unto me by thy throat” The throat is one of the most vulnerable parts of the body available to an ancient weapon such as a knife, a sword, or a spear. In addition, cutting the throat of a sacrificial animal began the process of a sacred offering. It is plain that Satan’s oaths seek to gain credibility through mimicking genuinely sacred covenants made in God’s name. It is certainly possible, for example, that entering into this evil oath was accompanied a sign symbolizing the cutting of the throat.

“swear thy brethren by their heads” Another symbol of the oath between Satan and the followers of Cain was the head which is also a vulnerable point of injury to any human being.

“swear . . . by the living God” Another way in which Satan seeks credibility for his evil oaths, ironically is to invoke the name of God.

“I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands” Satan’s part of the bargain was to deliver Abel into the hands of Cain, that Cain may kill him. In the interest of the “murder to get gain” part of the Satanic organization, Cain’s underlying motive was to obtain the flocks of his brother Abel (see verses 33, 38).

30 And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret.

verse 30 Both Satan and Cain (and their followers) swore an oath of loyalty and secrecy. This verse further suggests that Cain would actually dominate Satan in the leadership of this secret organization. God’s prophetic words apparently came to pass: “thou [Cain] shalt rule over him [Satan]” (verse 23).

31 And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness.

verse 31 “Cain said: Truly I am Mahan” Here is another way in which those in this counterfeit covenantal organization sought credibility. Among the righteous in Old Testament times, it was common to take a new name as a sign of entering into a covenantal relationship with God; for example, Abram became Abraham (see Genesis 17:5). In an analogous way, Cain takes a new name—Mahan. The meaning of the name Mahan remains unknown. It was evidently a term that made sense in “our own language,” that is, “the language of Adam” (Moses 6:46), which was plainly different from the language of Moses, who received the account (Moses 6:5). The language of Adam “was pure and undefiled,” a description that does not fit other tongues (Moses 6:6). We are at an impasse because we do not know whether Adam’s language was related to any of the Semitic languages, of which Hebrew is one. Hugh Nibley surmises that the name Mahan may mean “great,” that Master here means “keeper [master] of secrets,” and that Master Mahan may thus mean “great secret keeper” (Lecture 19, Adam and Eve,” in *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price* [Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986], 12).

“murder and get gain” The secret organization that Satan and Cain founded had, as perhaps its central tenets, the idea of murder for profit.

“he gloried in his wickedness” It’s obvious that Cain’s followers gathered round him and looked to him as their leader.

32 And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him.

verse 32 All of the action verbs in this verse describe the acts of Cain. Clearly, the narrative places the blame for all that happened on this fateful day squarely on him.

“Cain talked with Abel” Cain’s conversing with Abel stands in sharp contrast to his earlier, resolute withdrawal from Abel (see verse 26). It is therefore plain to the reader that Cain has an evil purpose in mind by talking with Abel.

“Cain rose up against Abel” Perhaps the readers are to think of Cain and Abel visiting with one another while sitting on their haunches or heels. They both rose up as Cain confronted Abel.

33 And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.

verse 33 This verse is unique to the book of Moses, and not found in the Genesis account.

“Cain gloried in that which he had done” We see evidence here of Cain’s absolute lack of remorse. He was “past feeling.”

“I am free” Here is an obvious and great irony. Perhaps Abel’s very existence engendered in Cain guilt over what he should be doing. Perhaps also Abel was often thrown up to him as an example he ought to be following. He was finally free of any comparisons to his brother Abel. Perhaps also Cain had the twisted idea that wealth would make him free. His statement here is ironic because of what will surely befall him here on earth when his evil act is found out, and what will befall him in the eternities.

“surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands” Again, here is the “murder to get gain” idea. Further, Hugh Nibley has pointed out that “all the oldest words for money simply mean flocks” (*Ibid.*, 436). At the base of Cain’s murderous act was a lust for possessions, though there may also have existed enmity between the brothers. Might it have been that Cain was still smarting from the Lord’s rejection of his offering (see verse 38), and he wanted the flocks from which the acceptable offering had come?

34 And the Lord said unto Cain: Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said: I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?

verse 34 It seems likely that Cain has assumed (Satan was not so naive) that he could gain Abel’s property without Adam’s or the Lord’s learning of his evil act or his secret pact (see verse 39).

“And the Lord said unto Cain” The Lord addresses Cain personally obviously with the intention of delivering him up to Satan (see verse 23).

“I know not” The lie of Cain stands in stark contrast to the admission of guilt by his parents in the Garden of Eden as they accepted responsibility for their transgression (see Moses 4:18-19).

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” Many assume from this statement that everyone is his brother’s keeper. However, in the patriarchal line of stewardship, a father, not a brother, is the keeper of his son.

In a broader sense, Elder Dallin Oaks asked, “Are we our brothers’ keepers? In other words, are we responsible to look after the well-being of our neighbors as we seek to earn our daily bread? The Savior’s Golden Rule says we are. Satan says we are not. Tempted of Satan, some have followed the example of Cain. They covet property and then sin to obtain it. The sin may be murder, robbery, or theft. It may be fraud or deception. It may even be some clever but legal manipulation of facts or influence to take unfair advantage of another. Always the excuse is the same: ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’” (Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, November 1986, 20).

35 And the Lord said: What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground.

verse 35 “The voice of thy brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground”

Blood crying out from the ground is a metaphor for the demands of justice crying “foul.” Justice must be served. There is hell to pay.

36 And now thou shalt be cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand.

verse 36 “now thou shalt be cursed from the earth” The Lord pronounces a specific curse upon this erstwhile farmer. The earth will no longer yield when Cain plants crops. The so-called inanimate earth is not to be regarded as truly inanimate and passive. We have frequently discussed the notion that the elements of the earth are associated with intelligence (see Moses 7:48). God has spoken, and the earth will obey. Cain is out of business as a farmer.

The Lord’s curse upon Cain was actually two-fold. First of all, the earth was not to yield her strength unto the efforts of Cain’s tilling of it. It is implied in the two previous verses that this was because of the blood of Abel being absorbed by it. It is further suggested in a subsequent chapter of Moses that this part of the curse also included a loss of the priesthood (Moses 7:8). The second part of Cain’s curse was that he would be “a fugitive and a vagabond . . . in the earth” (verse 37).

37 When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

verse 37 “A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” Cain, the lover and tiller of the earth, could not face a more unsettling future than that of having to constantly move about from place to place in order to seek a living. We will learn in verse 40 that the principle of blood vengeance (an eye for an eye) for those who have spilt innocent blood seems already to be a valid principle, as there are those who will seek to slay him in just retribution for his killing of Abel. Perhaps this is the reason he is sentenced to wander for the rest of his life (see verse 39). He is a fugitive on the run.

The reader has doubtless previously encountered the apocryphal story reported by Lycurgus A. Wilson in his book, *Life of David W. Patten* (50). He reports a recollection of David W. Patten while the latter was serving a mission in Tennessee in 1834: “As I was riding along the road on my mule I suddenly noticed a very strange personage walking beside me . . . His head was about even with my shoulders as I sat in my saddle. He wore no clothing, but was covered with hair. His skin was very dark. I asked him where he dwelt, and he replied that he had no home, that he was a wanderer in the earth and traveled to and fro. He said he was a very miserable creature, that he had earnestly sought death during his sojourn upon the earth, but that he could not die, and his mission was to destroy the souls of men. About the time he expressed himself thus, I rebuked him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the holy priesthood, and commanded him to go hence, and he immediately

departed out of my sight . . .” This man was later “identified” as Cain who was cursed to be a “fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.” This story has given rise to the unlikely “doctrine” that Cain is still upon the earth. It would seem this story should be regarded (or disregarded) as another of those “faith-promoting rumors.”

38 And Cain said unto the Lord: Satan tempted me because of my brother’s flocks. And I was wroth also; for his offering thou didst accept and not mine; my punishment is greater than I can bear.

verse 38 “my punishment is greater than I can bear” There are some other interesting translations of this response by Cain. The Holy Bible from ancient eastern manuscripts renders Genesis 4:13 as: “And Cain said to the Lord, my transgression is too great to be forgiven” (George M. Lamsa, *Holy Bible from the Peshitta, the Authorized Bible of the Church of the East* [Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1957]). The Septuagint has the same wording as the Ancient Eastern manuscript but changes the statement into a question: “And Cain said to the Lord God, ‘Is my fault too great to be forgiven? If thou castest me out this day from the face of this land and I be hid from Thy presence and be in a state of anguish and terror in the land, it will come to pass that whoever findeth me will kill me”’ (The Septuagint Bible, trans. Charles Thomson, 2nd edition [Indian Hills, Colorado: Falcon’s Wing Press, 1960]). Perhaps Cain’s response was more of a declaration or a question than a complaint. It is likely that the question was drawn out more from fear for his own safety than from remorse and fear of loss of salvation (see the commentary for verses 37, 39, and 40).

39 Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the Lord, and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that he that findeth me will slay me, because of mine iniquities, for these things are not hid from the Lord.

verses 38-39 In these verses Cain addresses the Lord. He initially tries to justify his killing of his brother but then quickly and without comment accepts the inevitability of his fate and despairs over his future.

“thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the Lord” What exactly does Cain mean here? This statement might refer to (1) being banished from the place of worship that seems to have stood on “the way [path] toward the Garden of Eden” (Moses 5:4), or to (2) being refused any direct interaction with God, or to (3) being forced to live away from those who enjoy God’s association. All of these possibilities become realities in Moses 5:41.

“he that findeth me will slay me, because of mine iniquities” Cain’s statement discloses that blood vengeance (an eye for an eye) was the norm even though probably no one had yet committed a crime as grievous as his. Under this law,

close relatives of Abel were obliged to seek his murderer and take that person's life as a penalty. Cain understands that consequently his own life is in danger.

“because of mine iniquities” In the first manuscript of the book of Moses, this expression read “because of mine oath [with Satan],” which makes sense in light of Moses 5:29: “Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me.”

40 And I the Lord said unto him: Whosoever slayeth thee, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And I the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

verse 40 “Whosoever slayeth thee, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold” The Lord takes steps to protect Cain against being slain according to the principle of blood vengeance. The Lord decrees that the slayer of Cain will in turn suffer the loss of seven lives from his or her family, a severe toll indeed.

“I the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him” As a second protective measure, the Lord places a mark upon Cain that would visually remind any would-be avenger of God's decree about the seven lives for the life of Cain.

We may well wonder why the Lord is taking steps to protect Cain from being put to death in the flesh by a potential avenger. After all, if the principle of blood vengeance is in force, should he not be killed in retribution for his own heinous act? Is the Lord taking pity on Cain by making an exception to the law of blood vengeance? Or, perhaps part of his curse is that he will not be let off “easily,” by being put to death early on, but rather he will be compelled to live a long life as a vagabond and a wanderer.

If the Lord's mark had been fully effective so that it completely and successfully prevented any and every potential avenger from attacking and killing Cain, then it seems he would not have had to wander for self protection. Perhaps there were some, and Cain was aware of them, that would not heed the Lord's warning but would still seek the life of Cain in retribution for his killing Abel.

41 And Cain was shut out from the presence of the Lord, and with his wife and many of his brethren dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

verse 41 “with his wife and many of his brethren” This is the group of Cain's followers who were doubtless just as rebellious and wicked as he was and were fully involved in the secret combination with Satan.

42 And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch, and he also begat many sons and daughters. And he builded a city, and he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.

verse 42 “Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch” Enoch seems to be the first child of Cain. He is not, of course, the same Enoch who would become a powerful prophet of the Lord.

“And he builded a city” We see the unusual abilities of Cain. This erstwhile farmer became a leader and builder of a city.

“he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch” There is an obvious irony in this city of Enoch. This city would become the main center for Cain and his followers, including their evil practices (see verses 51-52). Much later, another Enoch, a descendant of Seth and a son of Jared, will build a city for righteous people wherein God himself will dwell (see Moses 7:16, 18-19).

43 And unto Enoch was born Irad, and other sons and daughters. And Irad begat Mahujael, and other sons and daughters. And Mahujael begat Methusael, and other sons and daughters. And Methusael begat Lamech.

verse 43 “Mahujael . . . Methusael” It is yet another irony that we see the name of God preserved in these names (the ending in *-el* meaning “God”). Obviously there was still a desire, even in this wicked community, to remain connected to spiritual roots.

44 And Lamech took unto himself two wives; the name of one being Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

verse 44 “Lamech took unto himself two wives” Lamech introduces plural marriage into society. Each of his marriages leads to important innovations within the developing culture of Cain and his people.

45 And Adah bare Jabal; he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and they were keepers of cattle; and his brother’s name was Jubal, who was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

verse 45 “such as dwell in tents, and they were keepers of cattle” Through Lamech’s wife Adah and her son Jabal came a people who will be later noted by Enoch, the descendant of Seth and the son of Jared, as the nomadic people. It is apparent that class structure has become a feature of this society because, presumably, the “keepers of cattle” were a lower class of people who worked for someone else.

“all such as handle the harp and organ” Also through Lamech’s wife Adah, but through another son Jubal, came the musical instrument. The Hebrew verb translated “handle” (*tafas*) in Genesis 4:21 carries the basic sense “to lay hold of with the hands.” This fits because both the harp and organ were held by hand as one played them.

46 And Zillah, she also bare Tubal Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. And the sister of Tubal Cain was called Naamah.

verse 46 “Tubal Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron” Through Lamech’s other wife Zillah came Tubal Cain who was skilled in the art of

making metals from ores. Historically, the skills for making brass came very early. Presumably this branch of Lamech's family became a somewhat higher socioeconomic class—that of the self-employed craftsmen.

“the sister of Tubal Cain was called Naamah” This individual, mentioned also in Genesis 4:22, is found in none other of the narratives and it is unclear why she is mentioned. Presumably this woman was important, and there was an early story tied to her memory that the accounts do not preserve. In Hebrew, her name derives from the root meaning “to be pleasant” (*na'em*).

47 And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah: Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

verse 47 “I have slain a man” Lamech slew Irad (see verse 49) who was actually Lamech's great grandfather. It is puzzling that he refers to him as “a young man,” unless the expression can refer in that society to a person who still has a long time to live. We will learn that Irad is slain by Lamech because Irad learned the secrets of the secret combination and began to tell them to the righteous descendants of Adam who were not involved in the secret combination (see verse 49).

“I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt” This statement contains a parallelism—two phrases with the same meaning. They are:

I have slain a man to my wounding
and a young man to my hurt

In other words, Lamech says, I have slain a man who tried to wound me, and the same man for trying to hurt me.

48 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech shall be seventy and seven fold;

verse 48 “avenged . . . seventy and seven fold” In an ironic twist, Lamech holds to the notion that God will be obliged to protect him to a higher degree than he had promised to protect Cain, thus showing his misdirected hope for divine protection for his heinous murder.

verses 49-59 These verses have been lost from Genesis. They disclose that Lamech continued the secret combination entered into by Cain with Satan and that Lamech succeeded Cain as Master Mahan (Moses 5:49). Furthermore, one Irad began to reveal Lamech's secret unto the sons of Adam, which caused Lamech to slay him “for the oath's sake” (Moses 5:49-50). This part of the oath is confirmed in the Book of Mormon (Helaman 6:24), as is the fact that secret combinations began with Cain (Moses 5:51; Helaman 6:27).

49 For Lamech having entered into a covenant with Satan, after the manner of Cain, wherein he became Master Mahan, master of that great secret which was administered unto Cain by Satan; and Irad, the son of Enoch, having known their secret, began to reveal it unto the sons of Adam;

verse 49 “Lamech . . . became Master Mahan” The expression “Master Mahan” was evidently a title within the group that signified that the holder of this title knew the secret of Satan and Cain. In addition, it appears that Lamech succeeded Cain in this office or title, perhaps implying that Cain was either dead or had withdrawn from his society or had been forced out.

“Irad, the son of Enoch, having known their secret, began to reveal it” Apparently not all of Cain’s descendants participated in the secret disclosed by Satan. Irad, Cain’s grandson (see verses 42-43), apparently had sworn to preserve the secret. Verse 50 seems to say that Lamech’s murder of Irad was because Irad had betrayed his oath.

“reveal it unto the sons of Adam” It appears that the expression “sons of Adam” refers to a different group than the expression “sons [and daughters] of men” (verses 52-53). The “sons of Adam” are the descendants of Adam through the righteous line of Seth. The “sons [and daughters] of men” are the followers of Cain (see verse 52).

50 Wherefore Lamech, being angry, slew him, not like unto Cain, his brother Abel, for the sake of getting gain, but he slew him for the oath’s sake.

verse 50 This verse hints that at one time Irad had stood within the circle of initiates into the secret of Satan and that he had betrayed that standing by revealing the secret to outsiders.

51 For, from the days of Cain, there was a secret combination, and their works were in the dark, and they knew every man his brother.

verse 51 “they knew every man his brother” One possible implication of this expression is that the secret society formed by the oath-takers encouraged homosexual activity among its members.

52 Wherefore the Lord cursed Lamech, and his house, and all them that had covenanted with Satan; for they kept not the commandments of God, and it displeased God, and he ministered not unto them, and their works were abominations, and began to spread among all the sons of men. And it was among the sons of men.

verse 52 “the Lord cursed Lamech, and his house” Whatever curse the Lord chose for Lamech, it rested also on his two wives and their children (“his house”).

“he [God] ministered not unto them” Contact with God ceased through God’s representatives, through his angels, through his voice, and through his Spirit (see verse 58).

“sons of men” This expression, and the expression “daughters of men” in the following verse refer to those who had made an evil oath with Satan. Those who bound by covenant with God are referred to as the “sons of Adam” (see the commentary for verse 49).

53 And among the daughters of men these things were not spoken, because that Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him, and declared these things abroad, and had not compassion;

verse 53 “Among the daughters of men these things were not spoken”

The women in the secret combination who had taken the oath of secrecy did not divulge the Satanic secrets.

“Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him, and declared these things abroad” Lamech’s wives seem to have been so appalled by his murder of Irad that they sought something like a divorce, so that they were no longer part of Lamech’s household. The spread abroad the secrets of the oath which Cain had made with Satan. People apparently took seriously the word of these women, perhaps showing that the later discounting of women as witnesses of events was not a natural development from these early days but represented a change in legal views.

54 Wherefore Lamech was despised, and cast out, and came not among the sons of men, lest he should die.

verse 54 “lest he should die” Obviously the divine protection Lamech had hoped for did not materialize (see verse 48), leaving him vulnerable to blood avengers. He was forced to withdraw from his own society and become a fugitive.

55 And thus the works of darkness began to prevail among all the sons of men.

verse 55 In spite of the departure of Lamech, the evil works of the secret covenant society continued on and set the state for the later Flood narrative. Lamech is a representative of the seventh generation from Adam. Another representative of the same generation is Enoch, the descendant of Seth. It was in Enoch’s day that God began to reveal the coming Flood and the survival of Noah (see Moses 7:38, 42).

verses 56-59 These verses have no counterpart in the book of Genesis.

56 And God cursed the earth with a sore curse, and was angry with the wicked, with all the sons of men whom he had made;

verse 56 “God cursed the earth” This is not the first time that the earth has received a curse. It was also cursed when Adam and Eve were forced out of the garden (Moses 4:23-24) and again when Cain was made a vagabond and a wanderer (Moses 5:37). In light of these previous curses, it appears that God’s curse limits, in some way, the fruitfulness of the ground. There may have been other aspects to the curse, particularly this last one, as it is referred to as “a sore curse.” One other aspect of the curse was that the priesthood was lost from among those who kept not their covenants. Joseph Smith summed it up with this observation: “Cain also being authorized to offer sacrifice, but not offering it in righteousness, was cursed. It signifies, then, that the ordinances must be kept in the very way God has appointed; otherwise their Priesthood will prove a cursing instead of a blessing (*TPJS*, 169).

“sons of men” See the commentary for verses 49 and 52.

57 For they would not hearken unto his voice, nor believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him whom he declared should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world.

verse 57 “his voice” The Lord may have communicated with the “sons of men” (the members of the secret combination) through an intermediary—the prophet Adam. Or, it is possible that in that day the voice of God was directly audible among all the inhabitants of the earth.

“prepared from before the foundation of the world” The Savior was called in the premortal world (see Moses 4:1-2).

58 And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

verse 58 “the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning” Here is the vital truth that missionaries now declare to the world. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been declared specifically to inhabitants of the earth from the time of Adam (“from the beginning”) and that all of the holy prophets knew specifically of Jesus Christ and his coming in the meridian of time (Jacob 4:4). The restoration of the gospel to the earth in this final dispensation through Joseph Smith is not entirely a unique happening. Restorations have occurred before following periods of apostasy. Rather, the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ has never changed but has been on the earth since Adam’s day.

“being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God” A reminder that angels have always been and will continue to be a tool used by the Lord for warning his people and testifying to them. At the time of Adam, the angels had to be either pre-existent spirits or “the spirits of just men made perfect”—deceased mortals whose spirits reside in the state of paradise in the spirit world.

59 And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was. Amen.

verse 59 “by an holy ordinance” Apparently, this expression refers either to the baptism of Adam and his subsequent reception of the Holy Ghost (see Moses 6:64-65), or to another sacred ordinance.

“a decree sent forth” This decree, noted again in Moses 6:30, has to do with repentance, and if people do not repent, “a hell have I [God] prepared for them” (Moses 6:29).

Moses Chapter 6 (November-December 1830) Seth and Enoch

Moses 6 concerns itself with three main characters: Seth, the son of Adam (verses 1-16); Enoch, who lived five generations after Seth (verses 26-50), and Father Adam (verses 51-68).

We often refer to the combination of Moses 6:26-50 and Moses 7 as the book of Enoch and Moses 6:51-68 as the book of Adam.

1 And Adam hearkened unto the voice of God, and called upon his sons to repent.

verse 1 “Adam hearkened” The very theme of the story of Adam is his obedience to the voice of God.

2 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bare a son, and he called his name Seth. And Adam glorified the name of God; for he said: God hath appointed me another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

verse 2 The Genesis account again picks up with this verse, and Moses 6:2-25 corresponds to Genesis 4:25-26 and Genesis 5:1-21.

“Adam knew his wife again” For a discussion of the Hebrew verb *to know*, see the commentary for Moses 5:2.

“called his name Seth” The name *Seth* in Hebrew comes from the verb *sit* which means “to set, to appoint.”

“Adam glorified the name of God” Here the verb glorified means to honor, to praise, or give glory to. Ultimately we “glorify” God by obeying him.

“another seed” The tie between Abel and Seth is made plain. As this expression affirms, Seth is Abel’s replacement (see also Genesis 4:25). Evidently either there had been no other children born to Adam and Eve after the birth of Abel many years before, or perhaps the Lord is finally giving unto Adam and Eve another spiritual heir.

3 And God revealed himself unto Seth, and he rebelled not, but offered an acceptable sacrifice, like unto his brother Abel. And to him also was born a son, and he called his name Enos.

verse 3 “Seth . . . rebelled not” Seth was obedient to the Lord like his father.

4 And then began these men to call upon the name of the Lord, and the Lord blessed them;

verse 4 “these men” This expression evidently refers to Seth and his son Enos.

5 And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration;

verse 5 “a book of remembrance” This reference to a written source is a first. The other title for this record is “the book of the generations of Adam” (Moses 6:8; Genesis 5:1). At the time of Adam, writing was a sacred act and a sacred trust. This scriptural record was probably begun originally by Adam himself and is therefore prophetic and scriptural in the strictest sense. This book of remembrance is the original scripture of this earth. We will learn in verse 8 that in this record will be included a genealogy of the descendants of Adam.

In the book of Moses we are treated to a clear, lucid, and extensive account of how the fulness of the gospel, with the plan of salvation and the doctrine of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, was made known to our father Adam and that he taught it to his children and it was handed down from generation to generation. We are learning of these great truths and historical events from the writings of Moses. Did Moses receive the revelations of the gospel of Jesus Christ directly from the Lord himself, or is it likely that he learned much of it from the scriptural record of his day? Certainly Moses would have made use of every semblance of sacred scripture available to him in his day. What role do the scriptural writings of previous prophets play in the life of a living prophet? For the living prophet, the scriptures are most vital. Consider the prophet Joseph Smith. Were the ancient scriptures important to him? Consider the role of James 1:5-6 in his life: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Consider also the vital role of Joseph’s translation of the ancient record of the Book of Mormon and his study and inspired revision of the Bible in his receiving modern revelation. Indeed, study of scripture often is the very key, the foundation, the trigger for the living prophet’s receiving “modern” revelation.

It seems likely that some of the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ found today in the book of Moses originated in the book of remembrance begun by Adam. Did Moses have a copy of this original scriptural record—the book of remembrance? We don’t know the answer to that. Verse 46 of this chapter suggests that Enoch, in his day, had access to this book of remembrance. Perhaps Moses obtained much of his material for the book of Moses from the writings of Enoch who used as his resource the book of remembrance. This important revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to Adam is alluded to in other scriptures (for example, 2 Nephi 2:15-26; Alma 12:22-37; D&C 20:17-29; 29:40-44), but it is delineated most completely in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.

“recorded, in the language of Adam” The original language is usually regarded as something almost divine. We will learn in the next verse that the Adamic language was “pure and undefiled.” We may wonder if the language of Adam was the

same as that spoken in the celestial setting by the Father, the Son, and others there. The implication of this phrase is that the spoken language of Adam and his children differed from that of Moses, who is the scribe for what God is revealing.

“it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration” This phrase simply reminds us that the Spirit of God was dispatched to assist in the writing of scripture only those who were prayerful and righteous. It is apparent that in Adam’s day, the ability to write was thought to be of divine origin. Those who possessed writing skills so valued their ability that they prayed before writing anything.

6 And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled.

verse 6 “their children were taught to read and write” It is fascinating to learn that literacy was common among the family and descendants of Adam.

7 Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also.

verse 7 This verse constitutes a sudden change of subject and the abrupt injection into the text of the idea of the priesthood (see *Priesthood in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 12). This verse consists seems out of place and produces a break in the logical sequence of ideas. There is a reason for this. Modern revelation given to our dispensation strongly emphasizes the priesthood which was passed along the covenant line from Adam through Seth. This line had been previously ruptured with the death of Abel. Seth clearly became Adam’s birthright son. We learn from modern revelation that Seth was ordained at the age of sixty-nine by his father, Adam. He (Seth) was in the express image of his father. He was known as a “perfect man”; and, in a blessing from his father, received a promise that his “posterity should be the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth” (D&C 107:40-43). At Adam-ondi-Ahman Seth was privileged to be at the gathering of the righteous to whom Adam gave his last blessing and prophesied concerning his posterity (see D&C 107:53-56). Because of Seth’s importance, it is apparent that the genealogical tables (see Moses 6:8-25; Genesis 5), which evidently derive from “the book of the generations of Adam” (see Moses 6:8), are intended to track the line of Seth, “the chosen of the Lord” (D&C 107:42), for through that line would the priesthood descend, “to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed” (D&C 107:40). Hence, Moses would naturally assume that the reader of these verses would have had prominently in mind the priesthood and its descendancy beginning at the first mention of Seth in verse 2. Thus, this verse does not really represent an abrupt insertion and is not at all out of place.

Apocryphal sources speak of Seth in exalted terms. Among other characteristics, he is said to have been an important leader in the premortal life, having struggled valiantly on the side of good in the premortal conflict. As a figure of light, his righteous descendants were singled out by Satan for persecution because they were to be a force for good until the end of time. This persecution included the Flood, whose destructive force was aimed at Seth's posterity ("race") by the "god of this world." As a righteous personality, he was seen to prefigure the Redeemer (see the references to apocryphal materials in S. K. Brown, "The Nag Hammadi Library: A Mormon Perspective," in Griggs, *Writings*, 262-63).

"which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also" These words recall the statement about the higher order of priesthood: "the order of the Son of God . . . was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (JST Hebrews 7:3; Alma 13:7; Abraham 1:3). In other words, the priesthood has always existed. It is from eternity past to eternity future. Joseph Smith wrote: "The Melchizedek priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (*TPJS*, 323).

verses 8-25 These verses contain a genealogy or lineage of Adam taken from "the book of the generations of Adam." The expression "the book of the generations of Adam" is apparently one of the ancient titles for the scriptural genealogical and historical summary which follows. The context makes it clear that this genealogical record is a physical, not a spiritual, lineage.

8 Now this prophecy Adam spake, as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and a genealogy was kept of the children of God. And this was the book of the generations of Adam, saying: In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

verse 8 "this prophecy Adam spake, as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost" This phrase may refer to the prophecy in verse 7 regarding the priesthood. Though related there without attribution by the prophet Moses, here we learn that Moses now attributes it to father Adam. In a more general sense, this phrase more likely refers to the revelations given to Adam and recorded by the prophet Moses.

Again, we are reminded that the term *prophecy* does not necessarily have to refer to a divinely inspired prediction of the future. Rather prophecy also means *revelation*. What about the phrase "spirit of prophecy"? What is the "spirit of prophecy"? Answer: The Spirit of God is a man who, by his influence, enables all prophecy or revelation. The Holy Ghost, then, may be said to be the Spirit (capital "S") of all revelation. The "spirit (small "s") of prophecy" does not refer specifically to the Holy Ghost. Instead the phrase "spirit of prophecy" refers simply to all revelation.

“a genealogy was kept of the children of God” A genealogy was kept at least in part to track the passage of the covenant of the priesthood along the chosen line. The term “children of God” points to people of the covenant, in contrast to the expressions “the sons of men” and “the daughters of men.” See the commentary for Moses 5:49, 52.

“In the day that God created man” We have discussed previously that there are a few expressions that are used in Hebrew texts as introductory words or opening phrases. These are called incipit titles. The word *incipit* is from the Latin meaning “here begins.” These expressions include “in the beginning” (see Genesis 1:1) and “in the land” (see Abraham 1:1). Here is yet another incipit title. It is an incipit title for the book of genealogy and for the history of Adam.

9 In the image of his own body, male and female, created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created and became living souls in the land upon the footstool of God.

verse 9 “In the image of his [God’s] own body” This expression, which does not occur in the book of Genesis, clarifies the doctrine that the creation of Adam and Eve in the “image [and] . . . likeness” of God was more than a spiritual likeness (see Genesis 1:26; Moses 2:26). Hence, Adam was the literal, physical offspring of God the Father. The same, of course, is true of Eve. God the Father and his celestial consort gave birth to the bodies of Adam and Eve. Several statements of Brigham Young help to make this fact clearer:

God . . . created man, as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven, on the earth, in the earth, or under the earth, or in all the eternities, that is, that were, or that ever will be (*JD*, 11:122).

When you tell me that father Adam was made as we make adobes from the earth, you tell me what I deem an idle tale. . . . There is no such thing in the eternities where the Gods dwell. Mankind are here because they are offspring of parents who were first brought here from another planet, and power was given them to propagate their species, and they are commanded to multiply and replenish the earth (*JD*, 7:285-86).

Things were first created spiritually; the Father actually begat the spirits, and they were brought forth and lived with him. Then he commenced the work of creating earthly tabernacles, precisely as he had been created in this flesh himself, by partaking of the coarse material that was organized and composed this earth, until his system was charged with it, consequently the tabernacles of his children were organized from the coarse materials of this earth (*JD*, 4:218).

When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve. . . . When Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, their bodies became mortal from its effects, and therefore their offspring were

mortal. . . . He [Adam] is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by his Father in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve; from the fruits of the earth, the first earthly tabernacles were originated by the Father, and so on in succession (*JD*, 1:50-51).

In 1912 the First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose) sent a letter to Samuel O. Bennion, the mission president in Independence, Missouri, clarifying what Brigham Young meant:

But President Young went on to show that our father Adam,—that is, our earthly father,—the progenitor of the race of man, stands at our head, being “Michael the Archangel, the Ancient of Days,” and that he was not fashioned from earth like an adobe, but “begotten by his Father in Heaven.” Adam is called in the Bible “the son of God” (Luke 3:38) (Clark, 1970, 4:266).

Finally, a statement from Joseph Smith:

Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Wherever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? And everything comes in this way (*HC*, 6:476).

The picture is clear. Adam and Eve were immortal, physical children of God the Father and his celestial, immortal companion. The veil of forgetfulness was drawn over their minds, and they were placed in the Garden of Eden. There they partook of the forbidden fruit and became mortal. This in nowise contradicts the scriptural reference to Christ as “the Only Begotten of the Father.” He is the only begotten “in the flesh,” that is, in mortality. Adam and Eve were immortal when they were born.

We are not given to understand in any detail the kind of body Adam and Eve had. Though President Brigham Young referred to it as a “celestial” body, we know that it was not identical to a resurrected celestial eternal body possessed by the Father and the Son. For one thing, the bodies of Adam and Eve were incapable of procreation.

Does all this eliminate the possibility that the bodies of human beings (the family of Adam) are the evolutionary descendants of earlier manlike apes? Obviously our knowledge of the biological science involving the celestial bodies of our heavenly parents and the nature of the process whereby they “charged” their bodies with the materials of the earth prior to the births of Adam and Eve is most limited. We do know, however, that there exists an uncanny and remarkably sophisticated similarity between the genetic materials of the bodies of man and the apes of today.

“called their name Adam” The name *Adam* ties to the common term meaning “man” or “human being.” In this sense, the name refers to both Adam and Eve and their posterity.

“the footstool of God” This is the earliest reference to the earth as God’s footstool. On one level, it links God closely with the earth. On another, it demonstrates that the created or terrestrial order stands below the celestial order.

10 And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth.

verse 10 This verse begins a genealogical listing that extends from Adam to Enoch and Enoch's son Methuselah (verse 25). This listing ties together the material between here and Moses 8:1. This latter verse (Moses 8:1) begins the genealogical listing from Enoch and Methuselah to Noah and his sons (Moses 8:1-12). This list in verses 10-25 must be seen as a roster of priesthood holders who were ordained by Adam and fulfilled the Lord's promise to Seth that his posterity "should be the chosen of the Lord, and . . . should be preserved unto the end of the earth" (D&C 107:42).

"Adam . . . begat a son" These words differ from the formula that usually names the first son in a genealogical succession. Thus, this expression draws special attention to Seth and underscores his importance as the birthright son.

"in his own likeness, after his own image" These terms (see also Genesis 5:3) explain clearly that Seth was born in the physical "likeness" and "image" of his father Adam. The identical terms are the same as those in Genesis 1:26 and Moses 2:26 which make clear the physical relationship between God and man. Those who would insist that God is a "spirit"—which includes most all of the orthodox Christian world today—would interpret Genesis 1:26 as referring to some type of spiritual likeness or spiritual image. The term "spirit" in this setting is a complete fabricated mystery to all orthodox Christians and is without precedent in all science and all scripture. We, of course know that a physical likeness and image is intended, and Genesis 5:3 and this particular verse provide solid evidence for that interpretation.

11 And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years, and he begat many sons and daughters;

12 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

verse 12 "nine hundred and thirty years" The book of Genesis also reports that Adam died at 930 years of age (Genesis 5:5). However, when Joseph Smith prepared his inspired translation of the Bible, he wrote that Adam's age at his death was actually just short of one thousand years. Later, he was more specific, indicating that Adam died about six months short of one millennium (Robert J. Mathews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 84-85). This correction has not yet been made to this verse.

13 Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos, and prophesied in all his days, and taught his son Enos in the ways of God; wherefore Enos prophesied also.

verse 13 "prophesied in all his days" Here the text highlights Seth's righteous character and ministry.

14 And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat many sons and daughters.

15 And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power.

verse 15 “the children of men” This term links back to “the sons of men” and “the daughters of men” (see the commentary for Moses 5:49, 52) and differs from “the children of God” in Moses 6:8.

16 All the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

17 And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan. And Enos and the residue of the people of God came out from the land, which was called Shulon, and dwelt in a land of promise, which he called after his own son, whom he had named Cainan.

verse 17 “the people of God came out from the land” This first migration is away from the Garden of Eden. The influences that forced the migration must have been substantial, because the Garden of Eden formed a major focus of worship and devotion.

“a land of promise” This expression provides evidence that God assisted the migration from the region of the Garden of Eden. The move was apparently effective, because nothing is said about serious troubles affecting the following generations. Moreover, this verse presents the first notice in scriptures of a righteous minority withdrawing from a wicked society to go to a “promised land.”

18 And Enos lived, after he begat Cainan, eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat many sons and daughters. And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years, and he died.

19 And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel; and Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

20 And Mahalaleel lived sixty-five years, and begat Jared; and Mahalaleel lived, after he begat Jared, eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

21 And Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begat Enoch; and Jared lived, after he begat Enoch, eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And Jared taught Enoch in all the ways of God.

22 And this is the genealogy of the sons of Adam, who was the son of God, with whom God, himself, conversed.

23 And they were preachers of righteousness, and spake and prophesied, and called upon all men, everywhere, to repent; and faith was taught unto the children of men.

verse 23 “they were preachers of righteousness . . . and called upon all men, everywhere” “They” refers to the line of priesthood holders listed in verses 10-23. It is evident that the righteous side of Adam’s family did not cut itself off from Cain and his followers (“the children of men”). Instead, though they lived at a distance, these preachers attempted to bring distant relatives back to God.

24 And it came to pass that all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

25 And Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begat Methuselah.

verses 26-50 The Book of Enoch begins with Moses 6:26 and extends through verse 50. It then begins again at Moses 7:1 and continues on through Moses 7, ending in Moses 7:69.

The prophet-patriarch Enoch remains an enigmatic figure in the religious world—an ancient character shrouded in mystery. This is certainly in part due to the fact that so little information concerning Enoch is contained in the biblical canon. In the Old Testament we read simply: “And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:21-24). Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, explained that “by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). Finally, Jude, the brother of our Lord, wrote in his general epistle of the prophecies of Enoch concerning the destruction of the wicked at the time of the Second Coming (Jude 14-15). When we move, however, beyond the accepted canon of scripture to the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources, Enoch is a popular figure and receives considerable attention. There are extensive Enoch materials not only in the book of Moses but also in the three Enoch books that exist outside the Old Testament (First or Ethiopic Enoch, Second or Slavonic Enoch, and Third or Hebrew Enoch). Further, it is likely that a lengthy oral tradition about Enoch has been handed down side by side with the written texts of Enoch.

Joseph Smith had begun a serious study of the King James Bible in June of 1830. The earliest information about Enoch seems to have been received some time between November and December of 1830, during the Prophet’s inspired revision of the early chapters of Genesis (see JST, Genesis 6:26-7:1; Moses 6:26-7:1).

Enoch was ordained to the Patriarchal Priesthood at the age of 25 by Adam, and he received another blessing under the hands of Father Adam at 65 years of age. Modern revelation also makes plain that Enoch was in attendance on the sacred occasion when Adam bade farewell to his posterity and bestowed his last prophetic blessing in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman (D&C 107:48-57).

26 And it came to pass that Enoch journeyed in the land, among the people; and as he journeyed, the Spirit of God descended out of heaven, and abode upon him.

verse 26 “Enoch journeyed in the land” The narrative does not spell out the purpose of Enoch’s journey. But the fact that he was traveling “in the land”—in contrast to the wilderness—and “among the people” hints that he may already have been on a preaching tour (see the commentary on verse 27). It may also be significant that he had not withdrawn from society to seek spiritual strength at the time God called him. Rather, he was actively on the Lord’s errand.

“among the people” This expression is formulaic for missionary work (see also verse 37). Evidently, the Lord here is not calling Enoch *de novo* to missionary service; rather he is upgrading Enoch’s responsibility through the ensuing call.

“the Spirit of God descended out of heaven, and abode upon him” This passage is reminiscent of the Savior’s baptismal experience (see Matthew 3:13-17). Clearly, Enoch prefigures, or is a type of, the coming Messiah.

“abode upon him” In verse 34 the Lord will promise Enoch that he (the Lord) will abide in Enoch as Enoch does in him.

27 And he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people, and say unto them—Repent, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off;

verse 27 “a voice” This term is regularly associated with the beginning of a dispensation or some important action of the Lord. Compare the characterization of John the Baptist as the “voice.” Mark 1:3 describes the Baptist as “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” D&C 1:1 opens the Lord’s preface to the D&C with “Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high.” The *voice* in this case is obviously the voice of the Lord Jehovah.

“my son” Jehovah addresses Enoch with a particular term of endearment. We have scriptural record, for example, of the Father’s using this term of endearment for the Savior (Mark 1:11; 9:7) and for Moses (Moses 1:4, 6).

“prophesy unto this people” The context here indicates that one important meaning of prophesying is to preach repentance, not simply to forecast the future. Perhaps pertinent here is the definition: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). Adding upon our prior definition of the term “spirit of

prophecy” (see verse , above) we may learn here that not only does a testimony of Jesus come only by revelation, but this particular revelation is of supreme importance.

“this people” This expression, repeated in this verse and in verse 33, evidently refers to those who have followed Cain because of the list of their crimes in verses 28-29. If so, then Enoch has been journeying—and very possibly preaching—not among those who have accepted God’s covenants but among those who have rejected them.

“my fierce anger is kindled” The image of fire (“kindled”) as a figure or symbol of judgment is common in scripture (see Moses 7:34; Genesis 19:24; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 13; Luke 12:49; 2 Nephi 9:16, 19, 26; 3 Nephi 8:7; 9:3, 9-10).

“ears” This term may allude in part to ceremonies of consecration in which blood is applied to the tip of the ear as an ordinance of consecration (Exodus 29:20; Leviticus 8:23-24; 14:14, 17-18, 25, 28-29).

“their eyes cannot see” The reference is to spiritual sight, or lack of it, as in verses 35-36. Compare “God saw” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31; Moses 2:4, 10, etc.) and “the woman saw” (Genesis 3:6; Moses 4:12).

28 And for these many generations, ever since the day that I created them, have they gone astray, and have denied me, and have sought their own counsels in the dark; and in their own abominations have they devised murder, and have not kept the commandments, which I gave unto their father, Adam.

verse 28 This verse and the following summarize the sins among Cain’s people. But much more than a list of sins lies within these words. They also set out the legal grounds upon which God can justify punishments of those who ignore and disavow his laws. The call of Enoch, of course, formed one part of God’s plan to turn these people back to him.

“they . . . have not kept the commandments, which I gave unto their father, Adam” These words must refer to the sins of omitting the sacrifices after the manner of the Son of God (see Moses 5:5, 7), thus taking out of the society one of the elements of worship intended to remind them of his coming.

29 Wherefore, they have foresworn themselves, and, by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death; and a hell I have prepared for them, if they repent not;

verse 29 “they have foresworn themselves” To *foreswear* is to bear false witness

“by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death” Two important examples are those of Cain and Lamech, who took the lives of others after swearing oaths (see Moses 5:29, 49-50). Significantly, the statement hints that there were other killings done after swearing secret oaths to others in their satanic organizations.

“they have brought upon themselves death” One point of this phrase is that the wicked are responsible for their eternal difficulties. The second point is that evil oath taking brings upon the swearer—of the evil oaths—death. The likely reference here is to spiritual death or separation from God. We are taught that the transgression of Adam brought into the world physical death for all men. We don’t usually speak of the sins of mortals as responsible for physical death. If the sins of men, other than Adam, were responsible for the perpetuation of physical death among men, that would imply that a sinless mortal would not suffer physical death. There is no such doctrine.

The earliest version of this phrase from the first manuscript reads, “they have eat unto themselves death,” which may represent a scribal error, or it may hint that evil oath-taking involved ceremonial eating (notwithstanding the awkward verb tense).

30 And this is a decree, which I have sent forth in the beginning of the world, from my own mouth, from the foundation thereof, and by the mouths of my servants, thy fathers, have I decreed it, even as it shall be sent forth in the world, unto the ends thereof.

verse 30 “this is a decree” The Lord’s decree is defined in verses 27-29, 50-52, and 57-62 and consists of a somber warning that the children of men must repent and obey his commands. This decree went out from the premortal councils (“in the beginning of the world . . . from the foundation thereof”) and has been or will be taken to all of the Father’s children.

31 And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth, before the Lord, and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?

verse 31 Enoch, like so many of the humble ones called to assume prophetic status, hesitated and questioned his own capacity to convince others of the error of their ways. We will watch Enoch develop, slowly but surely, from a sensitive young man, brimming with eternal possibilities—but still a stammering and uncertain youth—to a noble and confident priesthood leader, one whose name and works have become associated with transcendent righteousness.

“Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight . . .” In spite of Enoch’s youth and inexperience, he is not overwhelmed and rendered speechless by his visit with the Lord. He keeps his wits about him and has a meaningful conversation with the Lord. We have seen this same ability in other great individuals like Moses (Exodus 3:11, 13), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6), and Mary (Luke 1:34).

“I am slow of speech” See the commentary for the following verse.

32 And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good.

verse 32 “Go forth” These two words are the divine commissioning of Enoch. Enoch is now fully authorized to speak for the Lord. Another biblical expression with similar meaning is “Go to.”

“no man shall pierce thee” This phrase implies that some will seek to destroy Enoch, but the Lord will protect him.

“I will give thee utterance” The Lord provides Enoch with some divine assistance in overcoming his difficulty with speech. It would seem likely that some of Enoch’s newly developed speaking ability was the result of a free gift from God, and that he did not have to labor alone to overcome his speech impairment.

The Lord’s patient and loving response must have supplied the needed confidence for this newly selected spokesman.

33 Say unto this people: Choose ye this day, to serve the Lord God who made you.

verse 33 “serve the Lord God who made you” The Lord’s suggested appeal is made by “the Lord God” which emphasizes his creative role. The appeal here is for the people to acknowledge their debt to the Lord with gratitude. Gratitude has been called not only the greatest virtue but the parent of all other virtues. It has ever been, in the Lord’s eyes, that our central motivation for obeying him should be gratitude to him for what he will do or has done for each us—especially his atoning sacrifice. This motivation has also been termed a “broken heart and contrite spirit.”

34 Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me.

verse 34 “all thy words will I justify” The Lord makes the sublime promise to Enoch that all of Enoch’s words will be “justified.” That is, whatsoever Enoch says or commands, the Lord will make it so. In essence, this is the sealing power of the priesthood which has been given to each presiding officer of the Church in this dispensation, and presumably to each presiding priesthood officer since the time of Adam. An example is the prophet Nephi, the son of Helaman. The Lord said to him: “I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will. Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people. Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal

on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people” (Helaman 10:4-7; see also Matthew 16:13-19; 3 Nephi 27:28-29).

“the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course” Keep in mind that Enoch’s power is priesthood power—borrowed power from the Lord. It is the Lord who exercises his personal power over the inanimate elements at Enoch’s request. See *The Power of God in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 14.

The reader has been previously invited to review *Priesthood* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 12. In that chapter, the veil metaphor is utilized to aid in understanding the concept of the true nature of priesthood power. After reviewing the chapter on priesthood, it should become apparent that the real difference between the sealing power, described earlier in the commentary for this verse, and the priesthood held by every righteous male servant of the Lord, is more quantitative than qualitative. In a sense, the Lord “justifies” or honors the righteous appeals by his priesthood holders as they labor in his earthly kingdom just as he agrees in this verse to honor the righteous requests of his key-holding prophet on the earth.

35 And the Lord spake unto Enoch, and said unto him: Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see. And he did so.

verse 35 “Anoint thine eyes with clay” Again we witness the inclination of the Lord to associate his spiritual blessings or the promise of his spiritual blessings with physical ordinances. What is it that he is trying to teach us by his use of physical ordinance and ritual? Before considering this question, let us consider two other scriptural anecdotes.

In John 9:1-7, Jesus and his disciples encountered a man who had been blind from birth. Jesus set about to heal him: “He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam . . . He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”

In 2 Kings 5:1-14, we read the well-known story of Naaman, a Syrian military general who lived in the ninth century BC at the time when there were two kingdoms in Israel, the Kingdom of Israel in the north, in Samaria, and the Kingdom of Judah in the south, centered in Jerusalem. Naaman was a good man but was stricken with leprosy. A young Israelite maid, a servant of Naaman’s wife, knew of her master’s condition. She also knew that deliverance from his awful disease was possible. “She said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet [Elisha] that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of the leprosy.” The king of Syria, wanting to save his valued general, sent a letter to the king of Israel saying that he would send Naaman, “that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.” The king of Israel was apprehensive and said, “Am

I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" Elisha heard of the letter and told the king, "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman came "with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in [the Jordan River] seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Naaman, expecting to be received and treated with more solicitude and respect was insulted on two counts. First, why couldn't Elisha take the time to come out of the house, meet him, and then heal him by the laying on of hands? Second, Naaman reasoned: What is it about the Jordan River? Why that filthy place? "Are not Armana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." And then the timeless lesson. The sensitive servants of Naaman asked the question of the ages: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" No doubt convicted by the poignancy and spirit of truthfulness in their words, Naaman humbled himself. "Then he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

Let us then ask again, what is it that the Lord is trying to teach us by his use of physical ordinance and ritual? Does the Lord involve us in ordinance and ritual arbitrarily—for some capricious godly whim? Let us be reminded, as we have many times previously, that there is nothing of arbitrariness or caprice in God's universe. He does nothing without reason and purpose. His central objective is to, within the limitations imposed by this mortal test, bring us home to live with him forever after this life. He does nothing without studied reason. He wants us home and his efforts to give us every chance to get there are thoughtful and deliberate (Moses 1:39).

Let us also be reminded that ritual and ordinance imply covenant. When we participate in a ritual or ordinance, we enter into a covenant.

Why, then, physical ordinance and ritual? For a more complete discussion of this question, please see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 29, *The Lord's Use of Ritual*. For the convenience of the reader, I will reproduce part of that discussion here. It would seem that there are perhaps eight things that we learn, or are intended by the Lord to learn as we participate in ritual and ordinance:

1. Pro-active Effort Necessary. The Lord's blessings do not come without effort on our part. He teaches this through figurative or metaphorical teachings. We don't receive the blessings of the sacrament, for example, without going to the Church, placing ourselves in a reverent frame of mind, singing a hymn, listening to the prayer, and then partaking of the bread and water. We don't receive the blessings of the temple without driving to the temple and participating in the ordinance and ritual that is found there. In order to participate in an ordinance, we must go to a certain place and

be there by a certain time. Likewise we do not achieve the spiritual growth here on earth that we must achieve without deliberately and purposefully exerting ourselves. Obedience is invariably painful, and spiritual growth does not come free or even cheap. The obligation to grow spiritually lies upon our own shoulders. No one can do it for us. We must exert ourselves; we must assume full responsibility. We must decide to participate in the ordinance and then participate.

2. Undeniable Commitment. Virtually all physical ordinances and all instances of ritual in the Lord's gospel signify a sacred and binding agreement, a covenant with him. When we covenant with him, he causes us to signify that covenant by a definite overt physical act which commits us in our own eyes. There is nothing vague about an overt physical act. We have done it and we know it, and we know that the Lord knows it. We are committed. We cannot renege on our promise. We must now make good. We must now keep our covenant.

Could it be that when the Lord gave to Enoch the gift of spiritual vision, he expected of Enoch a commitment? Could it be that in a real way, as Enoch received this gift, he was entering into a covenant? And might it have been that the mortal Jesus Christ, let the blind man know that his removing his blindness did not come without obligation on the man's part? And might General Naaman have sensed a spiritual obligation or commitment to the God of Israel after his experience in the River Jordan? Naaman said, after his experience, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15).

3. Commitment before the Saints. When we participate in a physical ordinance, the Lord often has us do it in a place where others of the saints are present. These others see us participate in the sacrament or participate in the ritual and ordinances of the temple. And why does he want others to witness our participation? It would seem that it is primarily so that they can know that we are committed—that we have made the agreement, the covenant—and now we are responsible to them and also they can help us keep that commitment. No one can go it alone. Earning our exaltation is not a process we can achieve solo. We all need help, and the Lord sees to it that we get that help from others who know that we have covenanted. Others were there. They saw us make the covenant. Now they know that we need the fellowship of the saints. We are all a part of his Church which is essentially a group of his followers committed to help one another on our way toward exaltation.

4. Enrichment of Our Fellowship. There is an additional reason why the group dynamic is spiritually fortifying for all of us. In the temple, we share together a ritual that is not so much secret as it is sacred. It is something we avoid speaking of outside the temple because of its profoundly sacred nature. It is not something that we would like to see become the topic of everyday conversation. So we keep it to ourselves—it is a topic that is held sacred, just among us saints. This cherished knowledge that we share adds to the warm fellowship which exists among us saints—the Lord intends that it

should. He has a vested interest in binding us together as a group, as he knows well that an effective way to bring us back home is to remain close and loyal to one another here in mortality. It is for this very reason that myriad earthly organizations utilize ritual. It is hoped, in these men's and women's fraternal organizations, that their secret ritual and lore will bind them together as an organization. Their concept of ritual is, in a way, a secularly adapted—even an “apostate” form—of the divine concept.

5. Added Meaning in Symbolism. At times the mechanics and script of the ritual itself may give us valuable spiritual insight. It may teach us precious spiritual truths. Perhaps this may pertain today especially in the temple. Another example is the ordinance of baptism. There is much insight into how we grow spiritually to be gained through an understanding of the three parts of the ordinance of baptism, the baptism of water, the baptism of the Spirit, and the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost (see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18, *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*).

6. Necessity of Blind Obedience. The Lord seems to be teaching us that we must obey him at all times even on those unusual occasions when we're not sure exactly why. He does not resent our studying his doctrine and trying to gain insight into his ways and reasons; but we must never forget that his ways are higher than our ways. In mortality, we will never come to fully understand him and his purposes. There must ever remain an element of blind trust and obedience in our relationship with him. One is reminded of the incident wherein Adam is asked by the angel why he is offering sacrifices to the Lord. Adam replied, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me” (Moses 5:6). The angel then went on to bless Adam for his determination to obey, even though he did not completely understand the significance of the Lord's command. The angel taught him the meaning of the command, “And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth” (Moses 5:7). This concept is perhaps particularly applicable to those individuals who have long studied the doctrines of the gospel and may have come to think of themselves as having special insight into God's ways. They, especially, need to be reminded that they do not understand all of God's purposes and must, at times, submit to his counsel, even when they don't understand the reasons. All we have to do to receive the Lord's blessings is to “go and do,” to just obey his commands. We don't have to completely understand the intricate workings of his commands to benefit by them. Simple deliberate faith and simple obedience—these are the watchwords.

7. Deny Yourself. We notice that all of the ordinances we are commanded to receive here in mortality involve the mortal physical body—the body is immersed, hands are laid on heads, we make certain signs and tokens with hands and arms, we partake of the bread and water with our hand and mouth. If a candidate for exaltation passes beyond this life without his having had the opportunity to receive the ordinances, the Lord commands that someone still here on earth use his physical body to vicariously

perform the ordinance on the deceased's behalf. The ordinances are part of mortality—they must be done during this mortal test. What metaphorical teaching is the Lord trying to convey here? Could it be that all of the ordinances are a figurative reminder that in order to gain our exaltation, we must deny our mortal natural man self and instead choose the Lord and his purposes. We must prioritize our thoughts and actions here on earth and resist our natural inclination to seek primarily after things of this world and instead “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” then the Lord's ultimate blessings will be ours.

8. All physical ordinances are just that—physical—and they all involve touch. The touch of another can provide a tangible transmission of love and power. It was the mortal Christ's inclination to minister personally and intimately by touching and expressing. So it is with ordinances and rituals. The Lord cannot be here to touch and personally minister, so he has his servants administer ordinances.

“**thou shalt see**” The Lord's promise here has to do with spiritual sight, as we will see in the next verse.

36 And he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people.

verse 36 “A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people” What is a *seer*? He is a priesthood leader who is empowered to see with spiritual eyes, to see beyond this mortal realm and beyond our mortal time frame. Here Enoch sees premortal, and perhaps other, spirits that are not visible to the natural eye. Ammon explained to King Limhi that a seer “can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come” and is thus the means by which “secret things [shall] be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light” (see Mosiah 8:17 and its commentary). Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: “A seer is one who sees with spiritual eyes. He perceives the meaning of that which seems obscure to others; therefore he is an interpreter and clarifier of eternal truth. He foresees the future from the past and the present. This he does by the power of the Lord operating through him directly, or indirectly with the aid of divine instruments such as the Urim and Thummin. In short, he is one who sees, who walks in the Lord's light with open eyes” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], 258).

37 And it came to pass that Enoch went forth in the land, among the people, standing upon the hills and the high places, and cried with a loud voice, testifying against their works; and all men were offended because of him.

verse 37 “standing upon the hills and the high places” Although Enoch may have sought out prominent spots for his preaching, this expression suggests also that he may have gone to the sanctuaries, the places of worship.

“all men were offended” Obviously his message was not one regularly heard in those places, and there is no message quite so painful as one which pricks the conscience. We are reminded that few men sin without an element of misgiving and emotional pain and apprehension. And it is this very conscience-induced pain that causes men to react defensively and angrily.

38 And they came forth to hear him, upon the high places, saying unto the tent-keepers: Tarry ye here and keep the tents, while we go yonder to behold the seer, for he prophesieth, and there is a strange thing in the land; a wild man hath come among us.

verse 38 “saying unto the tent-keepers” We have learned that the descendants of Cain were people that dwelled in tents and kept cattle (see Moses 5:45). Evidently Enoch was preaching among these people. We also see evidence of a class system among these people—some were relegated to the role of tent keeper.

“there is a strange thing in the land; a wild man” The terms “strange thing” and “wild man” applied to Enoch imply that he was seen as a wanderer and not of the culture to whom he was preaching.

39 And it came to pass when they heard him, no man laid hands on him; for fear came on all them that heard him; for he walked with God.

verse 39 “fear came on all them that heard him” Enoch had, of course, hoped that his preaching would awaken and engender faith and repentance among the people. Instead, in some his preachings produced fear—undoubtedly a combination of guilt, remorse, shame, but also awe, amazement, wonder, and ultimately a spiritual rejection of Enoch’s message. At least this fear served to protect him against attack, as its result was that “no man laid hands on him.” This latter effect was obviously God’s intent.

40 And there came a man unto him, whose name was Mahijah, and said unto him: Tell us plainly who thou art, and from whence thou comest?

verse 40 “Mahijah” In Moses 7:2 we will encounter the related place name Mahujah. These two names, Mahijah and Mahujah, were not known from any other ancient source before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Cave 4, where the name appears in fragmentary copies of the book of First Enoch (see J. T. Milik and M. Black, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976], 300-306, 311, 314, where the Aramaic name is transliterated as “Mahawai”).

“who thou art” Mahijah’s question was likely asked in a mocking tone. His question is similar in spirit to that of Pharaoh (“Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go”—Exodus 5:2)

and King Noah (“Who is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or who is the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction?”—Mosiah 11:27) and the people of Ammonihah (“Who is God, that sendeth no more authority than one man among this people, to declare unto them the truth of such great and marvelous things?”—Alma 9:6). At the very least, such questions stand as challenges to prophets’ credentials.

41 And he said unto them: I came out from the land of Cainan, the land of my fathers, a land of righteousness unto this day. And my father taught me in all the ways of God.

verse 41 “And my father taught me in all the ways of God” In Moses 6:21, we read: “And Jared [Enoch’s father] taught Enoch in all the ways of God.” Certainly a powerful testimony of the effectiveness of righteous parental teaching.

42 And it came to pass, as I journeyed from the land of Cainan, by the sea east, I beheld a vision; and lo, the heavens I saw, and the Lord spake with me, and gave me commandment; wherefore, for this cause, to keep the commandment, I speak forth these words.

verse 42 In this verse, Enoch invokes his vision of the Lord (Moses 6:26-36) as his divine authority in response to the challenge from Mahijah.

“**I journeyed from the land of Cainan, by the sea East**” We would presume that the land of Cainan is east of Eden.

43 And Enoch continued his speech, saying: The Lord which spake with me, the same is the God of heaven, and he is my God, and your God, and ye are my brethren, and why counsel ye yourselves, and deny the God of heaven?

verse 43 “why counsel ye yourselves, and deny the God of heaven?” The Lord had taught Enoch of the people among whom he is now preaching: “they . . . sought their own counsels in the dark; and . . . devised murder” (Moses 6:28).

44 The heavens he made; the earth is his footstool; and the foundation thereof is his. Behold, he laid it, an host of men hath he brought in upon the face thereof.

verse 44 Enoch begins a song of glorious praise of the Lord. This verse contains a few different expressions which indicate that the Lord Jehovah created the earth. These include: “The heavens he made,” “the earth is his footstool,” “the foundation thereof is his,” and “he laid it.”

45 And death hath come upon our fathers; nevertheless we know them, and cannot deny, and even the first of all we know, even Adam.

verse 45 “death hath come upon our fathers” This expression evidently does not teach that some of Enoch’s ancestors had, by the time of Enoch’s ministry, suffered a physical death, though it is certainly possible, even likely, that some of them had. Rather the phrase means that all mortals are inevitably going to die—“death hath come upon our fathers.” We know that most biblical chronologies suggest that Adam was still alive at the beginning of Enoch’s ministry, but certainly in the sense of this verse, “death hath come upon” Adam as well.

46 For a book of remembrance we have written among us, according to the pattern given by the finger of God; and it is given in our own language.

verse 46 “a book of remembrance we have written among us” This phrase is a bit ambiguous as it is written. It seems less likely that Enoch intends to say that “we have written the book of remembrance” than that he is saying that “we have a written book of remembrance among us.” Is this the original earthly scripture begun in the days of Adam and passed along to Enoch? Most probably. Whether or not Moses himself had access to the original book of remembrance for his writing of the book of Moses, we do not know. We are currently reading from Moses’s account of the writings of Enoch. And Enoch did have access to the original book of remembrance as explained in this verse. Perhaps Moses obtained much of his material for the book of Moses from the writings of Enoch, which were obtained by Enoch from the original book of remembrance.

“according to the pattern given by the finger of God” What experience with God might this statement refer to? It appears that God himself taught an earlier generation to write, underlining the importance of written communication.

“it is given in our own language” Enoch speaks of the scriptural record to which his people had access which was written in the language of Adam (see verse 5).

47 And as Enoch spake forth the words of God, the people trembled, and could not stand in his presence.

verse 47 “the people trembled, and could not stand in his presence” In this context, it is interesting to look at Exodus 20:18 which describes the reaction to the Israelites’ to the divine display on top of Mount Sinai: “And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.” The Hebrew verb translated “removed” here in the King James Version actually means “to tremble” or “to quiver.” The power of Enoch’s sermon was enough to intimidate and frighten those children of men who were listening, so that they “trembled, and could not stand in his presence.”

verses 48-68 These verses are among the most doctrinally significant in all of the scriptural canon relative to the Plan of Salvation, especially regarding the significance of the Savior's atonement.

48 And he said unto them: Because that Adam fell, we are; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe.

verse 48 "Because that Adam fell, we are" Enoch teaches that because of the fall of Adam and Eve, "we are"—that is, we are here in mortality, and this experience will be characterized by travails, challenges, and eventually physical death.

49 Behold Satan hath come among the children of men, and tempteth them to worship him; and men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God.

verse 49 "tempteth them to worship him" The word *worship* here is less likely to refer to Satan worship, as we know it today. Rather, Satan has ways to tempt mankind to succumb to his manipulations, and when they do, they "worship" him. To "worship" Satan is to obey him. For a discussion of Satan—who he is, what motivates him, the nature of his powers, and his approach to leading men away from their salvation—see *The Role of Satan in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 16.

"men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish" It is important to understand that each intelligence in God's universe has always had a so-called natural self, that characteristic which has always made it difficult to obey the commands of God. This natural self seeks for ease, immediate pleasure, popularity and acceptance, respect, and material comfort. Obedience to the commandments of God inevitably requires us to put off or deny the natural self within us. We encountered the commandments of God long before we ever came into this mortal experience here on earth, and we were subject to those commandments even prior to our spirit birth (see *The "Natural Self" and "Spiritual Self" in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5).

The mortal body which each of us receives and the mortal situation each of us encounters as we came into mortality have significantly enhanced the persuasive powers of the natural self. Here in mortality we refer to our natural self as the "natural man." This verse describes our natural man self as being "carnal, sensual, and devilish," and it teaches that we are shut out from the presence of God lest we subdue and overcome this natural man self.

50 But God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent.

verse 50 "God hath made known unto our fathers" Enoch's reference here is to his own ancestors, and not those of his audience.

verses 51-68 These verses comprise the Book of Adam and consist of a revelation to Adam. The book of Enoch, which began in verse 21 of this chapter, is suspended here, but will resume in Moses 7:1 and continue to the end of Moses 7.

51 And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.

verse 51 This verse begins a long quotation that comes from a record of Adam in which he quotes the words of God revealed to him (verses 51-68). In Moses 5:9-10 we read that the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, and he subsequently began to prophesy concerning all of the families of the earth. It could be that verses 51-68 (the so-called book of Adam) are simply the complete record revealed to Adam when the Holy Ghost fell upon him in Moses 5:9-10. The book of Adam may also be a record taken from the book of remembrance, the scriptural record written by father Adam (see verses 5, 46).

“I am God” Here God (Jehovah) reveals the sacred divine name I AM to Adam. This is consistent with what God hints when he reveals this name to Moses, that is, that earlier generations had known this name (see Exodus 3:13-16).

“I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh” This expression refers to the spirit creation of the earth and the spirit birth of man, and plainly implies a premortal existence for all human beings.

52 And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.

verse 52 This long verse embraces fully the essence of the gospel message of salvation revealed to Adam and underscores the centrality of the Savior. This information about the Savior’s role must have come to Adam following the revelation about the Savior through the angel, who appeared to Adam as he was making sacrifice unto the Lord (Moses 5:4-7), because it is more complete.

“If thou wilt turn” The images associated with the verb “to turn” are among the richest in scripture. Principally, it is an image for repentance. In virtually every case, the use of this verb involves how a person directs the feet and the will. See also the note on Moses 7:2.

“repent of all thy transgressions” This is a very revealing passage and details something concerning Adam that is not as clearly specified anywhere else. We are familiar with Adam’s singular transgression in the Garden of Eden which was the cause of his fall into mortality. However, in this passage the Lord directed Adam to “repent of

all [his] transgressions [plural],” not having reference to the event in the Garden but to others that Adam may have committed after he became mortal. We do not have an account of any of these, but we could confidently expect that since he was mortal, there might be some. This passage seems to say that Adam was not without transgressions. That these plural transgressions of which Adam was to repent deliberately did not include the original transgression in the Garden is born out in the following two verses.

“ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” The Holy Ghost himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, have been operative among men from the beginning. Some persons have thought that the declaration in the New Testament (in John 7:39) that the Holy Ghost had not yet come is supposed to mean that the gift of the Holy Ghost had never been enjoyed by mankind on this earth until the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. However, the Book of Moses makes it very clear that the gift of the Holy Ghost was operative among people who had the gospel from the very beginning of man on this earth. What then is the meaning of the statement in John 7:39 that the Holy Ghost had not yet come? Simply that the gift of the Holy Ghost had not yet been manifest in the New Testament dispensation.

53 And our father Adam spake unto the Lord, and said: Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water? And the Lord said unto Adam: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.

verse 53 “Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water?” In the prior verse, the Lord has specified that Adam and Eve must “repent of all . . . transgressions, and be baptized, even in water.” In this verse Adam asks the Lord to help him understand the concepts of repentance and baptism—the concepts of proactively striving to be obedient to the gospel law and covenanting with the Lord to continue to obey.

The Lord’s response to Adam’s inquiry is interesting and instructive. The Lord simply says, “I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.” Through the Lord’s answer, we are taught two important concepts.

1. First, the Lord is able to forgive, even though he had not yet atoned for the sins of man. This illustrates the infinite and timeless nature of the Lord’s atonement. He will someday atone for the sins of man in Gethsemane and on the cross, and based on that surety, the Lord is able to extend merciful forgiveness to the children of God even before the actual act of the atoning sacrifice.

2. Second, the Lord’s forgiveness of Adam and Eve for their transgressions in the Garden of Eden was virtually automatic and was extended to them even before they were baptized. The nature of their transgression in the garden was that they did no evil. There was no need for repentance. Rather, they chose a greater good (become mortal and multiply and replenish the earth by partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) over a lesser good (do not partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of

good and evil and remain in the garden), even though the Lord had commanded them to avoid the greater good. The Lord knew fully the unavoidable quandary in which he had placed Adam and Eve, but it was essential that he do so. For a discussion of why it was absolutely necessary, see *Understanding Eden—The Fall*, in volume 2, chapter 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. Hence, the Lord extends to them forgiveness of their transgression based on the true desires of their hearts and his knowledge that they are and will continue to strive to be strictly obedient to all of the Lord's commands.

54 Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.

verses 54 “the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt” This saying which “came . . . abroad” (which today would be the equivalent of a biblical Proverb) was indeed a profound eternal truth. Doubtless the people among whom this truth was discussed are the righteous posterity of Adam and not the separated people of Cain, among whom Enoch now apparently found himself. We might have assumed from other scriptures that Adam and Eve did not have to repent of their garden transgression, but this scripture categorically states as much. In other words, this passage, probably more than any other scripture, shows that Adam and Eve were, after their fall, in the same position as all mankind now is. The atonement unconditionally covers Adam and Eve's original sin (covers it for Adam and Eve as well as for us) and also covers Adam and Eve's other sins and our own sins on condition of their and our repentance and baptism.

“the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children” This phrase has a double meaning. First, the “parents” here may be specifically Adam and Eve. Thus, the first meaning is that none of Adam and Eve's descendants can be punished for the sins of Adam and Eve. Second, “parents” may refer to any parents on this mortal earth. Thus, the second meaning is that no children on this earth can be punished for the sins of their parents. It is ironic that the apostate concept of original sin directly contradicts this clear teaching of the Lord that there is no “original sin” (it has been unconditionally forgiven) and that it is an illogical and invalid principle to hold children in any way responsible for the sins of their parents.

“children . . . are whole from the foundation of the world” See the commentary for D&C 137:10.

55 And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying: Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.

verse 55 “thy children are conceived in sin” Does this statement contradict a statement in the previous verse: “Children . . . are whole from the foundation of the world”? The statement in the previous verse implies that children, before they reach the age of accountability, cannot be penalized by the law of justice. Hence, they are worthy for a kingdom of glory without repentance and without having to be forgiven of sin (again, see the commentary for D&C 137:10). This statement in this verse means something quite different. Each individual has always had a so-called “natural self”—that part of us which makes us naturally disinclined to obey the commandments. This “natural self,” rather, inclines us toward pleasure, immediate (rather than deferred) gratifications of our desires, a desire for popularity, acceptance, respect, and material success. It inclines us toward being primarily self consumed and competitive with others rather than being selfless. This natural self has been enhanced by our receiving a mortal body with its attendant needs—especially its physical sexual drives. As we “grow up” in this mortal existence, it is inevitable that our spiritual self will contend with our “natural man” self, and we will surely commit sin (Romans 3:23). Again, see *The “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self”* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5.

“they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good” Our natural self creates, within each of us, an ongoing conflict waged between that side of us that yearns to return to our celestial home and that side of us that finds satisfaction with the things of this world—our “natural man” self. This ongoing conflict creates a setting where we experience nearly continuous opposition. This opposition is, of course, a vital feature of this mortal experience, as we know that their “must needs be opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) in order for us to progress in this life. To “taste the bitter” is to experience this opposition. For further discussion of this important issue, see the commentary on 2 Nephi 2:11 and chapter 1, volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine—Adversity and Suffering*.

56 And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves, and I have given unto you another law and commandment.

verse 56 “it is given unto them to know good from evil” The antecedent of *them* in this phrase is “thy children” in the previous verse. But it refers to those children “when they begin to grow up” (verse 55). A child, prior to the age of accountability, has insufficient understanding and insufficient knowledge of good and evil to be held fully accountable for their sins. To be sure, children can and inevitably do commit sin, but they are not held accountable—they are not penalized by the law of justice—because of their incomplete understanding of good and evil. However, when they reach the age of accountability, then “it is given unto them to know good from evil” and they are fully accountable. This predictable and inevitable knowledge of good and evil comes through the “Spirit of Christ” given to all men as an entitlement as they enter mortality (Moroni 7:16-17; D&C 93:2).

“I have given unto you another law and commandment” Now that the children are accountable, they must be taught the law of repentance (see verse 52) which includes obedience to the commandments, mercy, the atonement, and forgiveness of sins. The Lord is still answering Adam’s question which he posed in verse 53.

57 Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

verse 57 “no unclean thing can dwell there” This well-known concept is already familiar to you (see 1 Nephi 15:34; Alma 11:37). An individual guilty of even one sin is unworthy to enter the Lord’s heavenly kingdom. For a discussion of this concept, see the sections entitled “The Law of Justice” and “Agency” in *The Essence of the Lord’s Atonement in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 19. See also “Who or What Enforces the Demands of Justice” in *The Law of Justice*, volume 1, chapter 12 in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

“Man of Holiness” “Son of Man” It is notable that the title Son of Man derives from the Father’s title, Man of Holiness. Thus, the full sense of the Son’s title is “the Son of the Man of Holiness.” Incidentally, we notice that the title “the Son of Man,” which the mortal Jesus applied to himself, does not appear in the Book of Mormon. This may indicate that the title did not appear on the plates of brass.

“the meridian of time” This is the earliest occurrence of this expression in scripture (see also Moses 6:62; 7:46). It is tied exclusively to the coming of the Savior. This period of time will be described by the Lord as the “days of wickedness and vengeance” in Moses 7:46.

58 Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying:

verses 59-63 These verses contain a statement by the Lord to Adam which Adam was to teach to his children. The context suggests that Adam and his family members were to teach this statement word for word to their children.

59 That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all

sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

verse 59 “water, and blood, and the spirit” The Lord draws a parallel between the process of mortal birth—involving spirit, water, and blood—and the process of “conversion,” “spiritual rebirth,” “new birth,” or “second birth” which is required of each of us before we can be exalted or enter the kingdom of heaven. The latter process involves baptism by one having the proper authority (water), the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost (the Spirit), and the repeated justification and sanctification which occurs as we strive to obey by virtue of the atonement of the Savior (blood). For a discussion of these concepts, see *Justification and Sanctification in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1 chapter 17. The Lord will say in verse 62: “And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.”

“enjoy the words of eternal life” To *enjoy* is to experience spiritual joy which is the most profound satisfaction and fulfillment of which the family of man is capable of experiencing. It can only come through our own spiritual growth or through seeing the same in those we love and care about.

60 For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

verse 60 To the reader who understands the concepts of spiritual growth, justification, and sanctification, this verse will be readily recognized as a greatly simplified statement about those concepts. The commentary on this verse will also be overly brief. For a more complete discussion of these concepts, the reader is referred to the appropriate chapters in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine: Justification and Sanctification Gifts* (volume 1 chapter 17) and *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit* (volume 1, chapter 7).

“by the water ye keep the commandment” This phrase refers to the baptismal covenant wherein you covenant to keep the Lord’s commandments.

“by the Spirit ye are justified” To be justified is to be forgiven of sin—to have the penalties assessed by the law of justice removed. A man whose sins have been forgiven is said to be justified. This happens in response to the individual’s efforts to obey the commandments. The Holy Ghost has a vital role in this process. In his role as the “Holy Spirit of Promise,” he judges the individual’s efforts at striving to be obedient, and if the efforts are sufficient—if the individual is worthy—the Spirit then extends the blessings of the Lord’s atonement to the individual and forgives him of his sins. No man can be forgiven of his sins without the benefit of the Lord’s atonement. Thus we see that a man is justified by obedience, by the Spirit, and by the blood of Christ (by the atonement).

“by the blood ye are sanctified” Simultaneous with the process of justification, the Spirit may bless the worthy and obedient individual by bestowing upon him, by personal revelation, increments of the attributes of God. It is by this process that a man may grow spiritually to become more like God. The process of receiving increments of the attributes of God is referred to as sanctification. A second part of the process of sanctification is the removal (the burning out as if by fire) of an increment of the natural self of the obedient man. Since these blessings afforded to the individual far exceed what he has actually earned through his efforts to obey the commandments, sanctification can only occur by virtue of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice and his willingness to mercifully extend blessings which are not fully deserved. Thus we see that sanctification also occurs by virtue of the individual’s obedience, by the Spirit, and by the blood of Christ.

61 Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.

verse 61 This verse contains a listing of the divine functions of the Holy Ghost. Some of these functions may also serve as titles for the Spirit of God. For a more complete discussion of the Holy Ghost and his functions and titles, see *The Holy Ghost* in volume 2, chapter 5 in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

“it is given to abide in you” The antecedent for “it” is the influence of the Holy Ghost. When the influence of the Spirit of God is perceived by a mortal, we may say that the Spirit abides in that mortal.

“the record of heaven” This phrase is a title for the Holy Ghost and refers to his all-important role of bearing witness or bearing record of the Father and the Son.

“the Comforter” In this role, he extends the comforting love of God (Jesus Christ) to those mortals worthy of the Spirit’s ministrations. In this context, he communicates a spirit of comfort and peace to those who honestly seek it and are worthy of it—“the peaceable things of immortal glory.”

“the truth of all things” A central role of the Holy Ghost is to communicate spiritual truth or light from God to man. In this context it is pertinent that he “knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.”

“quickeneth all things” To *quicken* in a scriptural sense is to spiritually make alive, refresh, or reinvigorate. It is to spiritually sharpen or give keener perception. The Spirit functions in this way by connecting heaven and earth—by connecting mortal with heavenly influences.

62 And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.

verse 62 “the plan of salvation” What would you say are the very most essential features of the “plan of salvation”? Certainly we must include: repentance/obedience, the covenant and ordinance of baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and justification and sanctification through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

63 And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me.

verse 63 This is simply a wonderful and profound verse which bears testimony, all by itself, to the divine origin of the Book of Moses.

As we discuss the important principle of likenesses contained within this verse, let us keep in mind that familiar theme we have spoken of previously: God yearns to live with us forever. He wants us home. Although he cannot and will not tamper in any way with our agency, he has built into this mortal existence features he hopes will attract us back to our celestial home. One such feature is the system of likenesses or symbols. Symbols are words, expressions, or images that, by themselves, have only a common meaning. But they represent far richer concepts. Symbols enlarge our understanding and help us to see relationships more clearly. They tend to strengthen the impact of the truth being represented. You may read a book by a gifted author and yet not fully appreciate the richness of it because you fail to understand the symbolism in the book. How much more joy and pleasure you will find when you read the book later after becoming aware of its symbolisms.

The Creator, Jehovah, has built into the earth and the heavens, and all things that are in them, likenesses that are reminders or symbols. All things bespeak the majesty and power of the Lord. We are immersed in a veritable sea of testimony that he lives! He intends that these symbols remind us of him and of profound truths about him. It is the obligation of each of us to raise our own awareness of these symbols. They are here for our benefit. They teach us, remind us, and enrich our understandings. A knowledge of these symbols can be, for each of us, a profound new insight, an addition to our spiritual sensitivities and understandings.

Other words or expressions may be used to mean the same as likeness or symbol. These include type, shadow, similitude, metaphor, pattern, analogy, or parable. The Bible scholar Alfred Edersheim has attempted to distinguish between the terms symbol and type. Commenting upon Old Testament temple ordinances, particularly the ancient practice of sacrifices, he wrote: “An outward observance without any real inward meaning is only a ceremony. But a rite which has a present spiritual meaning is a symbol; and if, besides, it also points to a future reality, conveying at the same time, by anticipation, the blessing that is yet to appear, it is a type. Thus the Old Testament

sacrifices were not only symbols, nor yet merely predictions by fact (as prophecy is a prediction by word), but they already conveyed to the believing Israelite the blessing that was to flow from the future reality to which they pointed” (*The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, 106.)

One may well speculate as to why God has saturated our mortal existence with reminders or symbols of him. At least two reasons are apparent.

1. They serve, at least for the spiritually sensitive, as daily—even constant—reminders of him. It is his intent that we be reminded often of significant spiritual truths, for they are the real purpose of our lives here. Again, he wants us home, and would use any occasion to remind us to come home. A symbol is a simple and efficient way to convey to us a richly meaningful eternal truth about him and his gospel.

2. They provide protection for sacred spiritual truths. Only those responsive to the influence of the Spirit will perceive the connection between the outward symbol and the rich and sacred spiritual truth. Those who are dead to the Spirit’s promptings will see only the outward symbol and perceive no secondary meanings. Jesus’s teachings during his mortal sojourn were replete with symbolism. Parables, by their very nature, are a form of symbolism. When his disciples asked him why he spoke using symbolism or parables, he responded by saying, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matthew 13:11). The Savior intended that his people understand and benefit from his parables, but that the spiritually dead find no particular meaning. After delivering a parable, he occasionally said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (see, for example, Matthew 13:9).

Where, in our lives, might we encounter these symbols? We may find symbols in things as they are—in nature—in the order of things here on earth and in the heavens. They are common in scriptural writings. Gospel ordinances are, in a way, prototypes of symbols. They are outward physical phenomena which have deeper spiritual significance. Occasionally, we may observe divinely orchestrated events that intentionally involve symbols. The temple ceremony is a rich source of symbols. We hear often of devoted temple goers still finding new meanings in temple worship even after several years of regular attendance. It is likely that some of this fresh insight comes in the form of suddenly seeing new meaning in the many symbols contained in the temple ceremony.

An awareness of spiritual symbolism is most effective when it results from self discovery. It is the responsibility of each person to become aware of and sensitive to spiritual symbols. We are responsible for our own education. No one is responsible to teach us. Each of us must learn the profound spiritual truths and then learn to connect them with their symbols. Our goal is to eventually live in a virtual sea of meaningful symbols that bring to our minds daily, and several times daily, the matchless love of our Savior and the blessed truths he has allowed us access to here on earth.

While we are responsible for educating ourselves, it may be helpful to get started with a few examples:

1. Sister Lenet Hadley Read, wrote of a few highly personal specific symbolisms (“All Things Testify of Him: Understanding Symbolism in the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, January 1981, 5). One was her perception of the concept of “the wilderness.” She wrote:

The scriptures make a great deal of the *wilderness*. Adam and Eve were cast out into the wilderness; Israelite groups wandered in the wilderness, were tempted in the wilderness, worshipped false images in the wilderness, and were fed and watered in the wilderness; while throughout, prophets cried repentance out of wildernesses.

These events are historical, but they are also similitudes. They illuminate the reality of man’s mortal experience as a true wilderness, and they are illustrative of his relationship to the Savior.

We can grasp more dearly the concept of mortality as a wilderness when we contrast it to the Garden of Eden. The garden was the epitome of flourishing growth. But its special luxuriance was both physical and spiritual. Though abundant in fruit and beauty, its real lushness came from the presence of the Father. And the true barrenness of mortality comes from the absence of the Father, with only intermittent blessings sent by his unseen power.

When we comprehend mortality as a spiritual wilderness, we are in a better position to understand the messages the Lord is trying to give us through his prophets today. For example, as we read of the Israelites’ worshipping false gods in their wilderness, we are less inclined to judge the Israelites and more inclined to wonder about the idols we may worship in our own wilderness. We are not as puzzled about the apparent futility of ancient prophets crying out in a wilderness where no one would hear. We are more anxious to make certain that our ears are sensitive to the prophets crying in our own wilderness, where, again, very few will hear.

Sister Read also reflects on other symbols that have become personally meaningful to her. These include the covering of skins provided by God to Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness; the significance of water in passages such as John 4; the concept of spiritual Babylon; and the concept of stones in such passages as Matthew 21:42, 1 Peter 2:4, and Psalm 118:22). The reader may consider other potential symbols including the shepherd, the lamb, and the life.

2. One symbol that has become personally meaningful to your author is that of the sun being symbolic of the Son of God and the light of the sun being a similitude of the light of Christ. The electromagnetic radiation that emanates from the sun is not the light of Christ. Yet, the sun’s light is a meaningful metaphor for the spiritual light that radiates from the Lord and fills the immensity of space. Please see the important chapter, *The Concept of Light* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 15. Consider a few verses in Doctrine and Covenants section 88 that describe the light of

Christ: "And the light which shineth, which giveth you light . . . proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (verses 11-12). And consider the utter dependence of all of the earth's life forms on the sun as you read verse 13: "The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things." It appears that the prophet Malachi referred to the Savior intentionally as the "*Sun* of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2, italics added). While physical light is not the same as the light of Christ, it is natural for us to be able to relate to the sun's light. The light of the sun is an apt model to teach us the concept of the light of Christ's permeating the "immensity of space" and giving "life to all things."

3. Moses was inspired to teach the recalcitrant Israelites of his day an object lesson utilizing a highly symbolic representation. We may read of this incident in Numbers 21:4-9.

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

For those Israelites who responded to Moses command to lift their eyes and look up to serpent of brass, this episode doubtless served, throughout their lives, as a powerful reminder, a symbol, of the Savior of whom Moses taught.

4. The mosaic law of sacrifice is another obvious symbol or type that has been missed by the Jews. From the time of Moses to John the Baptist, sacrificial rites were part of the process of repentance. In order to obtain a forgiveness of sin, the children of Israel, under the law of Moses, were required to offer various sacrifices, typifying the sacrifice to be made by the Messiah. Almost all of the book of Numbers and a considerable portion of the book of Leviticus are dedicated to the instructions of the Lord pertaining to these rites. The prophets clearly understood that these laws and rites were but "a shadow of those things which are to come," things that signified that "redemption cometh through Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 16:14-15). They taught that "the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his [Christ's] blood" (Mosiah 3:15). It was further understood that the law of Moses would be fulfilled

and that blood sacrifices under the law of Moses would cease after Christ's "great and last sacrifice" (Alma 34:10-14; see also 3 Nephi 15:4-5). It was further pertinent that the animal to be sacrificed be the "firstling male" and without "blemish" (Deuteronomy 15:19-21).

5. Baptism by immersion has obvious symbolic significance. It represents birth into the family of Christ and involves an element of natural birth—the water. It also relates our own death and burial to sin and worldliness and our resurrection or coming forth into a newness of life in Christ. There is also the implication of our being washed clean by the water. In addition, it reminds us of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.

Other objects which the reader may well wish to spend some time contemplating include the ordinance of the sacrament, the blood upon the door of the Israelites at the time of the Passover, manna from heaven, and the tree of life in Lehi's (1 Nephi 8) and Nephi's (1 Nephi 11-15) visions.

As with any good thing, the concept of symbols may be abused or made profane. In the history of the earth, it is interesting to see how symbols have been wrongly interpreted or misunderstood. Men have also, at times, begun to worship the symbols themselves. Consider, for example, those cultures who have worshipped the sun or other features of creation.

It is also interesting to observe how various social or fraternal organizations have sought to enhance their earthly relationships by utilizing ceremonies and rituals that usually have an element of secrecy. These organizations hope to bind their members together by this secrecy.

As we search for and find our own personal symbolic meanings, we will invariably discover that they do not afford us new and unique insights unique only to us. Rather, they enrich understandings of truths already revealed to all of us in scripture and by modern prophets. Especially will they enhance our understanding of our Savior, his divinity, his atonement, his resurrection, and his glorious gospel plan.

Let us not believe that all we read in scripture is only figurative and metaphorical. Some have wrongly assumed that scripture has no literal historical or doctrinal significance. We Latter-day Saints know that scripture has both significant literal and symbolic meaning. The inspired prophet Nephi, the son of Lehi, wrote, "My soul delighteth in plainness." I believe the Lord often teaches us plainly in purely literal terms.

64 And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water.

verse 64 “Adam cried unto the Lord” Here the verb “to cry” implies that Adam manifests his obedient and repentant spirit to the Lord.

“he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord” Adam was apparently baptized by the hand of the Man himself—the Holy Ghost.

65 And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man.

verse 65 “the Spirit of God descended upon him” He received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

“he . . . became quickened in the inner man” Here is that word *quickened* again. Adam, as a result of the gift of the Holy Ghost, became spiritually vitalized and deeply converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

66 And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever;

verse 66 “he heard a voice out of heaven” This was doubtless the voice of Jehovah.

“Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost” For an explanation of this important part of the ordinance of baptism, please see *Baptism—The Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth (Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18). See particularly the material on the three parts of the ordinance of baptism. These three parts are the baptism of water, the baptism of the Spirit, and the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. Each of these three parts is individually distinct and meaningful.

“the record of the Father, and the Son” This phrase is yet another title for the Holy Ghost (see verse 61 and its commentary). The Holy Ghost is “the record of the Father, and the Son.” Again, this phrase refers to the most essential stewardship of the Holy Ghost—to testify of the Father and the Son.

67 And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.

verse 67 “thou art” We have commented several times on the sacred divine name for God—I AM (see Exodus 3:14). Some have seen the expression “thou art” as the mortal correlate with the divine name I AM. Thus the expression especially ties us intimately to God (see verse 68).

“after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years” This is usually an expression for the higher priesthood. To be after that order apparently means to be a member of that order—a possessor of the higher priesthood. Here, however, the reference seems to be the Lord himself.

68 Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons. Amen.

verse 68 “thou art one in me, a son of God” Here is perhaps the highest affirmation, the most signal honor, which God could bestow upon father Adam.

“thus may all become my sons” Here is the Lord wistful wish that “all [the sons and daughters of God] may become my sons [that is, follow me and eventually return to live with me].”

Moses Chapter 7 (December 1830) The Visions of Enoch

This chapter has often been referred to as “the visions of Enoch.” Fifty-six of its 69 verses deal with Enoch’s two major visions (see Moses 7:3-11 and Moses 7:21-67). We might also well argue, of course, that Enoch’s call (Moses 6:26-36) was a prior grand vision in and of itself. In the first of the two visions in this chapter, Enoch beholds peoples and places of his time (see verses 3-11). In the second, the grand vision of Enoch, he views “all the inhabitants of the earth” until “the end of the world” (verses 21-67). Along the way, he sees God himself weeping because of the pending Flood (see verses 28-33) and, in the far-off distance, “the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh” (verse 47). These two visions, in this chapter, complement Enoch’s hearing the voice of the Lord in Moses 6:26-36.

In these visions, it would seem that two major divine purposes are described. First, the Lord orients, through the prophet Enoch, the peoples of earth to his divine point of view. Second, it steps up the Lord’s efforts to recover his people before the devastating Flood which is pending. This latter purpose is accomplished by the Lord’s sending angels (verses 25-27) and by his calling the prophet Enoch to be his spokesman.

We may divide this chapter into three chronological parts:

1. The first section has to do with Enoch’s vision of events that are roughly contemporary with Enoch and the people whom he leads (verses 1-19).
2. The second section consists of the initial part of the grand vision of Enoch, down to the time of Noah and the Flood (verses 20-47).
3. The third segment is concerned with Enoch’s vision of the two comings of the Son of Man and the millennial thousand years (verses 48-67).

1 And it came to pass that Enoch continued his speech, saying: Behold, our father Adam taught these things, and many have believed and become the sons of God, and many have believed not, and have perished in their sins, and are looking forth with fear, in torment, for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God to be poured out upon them.

verse 1 “Enoch continued his speech” The narrator or first person is Moses. This particular phrase refers back to Moses 6:37 and 6:40. Immediately following his call from the Lord, “Enoch went forth in the land, among the people, standing upon the hills and the high places, and cried with a loud voice, testifying against their works; and all men were offended because of him.” His authority was challenged by a man named Mahijah (see Moses 6:40). Thus, in this verse, he “continue[s] his speech.”

“our father Adam taught these things” Enoch has just finished quoting a long section from a record of Adam (see Moses 6:51-68). The narrative now returns to the words of Enoch himself.

“many have believed and become the sons of God” Here again we encounter the title of those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and obey his commands—“the sons of God.” This title applies in apposition to “the sons of men,” the title for those who rebel against God.

“many have believed not . . . and are looking forth with fear. . . in torment” This phrase refers to those who rejected the gospel here on earth and are in the world of spirits (see verse 38). It would seem that no one rejects the Lord and his gospel without some degree of misgiving or ambivalence, which ultimately manifests itself in some form of fear. These sinners are completely self aware and are fearful.

“the wrath of God to be poured out upon them” Other scriptures paint God’s wrath either as a liquid (see Job 21:20; Hosea 5:10; Revelation 19:15) or as a fire kindled by God (see Numbers 11:33; Psalm 106:40; 35:14; Leviticus 14:10-18; 2 Kings 16:13; Hosea 9:4; Micah 6:7).

It should be noted that God’s “wrath” is something of a metaphor. We know that both the Father and the Son love the sinner and yearn to live with him forever, but the law of justice holds that the unrepentant sinner 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, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:15-19). This suffering is experienced in the world of spirits and is not an arbitrary, punitive suffering “poured” upon a man because of his sins. Rather, it is suffering that has a constructive purpose. See the discussion of adversity and suffering in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 1, *Adversity and suffering* and chapter 2, *The Roles of Suffering in Our Lives*.

2 And from that time forth Enoch began to prophesy, saying unto the people, that: As I was journeying, and stood upon the place Mahujah, and cried unto the Lord, there came a voice out of heaven, saying—Turn ye, and get ye upon the mount Simeon.

verse 2 “Enoch began to prophesy” The basis of his prophecy is his vision wherein Enoch beholds the peoples and places of his time (see verses 3-11).

“I was journeying, and stood upon the place Mahujah” Often the term “the place” points to a special, even sacred locale. We notice such a term for Gethsemane, the “place” of Jesus’s suffering (Luke 22:40; John 18:2).

There is no reason given in the text to assume a relationship between the character Mahijah mentioned in Moses 6:40 and “the place Mahujah.” These are obviously, however, a variant pair of names, as they differ only by their middle vowels. It is notable that these names were not known from any other ancient source before the

discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls from Cave 4, where the name appears in fragmentary copies of the book of First Enoch (see the commentary for Moses 6:40).

“a voice out of heaven” One senses that this term effectively announces both a renewed effort by God to gather those who will believe and even a new dispensation. Compare Moses 6:27; Mark 1:3; D&C 1:1; also Isaiah 40:3.

“Turn ye” The verb *turn* has to do with one’s feet and, by extension, the path that a person follows. In scripture, such an action could describe traversing a path of righteousness, traveling a path of sin, or repenting by turning from one’s current course. Jesus’s act of washing the feet of the apostles ties to this set of ideas (see John 13:6-10). Compare Zechariah 1:3: “Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you.” See also Malachi 3:7.

verses 3-11 These verses offer a snapshot of life in the pre-Flood era. People have apparently divided into tribes and clans, taking up residence in specific locales. Whether they banded together into larger tribal confederations is not clear, although we read of “nations” and “enemies of the people of God” (verses 13-14), expressions that may point to a broad unification of sorts among peoples. Some of these peoples (the people of Cain and the people of Canaan) will become characterized by “a blackness” which apparently served to keep these people apart from other tribes.

We will read of tribal warfare that occurred among these people, including the brutal and sordid actions of the people of Canaan exterminating the people of Shum. We will also read of warfare against the people of God, perhaps *because* they are the people of God (verses 13-14).

3 And it came to pass that I turned and went up on the mount; and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed upon with glory;

verse 3 “I turned and went” Please note the immediacy of Enoch’s obedience to the Lord’s command.

“I beheld the heavens open” Here is the onset of Enoch’s first vision experience wherein he beholds peoples and places of his time (verses 3-11).

“I was clothed upon with glory” Enoch was transfigured so that he could withstand the presence of the Lord. It would seem that our knowledge of this special state is limited. It seems to involve a change from the mortal telestial state to a higher or more exalted condition and appearance. The change in appearance is visible to the mortal eyes of others, and this transformation enables the individual so favored to stand in the presence of God and view the things of God. The scripture refers to these individuals as having “spiritual eyes” (Moses 1:11). The scriptures report the “transfiguration” of several prophets and even the Lord himself (see Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Luke 9:28-36; Moses 1:11; D&C 67:11; Exodus 34:29-35;

3 Nephi 28:13-17; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4). For further discussion of the phenomenon of translation, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 14, *Transfiguration*.

At present, we are fallen beings and therefore naturally of the telestial order. It is not possible for what is telestial in nature to interact directly with things of a higher order. In order to interact with celestial beings, we must first be transfigured by the Holy Spirit. In other words, our present, fallen natures must be temporarily raised to a higher state of being by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we must partake momentarily of the nature that will be ours in the resurrection.

We may even expand the concept of transfiguration. Ordinarily we associate the phenomenon of transfiguration, and the need for transfiguration, with a mortal being who is blessed to be in the physical presence of a divine celestial being. His or her telestial body must be transfigured or temporarily changed so that it has celestial properties that protect the body from damage resulting from celestial glory (see the commentary for Mosiah 13:5). But the same general principle applies for the communication of celestial or spiritual concepts. The telestial, or “natural” mortal mind, cannot grasp celestial concepts lest that mortal mind be “transfigured” temporarily by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost or lifted to a higher celestial state (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only then can the mind grasp (understand and learn) the celestial or eternal concept. We say that the celestial or eternal concepts are “revealed” to the individual. It is notable that over time, the mind that seeks and receives heavenly revelation becomes less and less telestial and more and more celestial. This is spiritual progress; this is the process of becoming more like God.

4 And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face; and he said unto me: Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations.

verse 4 “I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations” Actually, the present vision will include only a few generations. From Enoch’s time it would be four generations until the Flood, and this vision that is beginning to unfold to Enoch will not include the Flood. That event will appear only in a later vision (see verses 34, 38, 42-43).

5 And it came to pass that I beheld in the valley of Shum, and lo, a great people which dwelt in tents, which were the people of Shum.

verse 5 “valley of Shum . . . people of Shum” The name *Shum* is likely a variant of *Shem*, itself meaning *name*. Here is an early instance of a place and a tribe that share the same name. On the issue of whether the name attached first to the place or to the people, it is probable that these people carried the name of an ancestor and then transferred that name to the valley. This point is important for understanding how the names in verse 9 became attached to certain lands or regions.

6 And again the Lord said unto me: Look; and I looked towards the north, and I beheld the people of Canaan, which dwelt in tents.

verse 6 “I looked towards the north” Geographically, both “the place Mahujah” and “the mount Simeon” lay to the south of the homeland of “the people of Canaan, who dwelt in tents” (verses 2, 6).

“the people of Canaan” This people is not the same as “the seed of Cain” (verse 22), although both groups had black skins (see verses 8, 22). Their tribal names are of different origins. One of the grounds for this conclusion has to do with the fact that the meaning of the roots of the names differ from one another. The name *Cain* derives from a root that means “to acquire” or “to create” (Hebrew *qanah*). *Canaan*, on the other hand, probably goes back to a root that means to bow the knee (Hebrew *k’na’an*).

verses 7-11 Here is the substance of Enoch’s actual first visionary prophecy. Enoch’s audience consisted of the peoples noted in verse 9: “all the inhabitants” of “the land of Sharon, and the land of Enoch,” including Cain’s people (see Moses 5:42), as well as others. It is they whom he addresses when the quotation begins in the middle of Moses 7:2: “Enoch began to prophesy, saying . . .” It is presumably from their numbers that he gathers individuals into “the people of God” (Moses 7:13), which individuals then break their tribal loyalties and establish a society on celestial principles.

7 And the Lord said unto me: Prophecy; and I prophesied, saying: Behold the people of Canaan, which are numerous, shall go forth in battle array against the people of Shum, and shall slay them that they shall utterly be destroyed; and the people of Canaan shall divide themselves in the land, and the land shall be barren and unfruitful, and none other people shall dwell there but the people of Canaan;

verse 7 “the Lord said unto me: Prophecy” The idea that the prophets of old were able to actually prophesy of future events has, today, become unfashionable, as biblical scholars and many members of Christian churches seek for naturalistic explanations for what seem to be instances of divinely inspired prophecy in the Bible. The actual occurrence of the supernatural in scripture has become unacceptable and not “politically correct.” Here in this verse and the next, however, we see an instance of literal God-inspired prophecy. When these events do come to pass, they will prove to his hearers that Enoch had received this information from a divine source.

“the people of Canaan shall divide themselves in the land” This expression implies that the people of Canaan shall spread themselves out (“divide themselves”) and take control of the land. One of the results of the war of extermination against the people of Shum was that the people of Canaan came into possession of the entire desert region, which they had evidently shared with the people of Shum. Thus, we see

a dark motive in the hearts of the people of Canaan—that of exterminating a people and taking over their land.

“the land shall be barren and unfruitful” In most instances, references to land carry the sense of cultivable land or grazing land that supports life (see verse 17, which distinguishes between fruitful land and mountainous regions). However, in the case of the people of Canaan, their land is “barren and unfruitful” and burdened “with much heat,” a result of a “curse [on] the land” (see verse 8).

8 For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.

9 And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: Look; and I looked, and I beheld the land of Sharon, and the land of Enoch, and the land of Omner, and the land of Heni, and the land of Shem, and the land of Haner, and the land of Hanannah, and all the inhabitants thereof;

verse 9 One surmises that these other tribes inhabited regions that were less harsh than the desert setting of the people of Canaan.

10 And the Lord said unto me: Go to this people, and say unto them—Repent, lest I come out and smite them with a curse, and they die.

verse 10 “Go to this people” The term “this people” evidently refers to those noted in verse 9, not to the people of Canaan (see verse 12). This latter group (those of Canaan) will not receive a call to repent from Enoch. We are left to guess at the reason for the Lord’s restraining Enoch in this way.

“come out and smite them” The image seems to be one of a warrior who stands behind a shield and, at the opportune moment, comes out from behind the shield and attacks the enemy.

“a curse, and they die” It is likely that the Lord is threatening these people with a similar curse that befell the people of Canaan (see verse 8).

11 And he gave unto me a commandment that I should baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, which is full of grace and truth, and of the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son.

verse 11 “baptize in the name of the Father and the Son” If we omit the honorific expressions that attach to the Son (“which is full of grace and truth”) and to the Holy Ghost (“which beareth record of the Father and the Son”), we are left with the formulary for baptism: “. . . in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This is a novel idea—that in the time of Enoch, baptism would be done in the name of Jesus Christ and the other two members of the Godhead. For all the Christian

world knows, it was the mortal Jesus Christ who introduced this baptismal language (Matthew 28:19-20).

“the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son” One of the important roles of the Holy Ghost is to bear record or testify of the Father and the Son. In this role he is sometimes referred to as “the record of heaven” (see Moses 6:61, 66 and the commentary for these verses). For a discussion of the many roles of the Holy Ghost, see *The Holy Ghost in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 5.

12 And it came to pass that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent;

verse 12 Initially, in his ministry, Enoch preached to all of the people (except the people of Canaan), but later on, his ministry will be confined to his own people (see verse 19).

13 And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.

verse 13 “the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness” It is puzzling why this detail is included in the text, unless it is either to stress that the topographic changes that occurred at Enoch’s bidding also severely disturbed the world of nature, or to emphasize that God’s power extends into the animal kingdom.

“so powerful was the word of Enoch, and . . . the language which God had given him” In considering the concept of gifts of the Spirit, we conclude that there are basically two distinct kinds of gifts. The first may be regarded as “free gifts”—those the Lord provides to his faithful earthly servants, particularly those who hold his priesthood and labor in his earthly vineyard to build and maintain the kingdom of God on earth. While a man must receive and utilize these borrowed powers under a rigorous mandatory set of rules, they are manifestations of God’s power the priesthood holder is allowed to utilize at his own bidding in his righteous labors here on earth while on the Lord’s errand. They are not manifestations of the man’s own personal spiritual powers. The second kind of gifts of the Spirit are those which a man “earns” through his diligent striving to be obedient to the laws of God. As a man strives to obey, he gradually receives increments of the attributes of God which are given to him by personal revelation. These gifts are increments of the man’s spiritual growth, and they produce a fundamental change in him. By virtue of these gifts, he becomes a “new creature” with

a heart that is fundamentally changes and softened toward the purposes of God. As a man receives these gifts of the Spirit, he also grows in personal power—that is, his own influence with the elements of our round of creation is enhanced. He thus acquires his own personal power quite distinguishable from God’s power. We may encounter scriptures that refer to this personal power eventually acquired by the diligently righteous (Matthew 17:20; 21:21). For a discussion of gifts of the Spirit, see *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 7. See also *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*, chapter 8.

It is obvious that Enoch possessed the gift of power in words. Which type of divine gift was this—was it a manifestation of God’s power made accessible to him by virtue of the priesthood which he held, or was it his own personal gift of the Spirit which he had acquired by his diligent obedience to God’s law? It is possible that it was a combination of both. If a man acquires, through his diligent obedience in a certain specific area, it would seem that the Lord would delight in adding to and enhancing that gift as a man labors in his kingdom.

14 There also came up a land out of the depth of the sea, and so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God, that they fled and stood afar off and went upon the land which came up out of the depth of the sea.

verses 14 By the word of his mouth, Enoch changed the topography of the lands roundabout, doubtless through the mechanism seismic activity. Witnessing these events was sufficiently frightening to the unbelievers that they fled onto an island or a peninsula that came up out of the depth of the sea during the seismic turmoil.

15 And the giants of the land, also, stood afar off; and there went forth a curse upon all people that fought against God;

verse 15 “the giants of the land, also, stood afar off” It is unclear whether this phrase refers to people who were especially large in stature or not. The meaning of *giants* here is important to Latter-day Saints because Joseph Smith allowed this term to stand in the Moses account without comment. Three possibilities present themselves. (1) The term points to mythological creatures that have nothing to do with reality and are connected with the Hebrew tendency to exaggerate. Most interpreters accept this view. (2) There were actual giants, or huge people, who lived on the earth. D. J. Wiseman points out that there are skeletal remains of persons over nine feet tall in the Middle East (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:13). (3) One can also examine the term on the basis of language. The Hebrew word translated “giants” in Genesis 6:4 is *n’filim*. This term derives from the verb to fall and may have as much to do with apostasy (see Moses 8:18) as with people who may be large in stature.

“there went forth a curse” Divine curses usually affect the productivity of the ground, but in this case the curse seems to have to do with the occurrence of “wars and bloodshed” among those cursed (see verse 16).

16 And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness.

verse 16 “the Lord came and dwelt with his people” The word *dwelt* implies a particularly intimate ongoing spiritual relationship between the Lord and his people. This phrase need not imply that the Lord dwelt physically upon the earth with his people.

17 The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.

verse 17 Under the influence of the Lord’s abundant blessings to his people, they flourished in all ways—temporally and spiritually—to the point where all people could not help but stand in awe (“fear”) of them.

“they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places” This phrase suggests a special place of worship such as a temple and implies that part of the Lord’s blessings to his people came in the form of sacred temple ordinances.

18 And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

verse 18 Here the Lord defines a Zion people as a righteous group of obedient saints whose central focus is the love of and the care of one another.

19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.

verse 19 “Enoch continued his preaching” It seems that, at a certain point, Enoch ceased his missionary activities among the general populace and turned his attentions entirely to his own people.

“he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion” Here is Enoch’s city of Zion, his City of Enoch.

verses 20-47 The era portrayed in these verses is one of extreme contrasts between the wicked and the righteous that, perhaps, have not otherwise occurred during human history, either before or since. On the side of wickedness, we will learn that “among all the workmanship of [his] hands,” which includes “millions of earths” like this one, “there has not been so great wickedness as among [Enoch’s] brethren [his

contemporaries] (verses 30, 36). In contrast, the righteous who join themselves to Zion are “taken up into heaven” (verses 16, 21, 47, 69).

20 And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed.

verse 20 The spirit of Enoch’s conversation with the Lord is that of a prayerful plea by Enoch for the future safety and well-being of Zion. His hopeful prophecy is expressed: “Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever.” The Lord immediately affirms his hope with, “Zion have I blessed.”

“the residue of the people have I cursed” The essence of a Zion people is that they are a covenant making and a covenant keeping people. These will forever, as a people, enjoy the Lord’s protective blessings. Those who refuse to make or keep the Lord’s covenants (“the residue”) may also be referred to as the “sons of men” or the “people of the world.” These will not be blessed with those same blessings—they are therefore “cursed” by the Lord.

21 And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever.

verse 21 “the Lord showed unto Enoch” Thus begins Enoch’s next vision.

“all the inhabitants of the earth” It seems likely that initially, Enoch was shown all of the inhabitants of the earth in his own day—a relatively few people. By this end of this vision, however, he will see all of the people of all ages of the earth’s existence, including the people of this latter day.

“in process of time” This phrase indicates that the current vision possesses a chronological component. This observation is reinforced twice a few verses later with the expressions “after that Zion was taken up” (verse 23) and “there came generation upon generation (verse 24).

“was taken up into heaven” It is not clear from the term whether the city was physically taken up, buildings and all, or whether only the inhabitants of the city were taken up.

What does it mean that the city of Enoch was “taken up into heaven”? Were the inhabitants of the city really taken back to heaven—that very celestial planet where God dwells? All indications are that they were not received back into heaven, that heaven where they dwelt prior to their mortal births. Rather they were translated. Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, explained that “by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). This implies that the inhabitants all reached an advanced stage of spiritual development while still on

earth—so advanced they were worthy to be sealed up to eternal life. They were given special translated bodies, assigned a terrestrial (not a celestial) residence, and then had the blessing of being utilized by the Lord as ministering angels on the earth until the Lord’s second coming. For a discussion of the fascinating topic of translation, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 17, *Doctrine of Translation*.

“Behold mine abode forever” The Father and the Son will eventually dwell directly in the celestial presence of their covenant people—Zion—forever.

22 And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them.

verse 22 “Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam” The vision widens to include people outside of the city. All of these are descendants from Adam.

“a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain” Here the descendants of Cain are excluded from the fellowship of the descendants of Adam, doubtless because of their rebellion and disobedience. We also learn in this verse that the seed of Cain were a black people—likely given a black skin as a mark of their disobedience. We have no information whatever to suggest how they acquired their blackness. Some have even raised the completely unsubstantiated and unlikely possibility that they did so through intermarriage with pre-Adamite peoples.

23 And after that Zion was taken up into heaven, Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were before him;

verse 23 “after that Zion was taken up into heaven” Ordinarily in modern-day English, we would say, “after Zion was taken up into heaven,” leaving out the *that*. The “after that” is, however, a typically Semitic or Hebrew idiom.

“all the nations of the earth were before him” The scope of Enoch’s vision widens to include the people of “all the nations of the earth.” The 10th chapter of Genesis lists seventy major families that have descended from the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. We will learn later in this chapter, after Enoch sees Noah in vision, that Enoch will then behold “all the families of the earth” (verse 45). We will assume that, in these passages, “nations” and “families” are equivalent. We will also assume that the seventy nations or families descended from Noah are many, if not all, of the people Enoch beholds in this vision.

24 And there came generation upon generation; and Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man; and behold, the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth.

verse 24 “there came generation upon generation” This phrase denotes the passage of time in Enoch’s vision. The Flood at the time of Noah will occur in the fourth generation after the time of Enoch.

“Enoch was high and lifted up” During his vision, Enoch was blessed to be placed at a most favorable spiritual vantage point over the whole of humanity.

“even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man” To be in “the bosom” of the Father and the Son is to be intimately enclosed in the loving (spiritual and/or physical) presence of God. Figuratively, it is to be enfolded in God’s protective arms. In verse 30 we will be reminded that God is “just . . . merciful and kind,” and to be embraced by him is to feel the full measure of these merciful attributes—completely confident, comfortable, secure, and safe (see Moses 7:63; D&C 76:13, 25, 39; 83:13; 109:4).

“the power of Satan” Satan has little or no power or influence over a mortal who is earnestly and consistently striving to obey the Lord’s commands. The disobedient and rebellious, however, hand themselves over to him for his uncaring and unfeeling ministrations. It is over these recalcitrant souls that Satan can exert real power. For a discussion of Satan, his characteristics and his limitations, see chapter 16 of volume 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. This chapter is titled, *The Role of Satan*.

25 And he saw angels descending out of heaven; and he heard a loud voice saying: Wo, wo be unto the inhabitants of the earth.

verse 25 “he saw angels descending out of heaven” At the time of Enoch there were no resurrected beings who belonged to our round of creation. Therefore, these angels must have been translated beings, premortal spirits, or the spirits of just men made perfect—individuals who had died and been judged worthy to be placed in paradise in the world of spirits (see the commentary for Alma 29:1). Through the calling of Enoch and the sending of angels, the Lord was mounting a significant effort to try to reclaim the disobedient. The role of these angels was to declare the gospel of Jesus Christ to the righteous and the wicked (see Moses 5:58-59).

“he heard a loud voice” The speaker is unknown but doubtless a spokesman for the celestial realm.

“Wo, wo be unto the inhabitants of the earth” Wo is used as an expression of denunciation, as here, or an exclamation of sorrow, as in, “Wo is me, for I am undone” (Isaiah 6:5). The use of two “wo’s” is an especially severe denunciation.

26 And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.

verse 26 Here is a chilling verse. Enoch describes a vision of Satan’s devilish delight in his work. Satan is a brilliant and persuasive megalomaniac who rejoices at

man's disobedience and unresponsiveness to things of the Spirit. And he is sufficiently perversely charismatic to the point of influencing his angels to the point of rejoicing—their hopeless plight notwithstanding.

“he had a great chain . . . and it veiled the whole face of the earth” One can envision, figuratively, his great chain wrapped around the earth several times and therefore casting a shadow over the whole earth.

27 And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.

verse 27 “angels descending out of heaven” See the commentary for verse 25.

“they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion” These thoroughly righteous individuals were likely translated just as were the inhabitants of the City of Enoch (see verse 21 and its commentary). These individuals were also spared the awful experience of the Flood.

verses 28-32 Enoch observes in these remarkable verses that in spite of God's omnipotence and greatness, there is no gap between him and his children. He is a being of tender compassion who weeps over the waywardness of those children.

28 And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

verse 28 “the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept” An important characteristic of the God of the orthodox Christian world today is that he must not be subject to passions. This idea, of course, originated with the Greek philosophic definition of God. Also God, when defined to fit within the parameters of Greek philosophy, could not be subject to either time or space. Similarly the Greek ideal held that God must be *apatheia* (impassible), without passions or emotions. Otherwise, his will would be subject to his emotions and feelings, and in the Greek view God cannot be subject to anything. This is why the God of the philosophers must be not only without body but also without passions (feelings and emotions). Augustine (AD 354–430) and others went to great lengths to insist that just as the corporeal references to God in the Bible must be reinterpreted in a non-corporeal way, so also all references to emotions in God must be interpreted in a non-emotive sense. For example, Augustine stated: “Now when God is said [in the Bible] to be angry, we do not attribute to him such a disturbed feeling as exists in the mind of an angry man; we merely refer to his just displeasure against sin by the term ‘anger,’ a word transferred by analogy from human emotions.” So, in Augustine's mind, God does not actually feel the emotion of

anger. The big problem, of course, is that love is also an emotion, a passion, and the scriptures insist on the love of God (“God is love,” “For God so loved the world,” and so on). The philosophers got around this problem by simply redefining love whenever it was applied to God, so that for them divine love was not an emotion. Augustine defined the love of God as a function of his reason and will alone—God feels nothing. Thus, according to the ancient theologians, love as humans know it in an emotive sense has nothing to do with God, the statements of the scriptures notwithstanding. Neither can God have genuine compassion nor empathy for human suffering, except as those terms are redefined to eliminate the element of feeling. In this way the language of scripture—the bare words themselves—are retained, but their meaning is completely subverted by philosophical concerns. God, of course, is most passionate, and experiences supreme emotional feelings, as this particular verse illustrates. One is not without evidence of this fact in the Bible. Please review Jeremiah 4:19-21; 8:18-9:1; 10:19-21 in which the poignant and truly emotional feelings of the Lord are made explicit.

“How is it that the heavens weep” Enoch asks the Lord, “how is it that thou canst weep” (see the following verse). Enoch expresses his surprise that the Lord weeps. After all, he is God.

verses 29-31 Enoch actually attempts to reassure and comfort the Lord in the Lord’s apparent agony as he contemplates the awful prospect destroying the “residue of the people”—those who are disobedient. It is poignant that the Lord seems to be assuming the blame for the wickedness of the people. After all, their wickedness will reach such a pitch that he will be compelled to destroy all human life on the earth through the Flood.

These verses also form a doxology—a hymn of praise to the Lord.

29 And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

verse 29 “How is it that thou canst weep” This phrase forms a parallelism, a synonymous phrase, with the prior phrase: “How is it that the heavens weep . . .?”

30 And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever;

verse 30 In this verse Enoch says, in effect, “I just don’t comprehend how you could have created innumerable earths and innumerable offspring and still be concerned about these relatively few people on this particular earth.”

“millions of earths like this” Though we cannot dismiss the possibility of hyperbole here, this phrase does not actually seem to constitute any overstatement.

Compare Moses 1:33: “Worlds without number have I [the Lord] created.” Moreover, God’s infinite abilities allow his “eye” to “pierce them [all]: (Moses 7:36).

“thy curtains are stretched out still” The “curtains” represent the borders of God’s created universe. Isaiah used similar terminology for the borders of God’s universe when he compared it to a tent: “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes” (Isaiah 54:2). Hence, this phrase means, “Thy borders are still expanding.” In effect Enoch says, “Thy dominions are already unimaginably large, and they are still growing.”

“yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there” Here is another reference to the rich concept of the bosom of the Father and the Son—see the commentary for verse 24. See also the following verse.

31 And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?

verse 31 Enoch continues his doxology or hymn of praise. He says, in effect, “Thou hast already taken the City of Zion to thine own bosom and blessed them to be recipients of thy never ending mercies and thy unfailing justice. Thou has already been so merciful to the righteous of this earth, how can you weep over extending the well deserved fruits of justice to the disobedient?” God’s omnipotence and greatness to not get in the way of his being a tender and compassionate Lord who weeps over the waywardness of his children.

32 The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;

verse 32 The Lord explains his despairing sorrow over his rebellious offspring to Enoch. He says, in effect, I feel responsible for them. They are my children; I tutored them; I saw to it that they were placed into mortality. And now they are about to be lost to me.

33 And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood;

verse 33 The Lord continues his explanation to Enoch: “I yearn for my offspring to love and succor one another and help each other to return to me, but, alas, they have come to reject, hate, and even kill each other.” We have witnessed concrete proof of the Lord’s assertions in the destruction of the people of Shum by the people of Canaan

(see Moses 7:7) and in the murdering of close relatives, as in the cases of Cain and Lamech (see Moses 5:32, 47-50).

34 And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them.

verse 34 “the fire of mine indignation” The imagery points to purging and judgment. The image of fire as a figure or symbol of judgment is common in scripture (see Moses 7:34; Genesis 19:24; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 13; Luke 12:49; 2 Nephi 9:16, 19, 26; 3 Nephi 8:7; 9:3, 9-10).

“will I send in the floods” This is the first mention in the book of Moses of the Flood.

“my fierce anger is kindled against them” See the commentary for verse 28. The Lord is angry over the rebellious and disobedient among Adam’s descendants, and they will feel his angry.

35 Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name, also.

verse 35 Here the Lord reveals some of his names to Enoch. The Lord does not do this arbitrarily. Each of his names has a specific and rich meaning, and he has reasons for revealing these names to Enoch.

“I am God” This expression possibly represents the divine name which the Lord will reveal to Moses on the holy mount: “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:13-14). This title will be on Jesus’s lips both in his mortal (John 6:35, 48, 51) and postmortal (3 Nephi 11:10, 11; 15:5, 9; 27:27) ministries.

“Man of Holiness” “Man of Counsel” These two names seem to function together to emphasize the idea that God is holy, and most of the people of the earth have chosen not to be holy. In fact, they have become as profane as it is possible to become. The name “Man of Counsel” draws attention to the fact that, through his representatives, God has tried to counsel with his children in order to bring them back to him through calls for their repentance (see Moses 7:25-27; also 5:14, 17, 58; 7:16, 19-20, 23-24).

“Endless and Eternal” “Endless” and “Eternal” are simply names for God and imply the character of his existence. See D&C 19:4-12 and the commentary for these verses, particularly the commentary for verse 4.

There are other titles of Jesus Christ that are found in Moses 7:

1. “The Lord” as a title (verse 35) ties to “the day” of the coming of the Messiah (the Lord’s second coming). Such a term says much about the context into which Jesus will come into the world on that occasion.

2. The term “the Righteous” (verse 45) links to the shedding of blood and to being “lifted up” on the cross. This title underscores an essential characteristic of the person who will die for our sins.

3. “Son of Man” (verse 57) links to “the day of [his] coming . . . in the flesh” (verse 47). Evidently, Enoch had already known of this title from the record of Adam, from which he has quoted at length (see Moses 6:51-68).

4. The title “the Lamb” refers to the notion of a long-expected sacrifice.

5. “Messiah” (“the anointed one”) appears in verse 53. In ancient Israel, those who received an anointing for their offices were kings, prophets, and priests.

6. “King of Zion” (verse 53) is a royal title which links to the Lord’s association with the people of Zion.

7. “Rock of Heaven” (verse 53) is the secure way for persons to ascend to heaven. Further, this title clarifies the meaning of “Rock” as it is applied to the Messiah in other contexts. In verse 53, this firm pathway to heaven is described as being “broad as eternity,” and the Lord in verse 53 also further attests to his being the secure path to heaven when he says, “Whoso cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by me shall never fall.”

8. “Only Begotten” (verse 59) is the appellation through which prayer is to be offered. It refers, of course, to he being the only begotten by the Father in the flesh.

36 Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren.

verse 36 “I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also” The Lord reminds Enoch that he (the Lord) is all powerful and has complete understanding and control of the situation created by the recalcitrant among Enoch’s contemporaries. One is reminded of Paul’s statement: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

“there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren” An important concept that gives even richer meaning to this statement is often overlooked in the Church. Every person who lived prior to the Flood had ample opportunity to hear and understand the gospel, and those who were wicked, became so with full knowledge of the gospel. See the important commentary for 2 Nephi 2:21 and D&C 138:28.

37 But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep

over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?

verse 37 **“their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers”** This statement is not to be taken as unequivocal and without qualification, but it is a reminder that every parent has the responsibility to diligently teach their children the truths of the gospel.

“Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom” Satan has no power over the children of men until they grant him that power by their giving in to their natural man selves. Then his influence tends to escalate until he has them entrapped in the chains of hell (Alma 12:9-11), and he becomes “their father.” Then, of course, we are reminded that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

“the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands” We have discussed the fact that “the heavens” in this chapter is synonymous with God, so that when the “heavens weep” in verse 28, it is God that is weeping. Here we learn that, in addition to God, all of the creations of God (“the whole heavens” and “the workmanship of mine hands”) who are aware of the plight of the rebellious souls among the contemporaries of Enoch will also weep for them.

“wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer” The Lord adds, in effect, “And well should the hosts of heaven weep for the disobedient, as they will certainly suffer in the great Flood for their recalcitrance.

38 But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them.

verse 38 **“these which thine eyes are upon”** The Flood during Noah’s day will occur some four generations after Enoch. However, Enoch is seeing them in vision.

“I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them” The Lord’s reference here is to those who will perish in the Flood. They will be remanded to the “prison” part of the world of spirits, there to await the eventual preaching of the righteous souls in paradise which will not commence until after the Lord’s crucifixion. Peter wrote in the New Testament of these people: “Christ also . . . went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah” (1 Peter 3:18-19). Modern revelation underlines the significance of the memory of these people when, in referring to “the Zion of Enoch,” the Lord says that “the residue of the wicked [of that and other eras] have I kept in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day, which shall come at the end of the earth” (D&C 38:4-5). Incidentally, the expression “the residue of the wicked” (D&C 38:5) is the same as that found in verse 43.

39 And That which I have chosen hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment;

verse 39 “That which I have chosen” The Lord Jesus Christ. Here, again, is an example of Jehovah’s speaking of himself in the third person by the principle of the divine investiture of authority.

“they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me” The wicked in spirit prison will not have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them, and consequently they will not have the opportunity to repent, until after the Lord is crucified and resurrected. Until that time they will languish “in torment.”

40 Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands.

verse 40 Perhaps the Lord reiterates here that both he and the hosts of heaven will weep for those destroyed in the Flood.

41 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook.

verse 41 The righteous Enoch is shown the details of the wickedness of man in his day and at the time of Noah, and Enoch weeps.

“stretched forth his arms . . . heart swelled wide as eternity . . . bowels yearned . . . all eternity shook” Enoch did not weep quietly. Rather he cried out to the heavens loudly, dramatically, and in agony over the plight of the wicked of his generation and the subsequent generations, and God’s creations shook over the power and majesty of his cry.

42 And Enoch also saw Noah, and his family; that the posterity of all the sons of Noah should be saved with a temporal salvation;

verse 42 “Enoch also saw Noah” As mentioned, Noah will live four generations after Enoch. Noah joins a select group of people known prophetically by name before they came to earth. The list includes such persons as Moses (see JST Genesis 50:29, 34; 2 Nephi 3:9-10, 16-17), Aaron (see JST Genesis 50:35), Mary (see Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10), John the Baptist (see Luke 1:13), and Joseph Smith (see JST Genesis 50:33; 3 Nephi 3:15).

“that the posterity of all the sons of Noah should be saved with a temporal salvation” Enoch sees that the sons of Noah and their offspring, born following the Flood, would be spared death in the Flood (“saved with a temporal salvation”). It is notable that some of the grandchildren of Noah born prior to the Flood had turned wicked and perished in the Flood (Moses 8:15).

43 Wherefore Enoch saw that Noah built an ark; and that the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand; but upon the residue of the wicked the floods came and swallowed them up.

verse 43 “the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand” The Lord protected the ark and its contents.

44 And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look.

verse 44 “Enoch . . . had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren” Prophets may be foreordained to their high and holy stations, but they are seldom born prophets. Much preparation and molding and experience—generally planned and orchestrated by the Lord himself—are needed before they become the “polished shafts” in the quiver of the Almighty. After the pattern of the Master whom they serve and represent, prophets frequently are recipients of experiences which take them from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell. Enoch knew the discouragement associated with scorn and rejection. He felt the pangs of sorrow as he saw in vision the destruction of a wicked generation by water. He also came to experience the sublime totality of walking and talking with the Lord, and ultimately being taken into the bosom of heaven.

“Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look” Enoch’s vision had formerly been limited to seeing the wicked perish in the Flood. Now, the Lord tells him to look up and see the future of world (“all the families of the earth”—see the following verse) and be encouraged.

45 And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life?

verse 45 “When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed” Usually in scripture the “day of the Lord” points to the time of the Lord’s second coming (Isaiah 2:12-13; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; D&C 45:39). However, here the expression “the day of the Lord” points to the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh and to his atoning sacrifice.

“that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life” Initially, the reader may be surprised here that the blessings of the Lord’s atonement seem not to be extended to mankind until after the Lord’s coming in the flesh and after his actual atoning death in Gethsemane and at Calvary. We know that this is not true. We know that because of the “infinite” character of the Lord’s atonement, its blessings have been and are accorded to those who lived even prior to Christ’s mortal sojourn. But the key here is to note that this expression applies to “all they that mourn”—to all they who died

in the Flood and are shut up in the prison prepared for them (see verse 38). For these, their opportunity for salvation to a kingdom of glory must await the Lord's post-crucifixion ascension to the world of spirits (D&C 138). This is not to say that "all [or even any of] they that mourn" shall be exalted—"have eternal life." It is likely the best resurrection they can eventually obtain is a terrestrial one. But the process of hearing the gospel and repenting of their sins will not even begin until the great gap in the world of spirits is mended by the Savior following his post-atonement ascension to the spirit world.

46 And the Lord said: It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance.

verse 46 This verse aptly characterizes the time of the Savior's mortal sojourn. Implicit in this saying is Jehovah's foreseeing that the earth's time will eventually be based upon his mortal advent.

47 And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced, saying: The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me.

verse 47 "the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world" Again, here is a reminder of the infinite characteristic of the Lord's atonement. Its blessings were valid long before the Lord actually made his atoning sacrifice during his mortal sojourn. They were available even in the premortal world—"from the foundation of the world." All men have been sinless at the moment they were born into this mortal world. That sinlessness would not have been possible save for the Lord's atoning sacrifice.

"through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and . . . Zion is with me" Remember that Enoch is speaking here. It is through his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that he is able to be "in the bosom of the Father." Ultimately faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a revealed knowledge of him and, indeed, even a personal and deeply felt relationship with him which comes through obedience to his commands. For a discussion of the rich concept of "the bosom of the Father" see verse 24 above and its commentary.

48 And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?

verse 48 "Enoch looked upon the earth" Enoch's attention shifts from "the coming of the Son of Man" (verse 27) to the earth itself.

“he heard a voice from the bowels thereof” There are differences of opinion regarding this verse. One school of thought would regard it as purely a figurative or metaphorical account of Enoch’s hearing the figurative voice of the earth—that there is nothing literal about the verse. Another school suggests that the verse has a more literal meaning—that Enoch is hearing the voice of the dominant intelligence of those intelligences that inhabit the so-called inanimate materials of the earth. For a general discussion of intelligences and their involvement in the process of creation, see *The Creation in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 3.

We learn in D&C 88:37: “And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom.” This may suggest that the intelligences which make up the inanimate materials of the earth are organized into a kingdom and there may well be a dominant intelligence which presides over this kingdom. Perhaps it is the voice of this intelligence Enoch hears in this verse.

“Wo, wo is me, the mother of men” There are several scriptural references which refer to the earth as a female (Moses 5:36-37; 2 Nephi 23:13; Helaman 11:13, 17; D&C 84:101; 88:45). This could be simply a figurative and symbolic characterization, or perhaps the governing intelligence of the earth is in fact a female intelligence.

This complaint of the earth is mirrored in an apocryphal book of Enoch—1 Enoch. Consider the following quotations: 1 Enoch 7:6: “the earth brought an accusation against the oppressors”; and 1 Enoch 9:2: “the earth . . . cries.” From such passages we sense that the earth is a living being (compare Moses 5:36-37; 6:34; Genesis 4:11-12).

“When shall I rest” The literal school of thought would suggest that this dominant intelligence is bemoaning the fact that there are many of the inanimate earth’s intelligences that are not obedient to those of the Lord’s commandments pertinent to their kingdom. The dominant intelligence appeals to the Lord and asks just how long she is going to have to put up with this disobedience. She yearns for the second coming of the Lord when the celestial intelligences will be purged from the earth and “for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” (verses 62, 64). Her yearning for the millennial thousand years is also made clear in the phrase: “When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?” During the Millennium, the earth is to be sanctified and “receive its paradisiacal [terrestrial] glory” (Articles of Faith 1:10).

This verse marks a significant shift or change in Enoch’s vision. Prior to this verse, Enoch’s “soul rejoiced” at the view of “the coming of the Son of Man” (verses 45-47). But the mournful voice of the earth jerked Enoch from his joy so that he “wept, and cried unto the Lord” (verse 49). From this point on, the vision focuses on the period between the first coming of the Son of Man in the flesh and the end of days when the earth will rest—during the millennial thousand years.

49 And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth? Wilt thou not bless the children of Noah?

verse 49 “O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth? Wilt thou not bless the children of Noah?” After seeing in vision the fate of the people of Noah’s day, Enoch prays for the two objects of his concern, (1) the earth—that there will not be another flood like the one at the time of Noah—and (2) for the seed of Noah (see the following verse).

50 And it came to pass that Enoch continued his cry unto the Lord, saying: I ask thee, O Lord, in the name of thine Only Begotten, even Jesus Christ, that thou wilt have mercy upon Noah and his seed, that the earth might never more be covered by the floods.

verse 50 The Lord’s response to this plea from Enoch is explained in the following verse. The Lord covenants with Enoch that he will never again send a universal devastating flood upon the earth.

51 And the Lord could not withhold; and he covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him with an oath, that he would stay the floods; that he would call upon the children of Noah;

verse 51 “the Lord could not withhold” These verses illustrate the important principle that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Note that the covenant not to send another universal flood upon the earth was first made between the Lord and Enoch. And it will be repeated, following the Flood, between the Lord and Noah (see Genesis 9:11; JST Genesis 9:17).

“that he would call upon the children of Noah” The Lord swares an oath which has two provisions. First “he would stay the floods,” that is, he would send no more floods like that at the time of Noah. Secondly, “he would call upon the children of Noah.” What does it mean that the Lord “would call upon the children of Noah”?

One meaning of the verb “call” or “call upon” is for the Lord to invite a people to accept an offered grace (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*). One example is Matthew 11:28-29 wherein the Lord says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Here the Lord calls upon or invites his people to accept the blessed peace and rest which the gospel offers. Here, in Moses 7:51, the Lord covenants to “call upon the children of Noah,” that is, to invite them to accept the blessing that “a remnant of [Noah’s] seed should always be found among all nations, while the earth should stand” (verse 52).

Another possibility for the meaning of the expression “call upon the children of Noah” is that the Lord covenant’s with Enoch that he will “call upon” or appear to the children of Noah in the latter days. This is his second coming in glory (see verse 60).

52 And he sent forth an unalterable decree, that a remnant of his seed should always be found among all nations, while the earth should stand;

verse 52 “a remnant of his seed” The referent here is apparently Noah, that is, Noah’s seed will always be found among all nations.”

53 And the Lord said: Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come; for he saith—I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven, which is broad as eternity; whoso cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by me shall never fall; wherefore, blessed are they of whom I have spoken, for they shall come forth with songs of everlasting joy.

verse 53 “Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come” It would seem that the immediate referent is still the prophet Noah. The Messiah will eventually be born through the lineage of Noah and his son Shem who is the likely father of the Hebrews.

“I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven” For a discussion of the significance of these titles for the Lord, see the commentary for verse 35. Pertinent to the meaning of the remainder of this verse is the definition of the “Rock of Heaven”: It is the secure way for persons to ascend to heaven. This firm pathway to heaven is described here as being “broad as eternity,” and the Lord further attests to his being the secure path to heaven: “Whoso cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by me shall never fall.

“they shall come forth with songs of everlasting joy” This phrase describes the blessed happy state of those who “cometh in at the gate and climbeth up [to heaven] through their devotion to the Savior who is the solid “rock” path to heaven.

54 And it came to pass that Enoch cried unto the Lord, saying: When the Son of Man cometh in the flesh, shall the earth rest? I pray thee, show me these things.

verse 54 Enoch’s comments in this verse indicates that he did not yet know the full sequence of events at the end of time. In coming verses, the Lord will instruct Enoch that only after the Savior ascends “up unto the Father”—following his crucifixion—will he “come in the last days” and “the earth shall rest” (verse 59-61).

55 And the Lord said unto Enoch: Look, and he looked and beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men;

56 And he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the earth groaned; and the rocks were rent; and the saints

arose, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man, with crowns of glory;

verse 56 Enoch sees the turmoil of nature and of the hosts of heaven that will follow the Lord's death on the cross. Who can doubt that the so-called inanimate things of the earth and the hosts of heaven were aware of the portentous happenings in Jesus's life. Who can doubt that they suffered unspeakable agony over the unjust crucifixion of the Savior. The heavens veiled themselves with the darkness of mourning. The earth groaned. The rocks rent themselves. And many of the righteous hosts of heaven were blessed to come forth on the earth as resurrected beings at the time of the Savior's resurrection. Although this event is mentioned by Samuel the Lamanite in his preaching from the wall around Zarahemla (Helaman 14:25), this verse is the only scriptural source that mentions they will be "crowned . . . with crowns of [celestial] glory." This is not surprising, however, since they were surely saints judged at death to be worth of paradise which likely means that they were sealed up to eternal life at the time of their death.

One is reminded of the incident when Jesus rode a donkey into the city of Jerusalem for the final time prior to his crucifixion. As his disciples hailed him as the Messiah, the onlooking Pharisees scolded him and demanded that he rebuke his disciples for their "heresy." The Savior responded by saying: "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." We thus learn that Jesus's statement was not figurative but literal. The inanimate things of the earth were aware of the happenings in Jesus's life and especially aware of their momentous significance.

57 And as many of the spirits as were in prison came forth, and stood on the right hand of God; and the remainder were reserved in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day.

verse 57 "many of the spirits as were in prison came forth, and stood on the right hand of God" This phrase refers to those righteous saints who will be resurrected at the time of the Savior's resurrection. We thus logically conclude that the word "prison" in this verse is a general name for the postmortal world of spirits and does not differentiate between paradise and prison. Those who were resurrected were certainly in paradise, while "the remainder" were on the other side of the great gulf (prior to the Savior's visit to the world of spirits—see D&C 138) in spirit prison. These latter spirits will have to wait until their resurrection just prior to the great day of judgment to experience their salvation.

58 And again Enoch wept and cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the earth rest?

verse 58 Now Enoch has sensed that the second coming of the Lord is associated with the beginning of the earth's rest, and he tearfully longs to know—when will these two blessed events occur? In an earlier inquiry (verse 54), it appears that Enoch thought of the first coming of the Son of Man as the time for the earth's rest. Here we learn he has come to realize it ties to the Lord's *second* coming.

59 And Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father; and he called unto the Lord, saying: Wilt thou not come again upon the earth? Forasmuch as thou art God, and I know thee, and thou hast sworn unto me, and commanded me that I should ask in the name of thine Only Begotten; thou hast made me, and given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace; wherefore, I ask thee if thou wilt not come again on the earth.

verse 59 “**Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father**” Enoch sees the Savior, following his resurrection, ascend “up unto the Father.” Now, he will inquire about the Lord's second coming.

“**Wilt thou not come again upon the earth?**” The question, like many of Enoch's words, is inherently prophetic. It is as though the Lord inspires a question that holds its own true and prophetic answer. The repetition of the question at the end of the verse underscores its importance.

“**thou art God**” The expressions “thou art” and its plural form “ye are” seem to form a particularly solemn and sacred declaration in the scriptures. See for example Moses 1:4, in which the Lord says to Moses “thou art my son”; Matthew 16:17-18, in which the mortal Christ says to his apostle Peter, “thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”; and John 13:35, ““By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Perhaps the statements “thou art” and “ye are” relate to the divine name I AM (Exodus 3:13-14) or “I am God” (D&C 1:24).

“**I know thee**” This is not to be regarded as a casual statement by Enoch. John in his gospel writes: “And this is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3, italics added). This knowledge of God is not a secular phenomenon, in the sense of being aware that God is there or merely knowing of him. Rather, it is a deeply spiritual and profound knowledge that is received only by personal revelation to an individual in response to that individual's persistent and diligent obedience. To know God in this way is not simply to know of him, but rather to know him personally—to have an intimate and sacred covenant relationship with him—which knowledge can come to a person only after the Lord has revealed himself to that person. The following passages share this concept: 1 Samuel 1:19; Matthew 1:25; John 17:3; Galatians 4:8; Ephesians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5.

“**thou hast sworn unto me, and commanded me that I should ask in the name of thine Only Begotten**” Here is another example of Jehovah, the Son, having

spoken to and commanded Enoch as though he were the Father by the principle of divine investiture of authority. Jehovah had commanded Enoch, “Ask in the name of mine Only Begotten.”

“thou hast . . . given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace” The Lord has given Enoch the “right to [the Lord’s] throne.” It is not entirely clear whether Enoch is referring to Enoch’s being granted the blessing or right to speak in person with the Lord or whether he is referring to the fact that he has been sealed up to eternal life in the celestial home of the Lord. Regardless of which meaning is intended here, it is a pertinent reminder that no man is entitled, based on his own merits alone, to remarkable blessings like these—or even any blessings at all from the Lord. Rather, blessings are meted out mercifully by the Lord or through his grace. When the Lord gives a blessing mercifully, it means that he gives the blessing to someone who does not fully deserve it, based on that person’s merit. But the Lord gives it anyway. We therefore say that the Lord is merciful in doling out his blessings. The grace of God has been previously defined in this commentary as God’s love—particularly that aspect of his love that inclines him to extend blessings to his people that are not fully deserved. Hence, we receive blessings from the Lord by virtue of his grace—his mercy and grace.

60 And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah;

verse 60 “As I live” This terminology, of course, indicates that the Lord is entering into a sacred and solemn covenant with Enoch that the Lord will come in the latter days—his second coming in glory.

“to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah” The Lord refers to his covenant with Enoch wherein the Lord promises to “call upon” the children of Noah (see verse 51). This “call” will be made by the Lord at the onset of the millennial thousand years and is the Lord’s second coming in glory. The phrase “children of Noah” seems to refer here to all the people of earth.

The remainder of this vision of Enoch (through verse 69) will deal with the period of the “last days” just prior to the Millennium.

61 And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve;

verse 61 “the day shall come that the earth shall rest” The Millennium.

The remainder of this verse refers to the eschatological phenomena of the latter days called the “signs of the times” or “the signs of the Lord’s second coming.” For a

thorough discussion of this rather complex subject, please see the sequence of chapters on the *Signs of the Lord's Second Coming* in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine* (chapters 24, 25, and 26).

“my people will I preserve” The Lord reassures his people (those in his Church) they will be preserved during the great upheavals of nature of the latter days that herald the imminent second coming of the Savior to the earth.

62 And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

verse 62 “righteousness will I send down out of heaven” Because one of the titles for the Savior is “the Righteous” (verses 45, 47), this prophesied event may well refer to the second coming of the Savior in the latter days. To the youthful Joseph Smith Jr., as he was writing his inspired revision of the book of Genesis, anticipating as he must have been the restoration of the gospel, this phrase might have been interpreted as referring to still more revelation to come to those who live in the last days.

“truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony . . .” This is perhaps the earliest of all prophecies about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

“truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth” Enoch sees our day when the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will flood the earth with the message of the restored gospel. This verse refers to the two great instruments or tools that the Lord will use to gather Zion in this latter day. These are righteousness which comes down from heaven—at least in part the truths of the gospel which are given to the earth through modern revelation—and truth which shall spring out of the earth. This is the Book of Mormon.

“an Holy City” The latter day converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ will be gathered to a figurative Holy City, there to live together as saints. This holy city may be referred to as Zion or, in the Americas, “Zion, the New Jerusalem.”

“my tabernacle” This reference is evidently to a temple, or by extension, to latter-day temples.

63 And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou 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;

verse 63 **“Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there”** This remarkable prophecy indicates that Enoch and his righteous city, in its translated state, will return to the earth and, with the Savior, greet those who have been gathered out “from the four quarters of the earth, unto . . . an Holy City” (verse 62). This will come at the Lord’s second coming, and will be a most joyous reunion of the faithful.

“we will receive them into our bosom” Here, the Lord apparently identifies himself with Enoch and the people of Zion who become the “we” in this phrase. The Lord and Enoch’s city of Zion will greet those in the Lord’s earthly kingdom—those who have been gathered from the four quarters of the earth—and will receive them into their “bosom.” See the commentary on the rich and delightful concept of the “Lord’s bosom” in verse 24.

“and they shall see us” Undoubtedly this experience of seeing each other will be more than just a visual experience. The saints involved in this most choice meeting will see each other with spiritual eyes and see one another for who they really are.

64 And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest.

verse 64 **“there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion”** During the thousand years, the Lord will dwell in the headquarters of Zion which, we have learned from latter-day revelation, will be in Jackson County, Missouri. We presume he will come and go from this location as he presides over the government of this millennial terrestrial kingdom. We learn also from this sequence of verses that Zion of that day will consist of both the Lord’s earthly Church and Enoch’s city.

“which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made” This phrase refers to Zion, or the kingdom of the righteous on the earth during the millennial thousand years. This Zion “shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made.” This phrase is provocative and somewhat enigmatic. It may simply mean that this Zion will be comprised of all of the righteous (celestial and terrestrial) human intelligences who have lived on this earth. But perhaps it may mean more. It may also refer to those non human intelligences (animal, plant, and those which inhabit the so-called inanimate things of the earth) who have abided their spiritual laws to at least a terrestrial degree. And then what about the righteous intelligences of the other “worlds without number” created by the Savior? Will they have their own millennial thousand year experience? Will it be on their own world? Are they included with the millennial experience of this earth? We are not given to know (Moses 1:33-35).

“for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” This is the news that Enoch had been praying to learn since he had heard the groaning complaint of the earth (verse 48). By postponing his response to Enoch’s request for this information, the lord had led Enoch in vision through the corridor of history to the Millennium.

65 And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years;

verse 65 “the day of the coming of the Son of Man” This expression is the equivalent of the expression “the day of the Lord” and refers to the Lord’s second coming in glory.

66 But before that day he saw great tribulations among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men’s hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which should come upon the wicked.

verse 66 Again, a reference to the troubled times on this earth that precede the Lord’s second coming.

“and he also saw the sea” This phrase may have reference to the great flood at the time of Noah.

67 And the Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world; and he saw the day of the righteous, the hour of their redemption, and received a fulness of joy;

verse 67 “the Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world’ The Lord completes the grand vision of Enoch which we would presume is the equivalent of the visionary experiences of the other prophets who were blessed to see a vision of the this earth from the beginning to the end such as the apostle John (book of Revelation), the brother of Jared (Ether 3), Moses (Moses 1:1-9; 12-41), and the prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 76).

“the day of the righteous” Indications are that “the day of the righteous” is the Millennium. This thousand years is also “the hour of . . . redemption,” as the morning of the first resurrection (the resurrection of the celestial persons) will occur just prior to the thousand years, and the afternoon of the first resurrection (the resurrection of the terrestrial) will occur during that thousand year period. For a discussion of the sequence of the resurrection, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:15.

“Enoch . . . received a fulness of joy” Certainly Enoch will come forth in the morning of the first resurrection with a celestial body. This constitutes a “fulness of joy.”

verses 68-69 These two verses form an epilogue for Moses chapter 7. In these verses, the Lord returns to the taking up of Enoch’s city and its immediate consequences.

68 And all the days of Zion, in the days of Enoch, were three hundred and sixty-five years.

verse 68 “all the days of Zion” This phrase suggests and the city of Enoch, Zion, prospered under the righteous leadership of Enoch for three hundred and sixty-five years. Genesis 5:23, on the other hand, applies this period of time to the duration of Enoch’s mortal life. Moses 8:1 makes it plain that Enoch lived 430 years, a figure corroborated by D&C 107:48-49 (65 plus 365 years of Zion’s earthly existence).

The number 365 itself suggests the length of a solar year. Thus, the sun becomes the symbol for Zion. Genesis 5:23 ties the number to Enoch, implying that the sun was a symbol for him, as it would be for the Messiah (see Malachi 4:2). In this view, Enoch and his ministry become a type and shadow for the coming Messiah.

69 And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is fled.

verse 69 “Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion” Prior to the city of Enoch’s being “taken up into heaven”—actually prior to its being translation—the righteous people of Enoch’s city enjoyed a most unusual and intimate relationship with the Lord, even while they were here on earth.

“Zion was not” “Zion is fled” We have discussed previously the fate of the righteous city of Enoch (see verse 21). The righteous inhabitants of the city of Enoch were taken up or translated.

Moses Chapter 8 (February 1831) Noah and the Flood

The materials in Moses 8:1-30 roughly parallel the twenty-one verses in Genesis 5:25-6:13. The thirty verses in the Moses account expand the twenty-one in Genesis. Both treat the genealogy from Enoch to Noah, explain the Lord's decision to destroy "all flesh . . . upon the earth," and describe the prelude to the Flood. The Moses account provides us a richer portrait of the prophet Noah. Much of the added information in Moses has to do with Noah's determined but fruitless attempts to bring others in his society, including his own grandchildren, to faith in God.

On one level, this chapter chronicles a gloomy age in the earth's history when people refused to respond to the divine warning to repent even though they faced certain destruction (see verses 20, 24). On another level, Moses 8 gives us glimpses into the lives of a few faithful, righteous individuals—Noah and his immediate family members—who respond to the Lord's coaxing and become "the sons of God," giving the Lord someone with whom he could work cooperatively in trying to recover his errant children (verse 13). Their reward? Survival from the looming catastrophe and the opportunity to stand at the beginning of God's new era on the earth.

There is another important element that touches Noah himself. Many generations later, he would come as God's messenger, first to the priest Zacharias and then to the youthful Mary, to announce the births of two children whose adult ministries would turn countless individuals to God. On those two occasions, he would be called Gabriel (see Luke 1:19, 26). Our source for learning that Gabriel was Noah is the prophet Joseph Smith (see *TPJS*, 157).

verses 1-4 There have been no corresponding verses in Genesis for the so-called book of Enoch (Moses 6:26-50; 7:1-69) and the book of Adam (Moses 6:51-68). Verses 1-4 are not in the Genesis text. The Genesis account again picks up in verse 5. Verse 5 is equivalent to Genesis 5:25.

verses 1-12 The framework for Moses 8:1-12 is a genealogical listing that spans from the end of Enoch's life to the births of the sons of Noah, a space of five generations if one includes Enoch and his three great-great grandsons, Japheth, Shem, and Ham. The individuals who formed the genealogical bridge between Enoch and Noah (Methuselah and Lamech) were upright persons with whom the Lord could interact. Hence, amid the rampant wickedness in those days there stood this family whose members remained true to their covenants with the Lord (see verse 4). But that will change with Noah's grandchildren.

1 And all the days of Enoch were four hundred and thirty years.

verse 1 “all the days of Enoch” Although the term “days” may seem an odd unit of measure for describing the considerable length of Enoch’s life, the term is commonly used in this way in the Bible (see Genesis 5:4-5 [Adam]; 5:8 [Seth]; 5:14 [Cainan]; 5:17 [Mahalaleel]; 5:20 [Jared]; and 5:23 [Enoch]).

“four hundred and thirty years” One reaches this figure by adding Enoch’s age at the time of Methuselah’s birth, sixty-five—evidently Enoch’s age when he was called (see Moses 6:26-36)—to the number of years that Zion existed under Enoch’s leadership, 365 (see Moses 7:68). In contrast, the Bible reckons Enoch’s earthly age to have been 365 years, counting 300 years from the birth of Methuselah

2 And it came to pass that Methuselah, the son of Enoch, was not taken, that the covenants of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to Enoch; for he truly covenanted with Enoch that Noah should be of the fruit of his loins.

verse 2 “Methuselah . . . was not taken” Methuselah, “the son of Enoch,” was not among the people of Zion whom “God received . . . up in to his own bosom” (Moses 7:69). This notation is unique to the book of Moses, as the Bible does not preserve this information. There are two possible reasons Methuselah was not taken which are suggested by the scriptures. The first is that the Lord had made a solemn covenant with Enoch that Noah would “be of the fruit of his loins.” Hence, Methuselah needed to stay back to sire that lineage. Methuselah became the grandfather of Noah. The second possible reason is a negative one and is suggested in the following verse—Methuselah “took glory unto himself.”

“that the covenants of the Lord might be fulfilled” After seeing Noah in his grand vision, Enoch secures a covenant that the Lord would “call upon Noah and his posterity” (see Moses 7:51 for a discussion of the meaning of the phrase “call upon Noah”) and that “a [righteous] remnant” would always be found on the earth (Moses 7:52; compare D&C 107:42—“his posterity . . . the chosen . . . should be preserved unto the end of the earth”). But in none of these earlier passages does one find mention of the covenant that Noah would descend from Enoch. This promise appears only in this verse.

3 And it came to pass that Methuselah prophesied that from his loins should spring all the kingdoms of the earth (through Noah), and he took glory unto himself.

verse 3 “Methuselah prophesied that from his loins should spring all the kingdoms of the earth” Obviously Methuselah was sufficiently righteous to have the blessing of the Spirit of prophecy, yet the verse adds that “he took glory unto himself.”

“(through Noah)” This parenthetical phrase appears to be a *gloss*—a marginal or interlinear explanatory note. It is not clear whether it comes from Joseph Smith or from an ancient copyist or editor of the text.

“he took glory unto himself” It seems certain that this note introduces readers to one of Methuselah’s shortcomings, that of pride. Please compare the actions of Moses and Aaron in Numbers 20:7-13 wherein Moses and Aaron took credit for the miracle of bringing forth water out of a rock rather than giving the credit to the Lord so the Lord could be sanctified “in the eyes of the children of Israel.” It was this transgression that prevented Moses from leading the Israelites into the promised land. It is not certain whether Methuselah transgressed before or after God took Zion to himself.

4 And there came forth a great famine into the land, and the Lord cursed the earth with a sore curse, and many of the inhabitants thereof died.

verse 4 “there came forth a great famine into the land” Although the notice of the famine and God’s “curse” of the earth are juxtaposed with Methuselah’s indiscretion (see verse 3), there is no evident reason to associate the two as cause and effect. Rather, the famine seems to arise because of genuine wickedness among the people.

“the Lord cursed the earth with a sore curse” In other instances, the Lord has turned to natural disasters in an effort to bring his children to repentance, usually without lasting effect. See, for instance, Revelation 9:20, where massive suffering and death is meant to bring people to repentance but does not. Instead, individuals continue to rely on material things for security and to pursue their normal lives of indulgence (see Revelation 9:21). Compare the Lord’s marshaling of natural forces in 1 Nephi 19:11 (“The Lord God surely shall visit . . . Israel at that day . . . with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke.”) Examine also D&C 43:25 (“How oft have I called upon you . . . by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind”). Other passages include Moses 8:22, 1 Nephi 18:20, and D&C 45:33.

5 And it came to pass that Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begat Lamech;

verse 5 “Methuselah . . . begat Lamech” Lamech will become the father of Noah.

6 And Methuselah lived, after he begat Lamech, seven hundred and eighty-two years, and begat sons and daughters;

7 And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

verse 7 According to the chronological notes in the Bible, Noah was 600 years old when the Flood struck (see Genesis 7:6). Calculating the age of Methuselah when

he sired Lamech (187 years) and Lamech's age when he sired Noah (182 years), Methuselah died in the year of the Flood at the age of 969.

8 And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and begat a son,

verse 8 “Lamech . . . begat a son” This verse breaks the formulaic custom of naming the successor-son in the genealogical list. The deliberate breaking of this custom and the setting apart of the name of Noah in the following verse with the phrase “And he called his name Noah” are thought to underscore the importance of the subject, in this case the birth of Noah.

9 And he called his name Noah, saying: This son shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.

verse 9 “And he [Lamech] called his name Noah” The name Noah had, of course, been revealed to Enoch two generations earlier (see Moses 7:42-43; 8:2) and it seems likely that the divinely specified name had been passed along by Enoch and Methuselah.

Pseudepigraphical literature portrays Noah at his birth as a special child of promise. For example, it is said that at birth Noah's body was “white as snow and red as a rose”; his hair was “white as wool”; his eyes lit his parents' home “like the sun . . . even more exceedingly”; and he stood in the hands of the midwife and “spoke to the Lord of righteousness” (See 1 Enoch 106, in Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:86-87, and also Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd, edition [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983-85), 216-217; Garcia Martinez, “The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated,” 2nd edition [New York: Penguin Books, 1987], 230-37).

“This son shall comfort us concerning our work” This statement of Lamech's carries a prophetic tone and suggests that Lamech was a righteous man.

“This son shall comfort us concerning our . . . toil of our hands” Somehow Noah eased the Lord's curse on the ground. This easing of the curse apparently leads to a relatively regular life that will lull people into a false sense of security that all was well in society—“are we not eating and drinking . . . ?” (verse 21).

10 And Lamech lived, after he begat Noah, five hundred and ninety-five years, and begat sons and daughters;

11 And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

verse 11 These years of Lamech's life span place his death a mere five years before the Flood, for we read that he lived 595 years after siring Noah (see verse 10), and the Flood burst over the earth when Noah was 600 years old (see Genesis 7:6).

12 And Noah was four hundred and fifty years old, and begat Japheth; and forty-two years afterward he begat Shem of her who was the mother of Japheth, and when he was five hundred years old he begat Ham.

verse 12 “four hundred and fifty years old” The Bible does not indicate exactly how old Noah was when he sired his three known sons, Japheth, Shem, and Ham saying only that he had reached his five-hundredth birthday (Genesis 5:32). The text does not identify the mother of Ham.

“Japheth . . . Shem . . . Ham” The order of the births may be important. In the book of Genesis, the sons are almost always listed in the following order: “Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Genesis 5:32; 6:10; 10:1; 7:13; 9:18; 1 Chronicles 1:4; and even Moses 8:27). It is interesting, however, that Genesis 10 which lists the genealogy of the generations of Noah and which is known as the “table of the nations,” hints that Japheth may have been the eldest son as is indicated in this verse. This suggestion is made in that Japheth’s descendants’ are listed first. Genesis 10, however, then lists Ham and Shem in that order. The observation that in the Bible Shem regularly stands first in the lists of the sons may have to do with the fact that Israelites saw Shem as their own ancestor and thus featured him first in their record.

“of her who was the mother of Japheth” Although we do not know the name this woman received from her parents, the account takes pains to point to her, possibly because she was a woman of note in her era. As far as can be determined, this notation is unique in scripture. But it preserves a custom prevalent in the Near East today wherein people call a woman by the name of her firstborn son, that is, “mother of so-and-so.” In this light, it is likely that in her culture this woman was known as “the mother of Japheth,” linking her to her firstborn, rather than being known by her given name. Hence, the text has apparently preserved the name by which she was known among her peers. Presumably, she was the mother of all of Noah’s sons even though the account features her only as the mother of Japheth and Shem. In other passages, the record speaks of Noah’s “wife” as if there was only one (see Genesis 6:18; 7:7, 13; 8:16, 18).

13 And Noah and his sons hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and they were called the sons of God.

verse 13 “Noah and his sons hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed” This phrase, which does not occur in the Genesis account, offers the reasons why the Lord preserved these men and their families from the wreckage of the Flood. Simply stated, they were obedient. This phrase raises another interesting question. Did Noah and his sons have a scriptural record from which they obtained the Lord’s commandments to which they gave heed? Or, did they depend only on direct communication from the Lord to the prophet Noah (verse 15)? We are aware of “a book

of remembrance,” begun by Adam (Moses 6:5, 46), but we have no information about its persistence to the time of Noah.

“Noah and his sons . . . were called the sons of God” This phrase introduces a special title—“the sons of God”—that must have come from the heavenly realm. The characteristics of such persons are spelled out in this verse: hearkening to the Lord and giving heed to his commandments.

14 And when these men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of men saw that those daughters were fair, and they took them wives, even as they chose.

verse 14 “these men” These men were the sons of Noah.

“daughters were born unto them” These women are the daughters of Noah’s sons.

“the sons of men . . . took them wives” The granddaughters of Noah did not marry well. Rather, they married “the sons of men”—men who were not obedient to the Lord’s commands and stood outside the covenant. In the following verse, the Lord will accuse these women of selling themselves.

In contrast, the Genesis account calls these men “sons of God” (Genesis 6:2) which has caused some confusion.

verses 15-16 These two verses do not appear in the book of Genesis. They include the Lord’s complaint against members of Noah’s family and Noah’s response, which is to prophesy and teach. It is not entirely clear as to whether Noah sought the Lord’s help with his family crisis, or whether the Lord, on his own initiative, drew the problem to Noah’s attention.

15 And the Lord said unto Noah: The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves; for behold mine anger is kindled against the sons of men, for they will not hearken to my voice.

verse 15 “And the Lord said unto Noah” It seems likely that Noah and the Lord are communicating vocally.

“The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves” It is not clear whether these women have become prostitutes or whether they have, independent of their parents, made the arrangements for their own marriages. The custom of the day was apparently for the parents to arrange for their daughter’s marriage. In either event, the association of these women with “the sons of men” has put them in danger of the Lord’s awful “anger [which is] kindled.” Obviously some serious transgression is responsible for the Lord’s anger and it is likely that some type of sexual sin is implied here.

“mine anger is kindled against the sons of men” Obviously both the daughters of Noah’s sons and the men with whom they have associated themselves are guilty of transgressions.

16 And it came to pass that Noah prophesied, and taught the things of God, even as it was in the beginning.

verse 16 “even as it was in the beginning” The antecedent for the pronoun *it* here seems to be “the things of God.” The apparent error in singular-versus-plural here may seem unusual (we are inclined to think the text should read “even as they were in the beginning”), but such constructions were common in Semitic tongues, including Hebrew (Kautzsch, 1910, 462-67; see also 145).

Reference to “the beginning” points to a prior more righteous time. Obviously apostasy had changed the people’s perception of “the things of God.” The Lord is taking action through Noah to attempt to return the perception of “the things of God” to how they were previously.

The record does not say directly whether Noah succeeded in turning his grandchildren to the Lord, but it seems evident he did not. Sadly, they were not among those who much later entered the ark (see Genesis 7:1, 7). These verses pass over in silence the hurt and pain that had arisen within the family, but they preserve enough details that we can imagine the difficulties and heartache that must have been present.

17 And the Lord said unto Noah: My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he shall know that all flesh shall die; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years; and if men do not repent, I will send in the floods upon them.

verse 17 This verse seems to continue the Lord’s words that begin in verse 15, and the two should be read together.

“My Spirit shall not always strive with man” The Bible preserves this defining statement but repeats only pieces of the rest of the verse (see Genesis 6:3). In this verse, the merciful Lord, in essence, says to Noah, “Look, I have my limits, and your contemporaries have reached it. There is an end to my patience and long suffering. If this behavior continues, justice will be done.”

“man . . . shall know that all flesh shall die” It is unlikely that the Lord is saying what is obvious—that all men know the reality and inevitability of death, as especially their own death. Rather, it is more likely that by this time the people have been warned and know full well that there will be a flood and that all men will die in the flood (see verse 26). The Flood has been the subject of earlier prophecy (see Moses 7:34, 38, 43).

“his [man’s] days shall be an hundred and twenty years” Before Noah’s era, the life spans of his ancestors had been very long. Even though we do not know the length of life among persons not mentioned in the narrative, we presume that it was

similarly long. Now the life spans are shorter, a change either made deliberately by the Lord or through the natural biological course of events. Now men are living, on the average, of “an hundred and twenty years.”

“if men do not repent, I will send in the floods upon them” This is the first warning to the earth’s inhabitants of the flood given through the prophet Noah himself.

The plural *floods* in this phrase invites comment (see also Moses 7:34, 38, 43). Art and literature, of course, feature rain as the major cause of the flood (see Genesis 7:12), but apparently there were additional causes. According to the Bible, “all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up,” implying seismic activity that ruptured water-storing aquifers beneath the surface of the earth (see Genesis 7:11). This implication receives support in the notice that, at the flood’s end, “the fountains also of the deep . . . were stopped” (Genesis 8:2). Thus there were at least two sources for the flood, the rain above the “firmament” and water on the surface of the earth or under it (see Genesis 1:6-8; Moses 2:6-8). The fact that the flood resulted from multiple water sources has apparently led to the plural term “floods.” The plural also raises the possibility that the process involved a series of floods that began in different regions. If this was the case, presumably the various floods eventually ran together.

18 And in those days there were giants on the earth, and they sought Noah to take away his life; but the Lord was with Noah, and the power of the Lord was upon him.

verse 18 “in those days there were giants on the earth” I will repeat the commentary for Moses 7:15. It is unclear whether this phrase refers to people who were especially large in stature or not. The meaning of *giants* here is important to Latter-day Saints because Joseph Smith allowed this term to stand in the Moses account without comment. Three possibilities present themselves. (1) The term points to mythological creatures that have nothing to do with reality and are connected with the Hebrew tendency to exaggerate. Most interpreters accept this view. (2) There were actual giants, or huge people, who lived on the earth. D. J. Wiseman points out that there are skeletal remains of persons over nine feet tall in the Middle East (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:13). (3) One can also examine the term on the basis of language. The Hebrew word translated “giants” in Genesis 6:4 is *n’filim*. This term derives from the verb *to fall* and may have as much to do with apostasy (see Moses 8:18) as with people who may be large in stature.

Whatever the meaning of the word giants, it seems that such individuals had continued to live “on the earth” since the days of Enoch and that they were now threatening the life of Noah.

“but the Lord was with Noah, and the power of the Lord was upon him” It is not evident what steps the Lord took to aid Noah when his life was under threat. Scripture offers examples of how the Lord has intervened in other instances. For

example, we know that the Lord preserved Abraham by slaying the priest who sought to take Abraham's life (see Abraham 1:20). In the case of the brothers Sam and Nephi, the Lord sent an angel to protect them from the hurtful acts of their elder brothers (see 1 Nephi 3:28-29). Evidently, Noah was protected by some miraculous means.

19 And the Lord ordained Noah after his own order, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch.

verse 19 “the Lord ordained Noah” It is possible that the Lord himself may have performed the ordination, perhaps in accord with the observation that anciently the priesthood “was delivered unto men by the calling of his [God's] own voice” (JST Genesis 14:29). It is also possible that Noah's father Lamech ordained his prominent son. But we do not know when Noah began his preaching ministry. According to Genesis 7:6, “Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.” Noah's father, Lamech, had evidently died about five years prior, perishing when Noah was 595 years old (see Genesis 5:30; Moses 8:10). If Noah started preaching before his father's death, Lamech may well have ordained his son at the Lord's behest. But if Noah's preaching ministry began less than five years before the Flood, then Lamech may not have ordained his son. This ordination also brought to Noah the right to “hold the keys of all the spiritual blessing,” to receive “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, [and] to have the heavens opened” to him (D&C 107:18-19; also D&C 84:19).

“after his own order” This refers to the higher priesthood, the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God (see D&C 107:3). This order of priesthood will eventually come to be called the Melchizedek Priesthood. Noah was given the priesthood and designated as God's prophet, his mouthpiece.

We are not told whether Noah's sons went forth with him to preach, but it seems likely they did.

20 And it came to pass that Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent; but they hearkened not unto his words;

verse 20 “but they hearkened not” This same statement appears at the end of verses 21 and 24. All these passages are absent from the Genesis version. This attempt to reach people seems to have been God's last in a long series of such exertions that included angels' efforts (see Moses 7:25, 27; compare Moses 5:6-8, 58) and natural disasters (see Moses 8:4 and its commentary).

21 And also, after that they had heard him, they came up before him, saying: Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And are we not eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in

marriage? And our wives bear unto us children, and the same are mighty men, which are like unto men of old, men of great renown. And they hearkened not unto the words of Noah.

verse 21 “they came before him, saying” The account records the gist of what people said to Noah in their own defense. In effect, they said that everything was going along normally, perhaps even better than they had expected, because of their “children . . . are mighty men . . . like unto men of old, men of great renown” (verse 21).

“we are the sons of God” Not only had a sense of well-being settled into the hearts of people, but they evidently saw themselves as continuing partakers of the covenant, that is, as “sons of God” (compare verse 13). Such a view of themselves exhibits a degree of self-deception in light of the fact that God had taken the city of Enoch, leaving them behind, and, further, that he had not taken them as he did the righteous persons of their own era (see Moses 7:27).

“the daughters of men” The word *daughters* recalls the daughters of Noah’s sons (verses 14-15), a connection hinting that “the sons of God” in this passage were the husbands of Noah’s granddaughters.

The idea that these men were the husbands of Noah’s sons is corroborated by the fact that they speak to “grandpa” Noah not with hostility but with respect and civility. It would seem that these men are saying to Noah, in effect, “Don’t worry about us; we’ll be fine. We have no need to repent. We are basically good men, and things are going well for us even though we married outside the covenant. We have plenty to eat and drink. We are having children, and they are wonderful.” In short, these men told Noah that they had no interest in, and indeed, no need for his preachings. And, just as we might expect, “they hearkened not unto the words of Noah” wherein in he pled with them to repent.

22 And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually.

verse 22 “the wickedness of men had become great in the earth” Notwithstanding their self content, egregious wickedness was practically universal in the earth (see Moses 7:36).

“lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart” We learn that the Lord had perceived wickedness not only in the actions of men, but also in their thoughts. We know that the Lord alone can perceive the thoughts and intents of a man’s heart” (D&C 6:16). One need not wonder long as to the thought content of these men. Surely they fantasized about doing evil—sexual and other types of evil, including violence against other people (see verse 28).

“being only evil continually” The thoughts of the sons of men were never wholesome and selfless. Rather they were “only evil continually.”

verses 23-24 These two verses do not appear in the Genesis account. They are significant because they disclose both the extent and the content of Noah's preaching, for he "continued his preaching" even after suffering rejection and threats against his life. He pled with his hearers to embrace what we now term the first principles and ordinances of the gospel (see verse 24).

23 And it came to pass that Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words;

24 Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not.

verse 24 It is important to note that Noah's warnings and testimony to his people were not simply general challenges to repent of their wrongdoings, but rather an invitation to participate in the saving ordinances of the Church and gospel of Jesus Christ.

"even as our fathers" It is of interest to be reminded that the first principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ were known from the earliest generations of this earth, even back to Adam and Eve (see Moses 5:8-9, 12, 14-15).

"that ye may have all things made manifest" Certainly, this includes the promise of personal revelation with all of its resulting blessings.

25 And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart.

verse 25 "it repented Noah" One meaning of the verb *repent* is "to regret or feel sorry for" (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*). One may say, for example, "He repented a hasty marriage." Here and in the following verse, the verb is used with a slightly different definition: "to make one regret or feel sorry." The fact that the Lord had made man on the earth "repented Noah"; that is, Noah was so disgusted at the disobedience and rebellion of man that the very fact of the Lord's placing man on the earth caused Noah to regret or feel sorry that the Lord had done so. The verb *repent* is used similarly in Genesis 6:6.

Noah is obviously in despair and is grieving over the spiritual state of the people of earth.

26 And the Lord said: I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Noah that I have created them, and that I have made them; and he hath called upon me; for they have sought his life.

verse 26 **“I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth”** The relationship of confidence and trust between Noah and the Lord is illustrated here and seems almost without precedent. Noah openly regrets that the Lord had placed these recalcitrant men and women on the earth, and when he expressed his pain, the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth.” One cannot help but suspect that Noah’s despair was the trigger for the Lord’s statement that he would destroy mankind by the Flood.

“both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air” Animal life, including birds will drown. Fish will likely be spared, unless fresh-water fish find themselves in the salty waters of the seas.

“it repenteth Noah that I have created them” For the meaning of the verb *repenteth*, see the commentary for verse 25.

The antecedent or referent of the pronoun *it* in this phrase is the fact that God had placed man on the earth.

The antecedent for *them* is a bit less obvious. There are two possibilities.

The first is that the antecedent is “both man and beast.” We already know that Noah regretted the Lord’s placing man on the earth and that some men had sought his life. This possibility, however, would imply that Noah also regretted the Lord’s creating of the animals of the earth and that the animals had also sought his life. This possibility seems a bit far fetched, but the possibility that the animal population of the earth had deteriorated in “righteousness” does exist. We know that the Lord has given to the animal kingdom laws or commandments by which the animals can behave in righteousness. The Lord taught in latter-day revelation: “All kingdoms have a law given; And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom. And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions” (D&C 88:36-38). It is possible that an animal or animals can behave unrighteously relative to the laws which they have been given in their “kingdom.” Some support is given to this possibility by verses 28-30 of this chapter. There the Lord avers, “The earth [not mankind upon the earth] was corrupt before God . . .” And, “All flesh [not just man] had corrupted its way upon the earth.” Also, “The end of all flesh is come before me.”

The second possibility for the antecedent of *them* is the men whom God has created. This explanation might appeal to those who feel that it is unlikely that Noah would have “repented” or regretted the placement of animals on the earth. Also, those who feel it is unlikely that the animals of the earth would have sought Noah’s life will find some support for this second possibility in the final phrase of this verse, “for they have sought his life” (emphasis added). Since “the creeping things, and the fowls of the air” are the unlikely culprits as those who had sought Noah’s life, it was the men—*they*—who sought his life.

“he hath called upon me” Noah had sought the Lord’s protection in prayer from those who have sought his life.

27 And thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

verse 27 “thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” Let us first be reminded of the definition of *grace*. Grace is the love of God, particularly that aspect of his love which inclines him to extend to his creations blessings they have not actually fully earned and do not actually fully merit. Noah was obviously a righteous man, eager always to obey the Lord’s commands. This verse further provides evidence of his righteousness as it speaks of him as “a just man, and perfect in his generation.” It also confirms that “he walked with God.” One may well ask, then why Noah was in need of the Lord’s grace. The answer is simple. There is no man who is without sin (Romans 3:23), and there is no man who fully deserves the Lord’s blessings, based on his own merits. Every gift of the Spirit, every blessing of protection, every personal revelation with which the Lord blessed Noah was given to him by virtue of the Savior’s atonement, because he, like every man, did not fully merit the Lord’s blessings.

“Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation” A just man is one who is justified before the Lord. This means he had no outstanding penalties owing to the law of justice. His sins have been forgiven by the Lord. When a man is earnestly and diligently striving to keep the commandments of the Lord, then the Lord regularly forgives that man’s sins (justifies him) and grants to the man increments of divine attributes or gifts of the Spirit (sanctifies him). The reader may wish to review these concepts in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*. Even though no man on earth ever achieves the ideal of complete and absolute justification and perfection, the Lord mercifully extends to him the labels of “just” (Matthew 13:49; Luke 14:14) and “perfect” (Moroni 10:32-33) if he is earnestly striving and truly progressing. These titles given to any man, just as here they are extended to Noah, are given through the mercy and grace of God, in other words, they are given by virtue of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice.

“he walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” Genesis 6:9 declares that Noah walked with God, but affirms nothing about the status of his sons. Such a notation about Noah’s sons in the book of Moses forms an important indicator for understanding why they went into the ark with Noah and with their mother.

28 The earth was corrupt before God, and it was filled with violence.

verse 28 “The earth was corrupt” As has already been mentioned in the commentary for verse 26, this statement could imply that mankind upon the earth was corrupt or it may imply a more expanded view—that mankind and the beasts of the

earth were corrupt. Please study this verse in conjunction with verse 26 and its commentary.

Yet another meaning for this phrase has been suggested in *The Pearl of Price, A Verse-By-Verse Commentary* (Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, 174-175). These authors suggest that *the earth* in this phrase might refer to the religious sanctuaries or places of religious worship of this earth, and that these places—“the earth”—have been corrupted by false worship.

“it was filled with violence” The earth was filled with violence. And what was the source of this violence? It was either mankind—who had sought Noah’s life, and doubtless the life of each other—or it was both mankind and the beasts of the earth.

29 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.

verse 29 “all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth” Again, we have discussed the possibility that this condemnation applies to wicked men upon the earth or both to wicked man and “disobedient” animals (see verse 26 and its commentary).

Genesis 6:12 renders this phrase “all flesh had corrupted *his* way upon the earth” (emphasis added). The pronoun *his*, in Genesis refers, of course, to the Lord, and that rendering seems preferable to *its*.

30 And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.

verse 30 “the earth is filled with violence” See the commentary for verse 28.

“the end of all flesh is come before me” The Lord says, in effect and in a coarser vernacular, “That’s it, I’ve had it, the time has arrived, I’ve made the decision. Now I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.”

We have all noticed that the Book of Moses ends rather abruptly, and many have wondered why Brother Franklin D. Richards, who arranged for the publication of the book of Moses, did not include more, especially to round out the story of Noah and the Flood. The answer is simple: What he published is what he had.

The Book of Abraham

Translated from the Papyrus, by Joseph Smith

Prior to beginning a study of the Book of Abraham, the reader is invited to read the supplemental articles, *Brief Biblical History of Abraham*, *Abrahamic Lore that Supports the Book of Abraham*, and *The Joseph Smith Papyri and their Relationship to the Book of Abraham*.

The Life and Times of Abraham

Abraham seems to have lived during the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000-1800 BC). The biblical chronology suggests specifically that he was born in 2118 BC and died in 1843 BC, though he may have lived as many as one hundred years later. The three major areas of political sovereignty in the Near East during this period were Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine, and Egypt. We will briefly summarize the status of each of these three sovereign areas.

Mesopotamian History

Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, derives its name and existence from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. These two rivers created the Fertile Crescent in the midst of surrounding inhospitable territory. The space we call Mesopotamia is roughly the same as that of the modern country of Iraq.

About ten thousand years ago, the people of this area began the agricultural revolution. Instead of hunting and gathering their food, they domesticated plants and animals, beginning with the sheep. They lived in houses built from reeds or mud-brick, grouped in villages where they tended their crops.

Between 3500 and 3000, for reasons still not well understood, the civilization of Southern Mesopotamia underwent a sudden growth and change, centered in the cities of Ur and Uruk. This development was perhaps driven by climatic change which rendered the old ways of agriculture less productive. People clustered into fewer, but larger, locations and the plough, potter's wheel, and the introduction of bronze can be seen as responses to the demands of a more intensive economic life, and also as causes of increased complexity in that life. In this same period came the beginnings of writing, weights and measures, and arithmetic.

The main part of the third millennium (between 3000 and 2000 BC), saw the gradual development of the Sumerian civilization which included numerous city states. The Sumerians lived in a complex, unpredictable and frequently hostile environment. They had to contend with floods, droughts, storms, dust, heat, disease and death.

The later part of this third millennium saw Sargon (2334-2279) create the world's first empire, stretching the length and breadth of the fertile crescent. The impact of Sargon's unification of Sumer and the other peoples in Mesopotamia resonated down

through the history of Mesopotamia for the next two thousand years. The Sargonic empire lasted for almost a hundred and fifty years, before it fell to insurrections and invasions. There followed a turbulent period, but order and a restoration of Sumerian culture was eventually brought to the area by the reign of the king, Ur III. There followed peace and prosperity throughout the land

The empire of Ur III lasted for over a century (2112-2004) before falling to the violent incursions of semi-nomadic Semitic-speaking Amorites. With the fall of Ur went Sumerian civilization for ever.

The next couple of hundred years was another turbulent time during which the cities of Mesopotamia vied for supremacy. These were especially Assur in the north (the future principal city of Assyria) and Babylon in the south.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century BC, the ruler of Babylon was one Hammurabi (1792-1750). He conquered and unified the whole of Mesopotamia, and Babylon became its greatest city. We now call this period Old Babylonian.

At the time of Abraham, the dominant events in Mesopotamia were the rule of the Sumarian Ur III and the overthrow of his dynasty by the Amorites, a powerful group of Semitic-speaking semi-nomads. They overran and controlled nearly the whole of Mesopotamia.

Egyptian History

Egyptian history is tracked by a simultaneous history of kingdoms, periods, and dynasties. A simple outline of that history is as follows:

Early Dynastic Period (3050-2686 BC)

First Dynasty (3050-2890 BC)

Second Dynasty (2890-2686 BC)

Old Kingdom – The Age of the Pyramids (2686-2160 BC)

Third Dynasty (2686-2575 BC)

Fourth Dynasty (2575-2467 BC)

Fifth Dynasty (2467-2345 BC)

Sixth Dynasty (2345-2160 BC)

First Intermediate Period (2160-2040 BC)

Seventh through Tenth Dynasties (2160-2040 BC)

Middle Kingdom (2040-1786 BC)

Eleventh Dynasty (2040-1987 BC)

Twelfth Dynasty (1987-1786 BC)

Second Intermediate Period (1786-1558 BC)

Thirteenth through the Seventeenth Dynasties (1786-1558 BC)

The New Kingdom (1558-1085 BC)

Eighteenth Dynasty (1558-1295 BC)

Nineteenth Dynasty (1295-1186 BC)

Twentieth Dynasty (1186-1085 BC)

Third Intermediate Period (1085-747 BC)

Twenty-first Dynasty (1085-945 BC)

Twenty-second Dynasty (945-828 BC)

Twenty-third Dynasty (828-825 BC)

Twenty-fourth Dynasty (825-747 BC)

Late Kingdom (747-343 BC)

Twenty-fifth Dynasty (747-716 BC)

Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664-535 BC)

Twenty-seventh Dynasty (535-404 BC)

Twenty-eighth Dynasty (404-399 BC)

Twenty-ninth Dynasty (399-380 BC)

Thirtieth Dynasty (380-343 BC)

During the time of Abraham, Egypt had just emerged from the First Intermediate Period into the period called the Middle Kingdom. Abraham's lifetime included the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties. It was probably one of the pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty who attempted to take Sarah from Abraham during his sojourn in Egypt. The Middle Kingdom was one of the most stable and culturally rich in all of Egyptian history. During this period Egypt exercised some degree of political control and cultural influence over most of Palestine and southern Syria.

Syria-Palestine History

The major events in Syria-Palestine history at the time of Abraham were the destruction of the Middle Bronze Age culture by nomadic invaders—probably the same Amorites that invaded Mesopotamia. After a period of semi-nomadic culture, fortified cities began to be rebuilt, and urban life began to flourish once again. As mentioned above, Egyptian political and cultural influence was strong during this period, as the book of Abraham confirms (see Abraham 1:6-11, 20).

[A Translation of some ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt.—The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus. See History of the Church, vol. 2, pp. 235, 236, 348-351.](#)

Much misunderstanding has arisen from this heading. Because of its wording, it is assumed that the Joseph Smith Papyri were the original draft of Abraham's book, his very own handiwork. It should be noted first that according to Egyptian and Hebrew thinking any copy of a book originally written by Abraham would be regarded and designated as the very work of his hand forever after, no matter how many reproductions had been made and handed down through the years. For the Egyptians,

there is no essential difference between an original and a copy. In Egyptian culture, a sacred book did not wear out, it was simply renewed. Also, no matter who did the writing originally, among the Egyptians if it was Abraham who commissioned or directed the work, he would take the credit for the actual writing of the document, whether he penned it or not.

So when we read “the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus,” we are to understand that this book, no matter how often “renewed,” is still the writing of Abraham and no one else; for he commissioned it or, “according to the accepted Egyptian expression,” wrote it himself with his own hand. And when Abraham tells us, “That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning” (Abraham 1:14), we do not need to suppose that the patriarch himself necessarily drew the very sketches we have before us.

Abraham Chapter 1 The Early Life of Abraham

1 In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence;

verse 1 “In the land of the Chaldeans” Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees (see Abraham 3:1) and later he moved to Haran. Just where are these sites likely to have been located?

Let us consider the map and identify the area where Abraham likely lived. The Euphrates River originates in the mountains of eastern Turkey, runs south to bisect the country of Syria, and then turns east and southeast to run through the country of Iraq to the Persian Gulf. The Tigris River also originates in Turkey farther to the east, then runs southeast through Iraq—to the east of the Euphrates—also to empty into the Persian Gulf. The two rivers come close to each other near Baghdad in the center of Iraq, and then they separate and continue to flow southeast. They then join together and flow into the Persian Gulf. The area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is commonly known as Mesopotamia, the “land between the rivers.” It is this region which is commonly thought by scholars to have given rise to the earliest civilizations which have recorded texts.

Chaldea is thought, on one level, to be an area in southern Mesopotamia near the Persian Gulf. This is the same area that, in more ancient times, was called Sumer. On another level, however the entire area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the entire Fertile Crescent has at times been referred to as Chaldea. The name Babylonia has also, during certain historical periods, been used for the entire Fertile Crescent.

The city of Ur was discovered in southern Mesopotamia near the Persian Gulf. This city was originally a Sumerian city. In the 1920s and 30s, an archaeologist, Sir Leonard Woolley, popularized the notion that this city was Abraham’s birthplace.

Indeed it was felt that all the great cultural achievements in the area of Mesopotamia came from the south, in what is today southern Iraq. More recently in the 1960s and 70s evidence has been found in the excavation of the ancient city of Ebla (Tel Mardikh) in northern Syria that northern Mesopotamia, including the area of northern Syria was a major cultural area as well. In this northern area another city called Ur has been discovered in the vicinity of the ancient city of Haran known to have been located in Turkey, just north of the modern-day border between Turkey and Syria. This latter Ur is now considered a more likely site for the birthplace of Abraham. Thus Haran and “Ur of the Chaldees” are in the same geographical region. The Book of Abraham itself is clear on this point, placing Potiphar’s Hill in “the land of Ur, of Chaldea” (Abraham 1:20). Potiphar’s Hill was “at the head of the plain of Olishem” (Abraham 1:10), which Olishem has been identified in texts of the Akkadian king Naram Sin (from Akkad, a city north of the city of Babylon) as being located in northern Syria, in the region of ancient Ebla (see the commentary for verse 10).

When Abraham traveled from Ur to Canaan, he passed through Haran. This would not have been the case if he had been born in the Ur of southern Mesopotamia.

“I, Abraham” Brother Hugh Nibley said of this phrase:

These words in opening verse of Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham ring out like a trumpet blast challenging all comers to a fair field. They state the argument and set up the target. Is this an authentic autobiography of Abraham the Patriarch, or is it not? . . . To date, not one critic has laid a finger on the Book of Abraham. Instead, they have all sought to discredit it by indirection, dwelling exclusively on the method and person by which they assume it was produced. . . . How is the book supposed to have been produced? By direct revelation, a method unsearchable and imponderable, which renders research along that line fruitless and pointless. But that is not to say for a moment that the Book of Abraham is beyond criticism—far from it! It can be tested as a diamond is tested—not by inquiring whence it came, who found it, who owns it, how much was paid for it, where and when, who says it is genuine, and who says it is not, etc., but simply by subjecting it to the established and recognized jewelers’ tests for diamonds. . . . In short, it is the Book of Abraham that is on trial, not Joseph Smith as an Egyptologist (*Abraham in Egypt*, 1-3).

By Joseph Smith’s own insistence, he was merely an implement in bringing forth the record, not its creator.

In Genesis, the name “Abram” appears consistently until chapter 17, where the patriarch’s name is changed to “Abraham” as a token of the covenant God makes with him (see Genesis 17:5). In some early manuscripts of the book of Abraham, “Abram” is used as well, but in the version published in the *Times and Seasons*, “Abraham” is written throughout. Abram (Hebrew ‘*abram*) and Abraham (Hebrew ‘*abraham*) seem to be simply variants of the same name, which means, “Exalted Father” or “The Exalted One—God is my Father”

2 And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

verse 2 “finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me”

In the previous verse, Abraham observed, “I . . . saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence.” His discomfort with his residence was likely caused by the apostasy of his father and the unpleasant environment it created. In this verse, although he has not yet moved his residence, he acknowledges that the gospel and the priesthood create a preferable environment of “happiness and peace and rest.”

“the blessings of the fathers” This phrase refers to the priesthood which, we are told in D&C 84:14, Abraham received from Melchizedek. Melchizedek “received it through the lineage of his fathers, even [back] till Noah; and from Noah . . . [back] to Abel . . . who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man” (D&C 84:14-16). The prophet Joseph taught: “Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood” (*TPJS*, 322-23. See also John Taylor, in *JD*, 22:304; D&C 84:14).

“The fathers” here in this verse, and in verses 3 and 4, is used in the sense of a priesthood line of authority rather than a father-to-son relationship. This latter is the meaning “my fathers” in verses 1 and 5. In this final dispensation, the Lord, speaking to Joseph Smith and other church leaders, told them that they were “lawful heirs, according to the flesh . . . with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers” (D&C 86:8-9).

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “Again there was an apostasy. During this time there was one man in the city of Ur, among the few that remained faithful to the Lord, who sought after righteousness. . . . The Lord answered Abraham’s prayer, and he received the priesthood under the hands of Melchizedek, king of Salem” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:82).

Wilford Woodruff wrote: “We have no account of the Lord’s having organized a kingdom upon the earth in that day; but he gave the priesthood to Abraham, who taught his children the principles of righteousness. Isaac taught Jacob; and Jacob’s sons, the twelve Patriarchs, were taught by the priesthood, and God gave unto them many great and glorious blessings” (*JD*, 11:244).

“desiring . . . to possess a greater knowledge . . . to be a father of many nations . . . to receive instructions” It has been observed that these may well be references to elements of the temple endowment and eternal marriage (see D&C 43:16-17; 105:11-12; 132:19). Perhaps Abraham knew and yearned for these blessings, but his immediate forefathers had lost them through apostasy (see verse 5).

“follower of righteousness” Stephen D. Ricks has suggested in both instances of this phrase in this verse that the word righteousness, in spite of its not being capitalized, is suggestive of a divine title or epithet and refers to Jehovah, Jesus Christ (“The Early Ministry of Abraham,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume Two, the Pearl of Great Price*, 217-19). He cites as evidence Moses 7:47, “Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh and his soul rejoiced, saying: *The Righteous* is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world (italics added).” Also, Isaiah 51:5, “My *Righteousness* is near, My Salvation has gone forth and my arm will rule the peoples; in me the coastlands trust, and they wait for my arm.” Note the variant of the last three lines of this verse found in the Qumran version of Isaiah: “And his arm will rule the peoples; in him the coastlands trust, and they wait for his arm.” Note also Isaiah 56:1 from the Qumran version, “Maintain justice and do what is right for my Salvation and my Righteousness is about to be revealed.”

“desiring also to be . . . a prince of peace” Two men in the standard works are called “prince of peace”: Melchizedek (see Alma 13:18) and the Savior (see Isaiah 9:6). This verse states that Abraham desired to be a “prince of peace” but does not say whether he ever attained such a title.

It is noteworthy that the name Melchizedek is to be understood to mean either “my king [Hebrew *malki*] is *Sedeq* [Righteousness]” or “*Sedeq*’s [Righteousness’s] king.”

3 It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the 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.

verse 3 “It was conferred upon me from the fathers” See the commentary of verse 1 for a discussion of the meaning of “the fathers.” Again, Abraham is referring to his priesthood (see the commentary for verse 2). Adam was ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood “before the foundation of the earth,” and all his righteous posterity in turn have a right to bear this same priesthood. Indeed, all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood in this life were “called and prepared from the foundations of the world” (Alma 13:3). Referring to the order of priesthood on this earth: “This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage” (D&C 107:41). “All things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance” (Moses 5:59).

“even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam” Adam is designated the “firstborn,” a title in the scriptures that normally refers to Christ,

indicating the Savior's status as the firstborn spirit of child of God (D&C 93:21). Here, "firstborn" refers to Adam's being the firstborn human on this earth. Because he was ordained with the Melchizedek Priesthood in the premortal life, he has "the right" to the priesthood here on earth.

4 I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.

verse 4 "according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed" The word *fathers* in this phrase refers to Abraham's priesthood line of authority. This statement refers to the patriarchal nature of the priesthood in those days. Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "The Patriarchal Order of Priesthood was revealed from heaven, and we are informed that 'the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made. This order was instituted in the days of Adam and came down by lineage'" (*Progress of Man*, 100). On another occasion President Smith taught: "The first authority of Priesthood in the earth was Patriarchal. Adam was a patriarch, so were those who succeeded him. Being patriarchs, of course they were, as stated by Alma, high priests after the Holy Order. This Patriarchal (or Evangelical) order of Priesthood continued through the generations from Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Moses" (*Way to Perfection*, 72). President Smith also added: "The father of Abraham from what we learn in the book of Abraham, turned to the worship of idols; therefore he either lost his priesthood or it passed him by; nevertheless the descent came through him to Abraham" (*Improvement Era*, Nov. 1956).

5 My fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice;

verse 5 "My fathers, having turned from their righteousness" In this phrase, "my fathers" refers not to Abraham's priesthood line of authority, but rather to his immediate forefathers. This phrase implies that his forebears were not always pagans, but that they initially had the true gospel but had apostatized. The Bible does state that Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor . . . served other gods" (Joshua 24:2). See the supplemental article, *Abrahamic Lore that Supports the Book of Abraham*.

"utterly refused to hearken to my voice" Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "We all know something of the courage it takes for one to stand in opposition to united custom, and general belief. None of us likes to be ridiculed. Few are able to withstand popular opinion even when they know it is wrong, and it is difficult to comprehend the magnificent courage displayed by Abraham in his profound obedience to Jehovah, in the midst of his surroundings. His moral courage, his implicit faith in God, his boldness

in raising his voice in opposition to the prevailing wickedness, is almost beyond comparison. Without doubt this all had its part in the Lord's granting the reward and blessings to Abraham and his posterity to the latest generations. Few greater blessings have been given to mortal man" (*Way to Perfection*, 86).

Abraham was so vocal in his opposition to the idolatry of his time that his father and the idolatrous priests of that day will later seek his life.

The book of Genesis makes no mention that Abraham's forefathers were idolaters. However, we find corroboration of this fact in the apocryphal book, the Book of Judith (chapter 5, verses 6-9). These verses report that when the invading hosts of the king of Nineveh were approaching the land of Israel, the commanding general made some inquiries with regard to the history of the Israelite people. Then Achior, the captain of all the sons of Ammon, in answer to his inquiries, replied: "This people [the Israelites] are descended of the [pagan] Chaldeans, and they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia [Haran], because they would not follow the [pagan] gods of their fathers which were in the land of Chaldea. For they left the [pagan] way of their ancestors, and worshiped the God of heaven, the God whom they knew."

6 For their hearts were set to do evil, and were wholly turned to the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt;

verse 6 "the god of Elkenah . . . of Libnah . . . of Mahmackrah . . . of Korash . . . and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt" To the student who reads carefully, this verse may cause confusion; particularly is that confusion used by the multiple uses of the word "of." Apparently the verse intends to say that the people of Ur had set their hearts on the worship of the pagan gods Elkenah, Libna, Mamackrah, and Korash, and an unnamed god who was the god of the Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Not only did the people of Ur worship idols, but they also offered sacrifices of innocent children, men, and women, on their altars before the images of their gods. The names Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and Shagreel (the sun god of the Egyptians—see verse 9) are definitely Semitic in form, and they do appear on Mesopotamian deity-lists from that general time period (see John M. Lundquist, "Was Abraham at Ebla? A Cultural Background of the Book of Abraham" in *Studies in Scripture, volume two, The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. by Robert L. Millett and Kent P. Jackson [Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co.], 232).

We will learn, in the following verse, that the pagan Egyptian priest of the god Elkenah (who is also the priest of Pharaoh) will attempt to sacrifice Abraham on the altar. Elder Mark E. Petersen asked the questions: "How did this Egyptian infusion reach into Mesopotamia? What was the priest of Pharaoh doing in Ur?" Elder Petersen then answered his own questions: "Abraham here not only spoke of the local gods of Ur, but also of the Egyptian gods. He mentions that the priest of Elkenah was also the

priest of Pharaoh. The altar was obviously specially built for human sacrifice. . . . At this time Egyptian influence was felt throughout the Fertile Crescent. Much of the advanced learning of the people of the Nile was exported abroad, including some of their religious customs . . . the Egyptians had developed an alphabet, the earliest known to historians. This was borrowed by other nations, together with writing materials. . . . The Egyptians developed the use of papyrus. . . . This stimulated writing and greatly facilitated record keeping in neighboring countries. It was far more convenient than the use of clay tablets. In the same manner the religions of the Egyptians were also exported to nearby peoples. Hence there were priests of Pharaoh in Ur” (*Abraham, Friend of God*, 42-43).

7 Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their children unto these dumb idols, and hearkened not unto my voice, but endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah. The priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh.

verse 7 “Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen”

This phrase is slightly ambiguous. It intends to say that Abraham’s forefathers had turned their hearts from the gospel to the sacrificial practice of the heathen—that of sacrificing children to their pagan gods.

“hearkened not unto my voice” Abraham was bold enough to preach openly to his forefathers in an attempt to make them see the error of their ways.

“they . . . endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah” The referent or antecedent of the pronoun *they* is the forefathers (including his father Terah) of Abraham. Terah and the others sought to have the Egyptian pagan priest sacrifice Abraham on the altar because Abraham would not bow down to the heathen gods.

Regarding the complicity of Abraham’s father in the attempted sacrifice of Abraham, Elder Mark E. Peterson wrote: “Did Terah believe so much in the sun god that he would seek to placate that deity by sacrificing Abraham to him? The heathen priest already had sacrificed three young women on this same altar because they would not yield their virtue and refused to ‘bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone’ (Abraham 1:11). It seemed to be Terah’s intention to provide the same treatment for his son. It does not appear that there was any desire on his part to murder Abraham in a fit of anger because of a family quarrel. It seems more likely that it was a sacrifice of atonement that Terah sought, probably out of his fatherly love for his son. He may have thought that this extreme method should be used to save Abraham’s soul. That at least is the charitable point of view, and most likely the correct one” (*Abraham, Friend of God*, 47-48).

8 Now, at this time it was the custom of the priest of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women, and children.

verse 8 Human sacrifice is well attested among the ancient inhabitants of Canaan (see Adams, William James, Jr. "Human Sacrifice and the Book of Abraham," *BYU Studies* 9, no. 4 [summer 1969] and Day, John, *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.] Among the Egyptians there is little or no direct evidence for the practice of human sacrifice. This seems to be a practice adopted by the priest of Pharaoh from the Canaanites among whom he dwelt.

9 And it came to pass that the priest made an offering unto the god of Pharaoh, and also unto the god of Shagreel, even after the manner of the Egyptians. Now the god of Shagreel was the sun.

verse 9 "the priest made an offering unto the god of Pharaoh" It seems unlikely that a human had just been offered up on the altar. It is more likely that this verse intends to say that it was the custom of the priest of Elkenah to make thank-offerings of children (see verse 10) to the pagan gods—to the unnamed god who was worshiped by Pharaoh, the king of Egypt and to Shagreel. Shagreel is the god of the sun—the sun god. We will learn that it is the intent of the priest to specifically offer up Abraham as this thank-offering.

10 Even the thank-offering of a child did the priest of Pharaoh offer upon the altar which stood by the hill called Potiphar's Hill, at the head of the plain of Olishem.

verse 10 "the thank-offering of a child did the priest of Pharaoh offer upon the altar" Again, we sense that this phrase less likely means that the priest had just offered up and child, and more likely that the phrase teaches that it is the custom of the priest to offer up children for his thank-offerings.

"the altar which stood by the hill called Potiphar's Hill, at the head of the plain of Olishem" The name *Potiphar* frequently occurs on the monuments of Egypt (written either Pet-Pa-Ra, or Pet-P-Ra), and means: "Dedicated to Ra," or the sun. Potiphar was also the name of the Egyptian officer to whom Joseph was sold (see Genesis 37:36; 39:1). The name of Joseph's father-in-law, Potipherah, is a variant of the same name (see Genesis 41:45). Potiphar's Hill is not mentioned in the Bible, and its location is unknown. The plain of Olishem is also not mentioned in the Bible, however we do have evidence which suggests its location. An inscription of the Akkadian king Naram Sin, dated to around 2250 BC mentions a place called Ulisum or Ulishem, which was located in northern Syria (Lundquist, John M. "Was Abraham at Ebla? A Cultural Background of the Book of Abraham (Abraham 1 and 2)." In *Studies in Scripture: Volume Two, The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P.

Jackson, [Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985], 233-34). This finding has led to the speculation that Abraham's Ur was located in the northern Mesopotamian area near Haran.

11 Now, this priest had offered upon this altar three virgins at one time, who were the daughters of Onitah, one of the royal descent directly from the loins of Ham. These virgins were offered up because of their virtue; they would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone, therefore they were killed upon this altar, and it was done after the manner of the Egyptians.

verse 11 “this priest had offered upon this altar three virgins at one time . . . because of their virtue” Perhaps they refused to participate in the sexual orgies that characterized the form of worship in that day. “Among the ancient nations of the East, with the exception of the Jews, prostitution appears to have been connected with religious worship, and to have been not merely tolerated but encouraged. . . . In Egypt, Phoenicia, Assyria, Chaldea, Canaan, and Persia, the worship of Isis, Moloch, Baal, Astarte, Mylitta and other deities consisted of the most extravagant sensual orgies and the temples were merely centers of vice. In Babylon some degree of prostitution appeared to have been even compulsory and imposed upon all women in honor of the goddess Mylitta. In India the ancient connection between religion and prostitution still survives” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1952 edition, 18:596, as quoted in W. Cleon Skousen, *The First 2000 Years*, 362).

“daughters of Onitah” The name *Onitah* may contain the Sumerian word *nita(h)* which means “man; male.” Onitah is a descendant of Ham, the son of Noah.

“after the manner of the Egyptians” There is apparently no evidence that human sacrifice was practiced in Egypt. Hence, this particular phrase may simply mean that the sacrificial technique was the same the Egyptians used as they sacrificed animals on the altar.

12 And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.

verse 12 “the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also” The Bible, of course, is silent on the attempt of the priests to sacrifice Abraham on the altar, however, several post-biblical sources have described the attempt to sacrifice Abraham. For example, this idea is supported in thirteen Jewish documents, two Christian, eleven Muslim, one Samaritan, one Falasha, and one Mandaean document. The Falasha are the so-called “black Jews” of Ethiopia in Africa, whose Israelite origins go back so early that they don't even have the rabbinic traditions that came later on.

The Mandaeans claim to be descendants of the disciples of John the Baptist and live in Iraq and Iran.

In most of the stories, Abraham was brought to be killed for the very reason that he would not worship the idols, in some cases because he destroyed the idols. Many of the stories say he specifically destroyed them. Also in most of the documents the attempt on Abraham's life was made by throwing him into a fiery furnace. For example, the second-century-AD Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, commenting on Genesis 11:28, says, "And it came to pass when Nimrod cast Abraham into the furnace of fire, because he would not worship his idol, the fire had no power to burn him." The Anonymous Christian Chronicle, which is a Latin text, says: "And Nimrod threw Abraham into a fiery furnace because he did not approve the worship of idols. But the flame of the furnace was changed into pleasant dew." In some texts, the fire becomes roses or even flowering vines. An Arabic writer, al-Mas'udi, wrote a text called Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems. It says, "Abraham blamed his people for their idolatry. When they were annoyed by the disdain by which Abraham scorned their gods, and which had attracted public notice, Nimrod threw him into the fire. But God converted the fire into coolness, and he was preserved." A Falasha document from Ethiopia has the following story of Abraham: "Nimrod said, 'Oh, Abraham, let us worship this idol. Perhaps thou dost not want to?' Abraham was obstinate and refused. Nimrod said to him, 'I shall surely cast thee into the oven and burn thee in the flames.' Abraham heeded it not, and would not change his mind and worship the idol. He threw him into the flames."

"that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record" This text refers the reader to an illustration that Abraham placed "at the commencement of [his] record." This language implies that the reader does not have the picture before him, but must be referred back to the beginning of the record from which Joseph Smith is translating, where is found facsimile 1. It was a common practice in Egypt to place illustrations in written documents, but they are not normally found in Hebrew documents. See also verse 14.

13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

verse 13 Here Abraham described the sacrificial altar used by the pagan priest. It was surrounded by idols or images of the pagan gods.

14 That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics.

verse 14 “I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning” Again, Abraham refers to Facsimile 1 and, to some extent, the other facsimiles. The purpose of this facsimile is, at least in part, to help the reader understand more about the pagan gods by being able to view an effigy or image or “fashion” of each.

“which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos” The general type of art in which these facsimiles are reproduced is referred to by the Chaldeans as *Rahleenos* which means hieroglyphics. The root *hier-* means sacred. Glyphs are pictures or a script that utilizes pictures—pictographic script. Thus the word hieroglyphics means writing by means of sacred pictures. A study of the etymology of the word *Rahleenos* has been problematic. Apparently it is not Aramaic (the common general language of the Chaldeans) and it is not Semitic (the language of those who would eventually become Hebrews). There is a suggestion that the word may be Indo-European. And, it turns out, that there were Indo-European peoples in northern Chaldea, the Hittites and also the ruling class of a kingdom in northern Chaldea called Mitanni. Perhaps the name *Rahleenos* derives from one of these peoples with whom the Chaldeans came in contact.

15 And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;

verse 15 “the angel of his presence” It seems that it was actually an angel rather than Jehovah who appeared here to Abraham and loosed his bonds. This angel is referred to again in Abraham 2:13 and 3:20. That the angel in the next verse says his name is Jehovah does not necessarily contradict this point. For example, in Revelation 22:6-7 the angel who is talking to John says, “Behold, I come quickly,” referring, of course, to Christ. When John then falls down to worship him, he says, “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets” (Revelation 22:9). These are both examples of divine investiture of authority whereby a divinely authorized agent can speak for and in behalf of God.

President Spencer W. Kimball observed: “Divine guards had sped through space to save the life of Abraham on Potiphar’s Hill in the land of Ur, to save Daniel and his companions in the lions’ den, to save Nephi from the bitterness and bloodthirsty anger of his brothers, to save Isaac from the knife of sacrifice” (*Improvement Era*, June 1962, 437).

16 And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away

from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of;

verse 16 “**Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah**” See the commentary for the previous verse.

Biblical scholars have assumed that Moses, and not Abraham, was the first to learn the name *Jehovah* as the name of the God of Israel. If that were true, it would make this verse here in the book of Abraham difficult to explain. The scholars' belief is based on Exodus 6:3, “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.” However, the JST of this same verse reads, “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob. I am the Lord God Almighty; the Lord JEHOVAH. And was not my name known unto them?” *Them* here refers to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This makes it clear that the name Jehovah was also known to the patriarchs, an observation reinforced by the Hebrew slaves' evident knowledge of this name (see Exodus 3:13). The name Jehovah (Hebrew *yhwh*) may mean “he who brings into being,” or “he who causes to be,” that is, “creator,” or perhaps simply “he who exists.” This latter meaning is reinforced in Abraham 1:19, where God says, “I am thy God.” Compare this with Exodus 3:14: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

verses 12-16 As with the prophet Enoch (see Moses 7:35-44 and the commentary for Moses 7:44), Abraham was tested, tried, and strengthened by the Lord before his prophetic call.

17 And this because they have turned their hearts away from me, to worship the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; therefore I have come down to visit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life.

verse 17 “**they have turned their hearts away from me, to worship the [heathen] god[s]**” Abraham's father Terah and others of his kinsfolk were worshipping idols (see verse 16). The fact that Terah worshipped idols is not found in the Bible, but it is found in other ancient manuscripts. See the supplemental article, *Abrahamic Lore that Supports the Book of Abraham*.

“**Abraham, my son**” God addresses Abraham as his son, as he also did when he appeared to Moses (Moses 1:4, 6, 7). The exalting doctrine that men and women are the literal offspring of God, and not mere creations, was known not only to Abraham and Moses but to all prophets in all dispensations, including Adam (see Moses 6:22), Enoch (see Moses 6:27), Nephi (see 1 Nephi 17:36), Paul (see Romans 8:16-17), and Joseph Smith (see D&C 46:26).

18 Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee.

verse 18 “I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father” Mentioned in this verse is one of the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant, that is, that the righteous descendants of Abraham have the right to the priesthood. For a summary of the four provisions of the Abrahamic covenant, see the commentary for 1 Nephi 14:8 and Abraham 2:6 (see also Abraham 2:11 and its commentary).

For a man to receive the priesthood is to have the name of God put upon him. It is the power to act on behalf of God—in God’s name. As indicated in D&C 107:3, the full name of the Melchizedek Priesthood is “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.” The phrase “to put upon” also suggests God’s putting a garment on Abraham, which has obvious connections with temple ceremony.

The scriptures teach that Abraham received the patriarchal priesthood with an unusual twist. As the Lord gave him the priesthood, he changed Abraham’s name from Abram (“exalted father”) to Abraham (“father of a multitude”) (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Abraham”). The righteous spirits in the premortal life were to be born into mortality through Abraham’s lineage. Abraham the patriarch was honored to become the father of the faithful; not only would he have a large posterity but he would have a righteous posterity who would “bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abraham 2:9).

19 As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God.

verse 19 “As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee” God here makes the same covenant with Abraham that he made with Noah: “And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto your father Enoch, concerning your seed after you” (Genesis 9:8-9; JST Genesis 9:15). This is the new and everlasting covenant, restored to each new dispensation head, that makes it possible for men and women to be exalted in the celestial kingdom (D&C 132:4).

20 Behold, Potiphar’s Hill was in the land of Ur, of Chaldea. And the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and of the gods of the land, and utterly destroyed them, and smote the priest that he died; and there was great mourning in Chaldea, and also in the court of Pharaoh; which Pharaoh signifies king by royal blood.

verse 20 “Potiphar’s Hill was in the land of Ur, of Chaldea” See the commentary for verse 10.

“and utterly destroyed them” The Lord destroyed the effigies or images of the pagan gods associated with the altar of Elkenah. We are not told by what process the

Lord destroyed the altar, the effigies, and the priest of Elkenah. Perhaps they were all destroyed by the same natural disaster.

“Pharaoh signifies king by royal blood” The word *pharaoh* (Hebrew *par ‘oh*) derives from the Egyptian word meaning “great house,” referring initially to the palace where the king dwelt; later the term was applied to the king himself—the first example is from the reign of Thutmose III (1490-1436 BC). Thus, it was not a personal name but simply designated the Egyptian king.

21 Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

verse 21 “this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham”

Prior to the Flood, Ham had married a woman named Egyptus who is presumed to be a descendant of Cain, and she was with him on the ark. Even though Egyptus had accepted the gospel, as preached by her father-in-law, this marriage was entered into with misgivings on the part of the parents of Ham. The Lord had forbidden the marriage of his faithful children to descendants of Cain who callously murdered his brother, Abel. Because of a curse placed on Cain, his offspring, regardless of how righteous they may be individually, were forbidden from holding the priesthood. This prevented any of the descendants of Ham and Egyptus from holding the priesthood of God. Egyptus was blessed in many ways, but in matters of the priesthood she was forbidden. Noah and the others in the Ark knew of the curse and that she, in fact, was forbidden as a proper wife to Ham. It is also likely that a mark of this curse evolved over time—that of a black skin.

Ham and Egyptus had a daughter, also named Egyptus. The name Egyptus in Chaldean means “that which is forbidden.” Egyptus, the daughter of Ham and Egyptus, is credited for discovering and first inhabiting the land of Egypt. Her son became the first king or pharaoh of Egypt. Hence, this Egyptian king was a descendant from the loins of Ham through his daughter Egyptus.

Perhaps there is another way in which the king of Egypt, at the time of Abraham, was a descendant of Ham. Ham had four sons: “Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan” (Genesis 10:6). Mizraim (Hebrew *misrayim*) is the Hebrew name for Egypt. Perhaps the sons of Ham, and not just his daughter Egyptus, had a role in discovering or initially settling Egypt. In an apocryphal manuscript, the Genesis Apocryphon, Egypt is designated as “the land of the sons of Ham” (1QapGen 19.13).

The descendants of Ham would later also become the Canaanites through Ham’s son Canaan. The Canaanites were those Semitic inhabitants of the land of Canaan, the land that is approximately equivalent to Palestine.

“a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth” The easiest explanation for this phrase is that this king was a partaker of the blood of Ham and his wife Egyptus. Since they were also the ancestors of the Canaanites, then the Egyptian king was “a

partaker of the blood of the Canaanites.” Perhaps there is another way, however, in which the Egyptian king was a partaker of Canaanite blood. There are reports that thousands and tens of thousands of Canaanites settled the land of Egypt early on. One specific example is that at the end of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (1786 BC), Egypt was invaded by a race of Semites from Canaan, called *Hyksos* by the Egyptians (from an Egyptian word meaning “rulers of foreign countries”). These invaders ruled Egypt as the pharaohs of dynasties 14 through 16 of the Second Intermediate Period (approximately 1786-1550 BC). It is not entirely clear that would have impacted the blood line of this Egyptian king who was a contemporary of Abraham, since it is not entirely clear exactly when Abraham lived (see the introductory remarks for the book of Abraham).

22 From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

verse 22 “From this descent” From the descent of Ham and Egyptus (including from the descent of the Canaanites).

23 The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden;

verse 23 “The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman” Heraclides wrote, “It was first a woman named Aegyptia who established her son and introduced weaving. Because of her, the Egyptians set up an image of Athena” (Heraclides. *Etymologicaum Magnum* 352, 50 s.v. “epoichomenon.” In Theodore Hopfner, *Fontes Historiae Religionis Aegyptiacae* [Bonn: Weber, 1922-25]).

24 When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

verse 24 “When this woman discovered the land it was under water” When Egyptus, Ham’s daughter, first laid her eyes upon what to her was a vast domain, it was covered by water. More than likely it was the region we know as the great Nile Delta. In certain seasons of the year it lies inundated by the overflow of that river, and it follows that as the waters recede an immense area of fertile land was made visible.

“thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land” One is reminded of the curious incident described in Genesis 9:20-27:

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went

backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

This story seems metaphorical. In some way Ham had dishonored his father, Noah. Could it be that his dishonored him by marrying Egyptus?

25 Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

verse 25 “Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus” The eldest son of Egyptus became the first king of pharaoh of Egypt. Egyptian inscriptional evidences give various names for the first king of Egypt. The Palermo Stone (5th Dynasty, (2467-2345 BC) shows *Aha* as the first king of Egypt (Grimal, Nicholas, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, Translation by Ian Shaw [Oxford: Blackwell, 1992], 48). The king list of the Turin Papyrus lists *Meni* as the first king of a united Egypt (Gardiner, Sir Alan, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961], 430). Herodotus calls him *Min* (Herodotus, 2; 4, 99). In Eusebius's epitome of Manetho we encounter the idea that it was Ham's son Mizraim (Hebrew misrayim, which is the Hebrew name for Egypt) who was the first king of Egypt: “After the flood, Ham, son of Noah, begat Aegyptus or *Mestram*, who was the first to set out to establish himself in Egypt” (Waddell, W. G., ed. *Manetho* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1940], 7). From the Book of Sothis, the first king of Egypt is *Mestram*, also called *Menes*” (*Ibid.*, 235). Early dynastic artifacts associate the name *Men* with the kings *Aha* and *Narmer* (Gardiner, 1961, 405).

“the first government of Egypt . . . was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal” President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “Egypt was not the only nation, in these early times, which attempted to imitate the patriarchal order of government. We have seen in Abraham's record that this was the order of government in the reign of Adam, and down to the time of Noah. Naturally that form of government would be perpetuated in large degree by all tribes, as they began to spread over the face of the earth. As men multiplied, they organized first in the family group, then into tribes and eventually into nations. The greater powers would naturally occupy the most favored spots. Stronger tribes would overcome the weaker and force them to join the national government, or else they would be subdued and treated as slaves, or placed under tribute. As the patriarchal order was handed down from father to son, so also would the political authority be perpetuated with the same claims to authority. We know that in ancient times in Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, Babylon, Persia, and among all

the petty nations of the Mesopotamia and Palestine, the monarch was succeeded by his posterity in hereditary right" (*Progress of Man*, 100-01).

Brother George Reynolds added: "It must be evident from the light thrown on the early history of the world, more especially of Egypt, by the Book of Abraham, that under the almost universally existing form of patriarchal government that 'the fathers' were not only High Priests unto God by right of their 'fatherhood,' but also the kings of the earth by that same right, and it was one of the easiest things in the world for the descendants of these men, who ruled by right divine, to not only reverence them as ministers of heaven's will in all things, temporal and spiritual, but also to deify and afterwards worship them" (*Book of Abraham*, 86).

Let us summarize the genealogy of this Pharaoh, the first ruler of Egypt: His progenitors were: his mother Egyptus, her parents Ham and Egyptus, and Ham's father Noah.

26 Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

verse 26 "Pharaoh, being a righteous man" This refers to the first king of Egypt, the son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham and Egyptus.

"that order established by the fathers in the first generations" This refers to the patriarchal order of the priesthood (see the commentary for verse 25), by which the people were governed both religiously and secularly.

"but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood" See the commentary for verse 21.

27 Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry;

verse 27 "Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood" Why was Pharaoh, "a righteous man . . . blessed . . . with the blessings of wisdom" (verse 26), denied that priesthood which he "would fain claim from Noah, through Ham" (1:27)? The word *fain* means gladly or happily. Pharaoh would have been happy to claim the priesthood by virtue of his belonging the lineage of Noah. We have already described, in the commentary for verse 21, the reasons why the descendants of Ham and Egyptus were unable to pass the priesthood along to their descendants. It was because Egyptus was a descendant of Cain.

Even if Ham had been able to pass the priesthood along to his descendants, the Pharaoh would not have been eligible because he claimed it through the wrong line, “that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood” (verse 27). What was wrong with his lineage? Simply this: He descended not from the patriarchal but from the matriarchal line. He was the son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham. In the days of the patriarchal order, the priesthood was passed on only from father to first-born son. Even though he was trying to govern his people by a system patterned after the patriarch order of the priesthood, he had no right to that priesthood. However noble and respectable the line may be, a matriarchal line cannot claim patriarchal authority, even though all the parties concerned are sympathetic to the idea.

In all of this there has been no mention of race, though enemies of the Church have declared with shock and outrage that these passages are proof of Mormon discrimination against blacks.

There can be no question that the ancient Canaanites were cursed by God and denied the priesthood, but there is some controversy over the exact reason why that was so. Some modern LDS authors have questioned the Church’s generally accepted belief that the denial of the right of the priesthood to the Canaanites is the result of the curse God placed on Cain (Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price, A Verse-by-Verse Commentary*, 256-57). They make the following points in defense of their argument: (1) No specific mention is ever made of a connection between Ham’s wife Egyptus and Cain. The connection we make here is presumption only. (2) JST Genesis 9:25 states the Canaan was cursed and that “a veil of darkness shall cover him [Canaan], that he shall be known among all men.” Moses 7:8 says that “a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan.” This darkness or blackness is assumed to refer to skin color. However, the Canaanites of ancient Palestine were Caucasian, not black, and had no connection with Africa, where the black race seems to have originated. (3) That the people of Canaan were descendants of Cain is not explicitly stated, though it is often assumed. (4) It is also not clear whether these antediluvian Canaanites are the same people as the Canaanites found much later in Palestine. (5) The Lord pronounced two curses on Cain because he murdered his brother, Abel. These were (a) that when he tilled the earth, it would not yield its strength, and (b) that he would be a fugitive and a vagabond (see Moses 5:37). No mention is made of a loss of priesthood or that the curse will be passed on to his posterity. (6) In Moses 5:40 the Lord places a mark on Cain to identify him so others will not attempt to slay him. It did not say what this mark is, although it is generally assumed to be a dark skin, and again, there is no implication that this mark is to be passed on to his descendants. (7) It is often speculated in the Church today that the blacks in this final dispensation were denied the priesthood because of their descending from Cain, although that is unsupported from the scriptures. The Church has never actually given any official doctrinal statement as to why the priesthood was temporarily

denied to blacks, and in reality we simply do not know why God denied blacks the priesthood for a time. All we know is that he did, later making it available to them through a living prophet.

“therefore my father was led away by their idolatry” Doubtless the priest of Elkenah claimed that he possessed the priesthood through the lineage of Noah, in fact it should be said that perhaps he himself believed that he possessed the priesthood. Abraham’s father Terah believed that the priest of Elkenah was a fully authorized servant of God, and at least partly for that reason, he was led away into idolatry.

28 But I shall endeavor, hereafter, to delineate the chronology running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold unto this present time.

verse 28 “for the records have come into my hands” Abraham refers to early scriptural records that contained a chronology dating back to the creation. These records were probably the same as those which were begun by Adam and mentioned the book of Moses as “a book of remembrance” or “the book of the generations of Adam” (Moses 6:5, 8; Genesis 5:1). Obviously Abraham had possession of a copy of this scriptural record, though we don’t know whether Moses actually had possession of them. See also the commentary for verse 31.

29 Now, after the priest of Elkenah was smitten that he died, there came a fulfilment of those things which were said unto me concerning the land of Chaldea, that there should be a famine in the land.

verse 29 “there came a fulfilment of those things which were said . . . that there should be a famine in the land” In verse 17, the Lord says that because of the idolatry of the people, “therefore I have come down to visit them.” Apparently, a part of this visitation included the Lord’s cursing the land with a famine.

30 Accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea, and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, to take away my life.

verse 30 “Accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea” Famine is generally the result of drought. In most of the area of the Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia and Palestine), rainfall averages around 8 inches a year, which is just sufficient to maintain agriculture without irrigation (Knapp, A. Bernard, *The History and Culture of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt* [Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1988], 20-21). In years when rainfall drops below this minimum amount, drought and famine occur. Terah, humbled by the famine does repent. However, when conditions improve, we will learn that he goes back to his old ways (see Abraham 2:5).

31 But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore 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, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.

verse 31 “the records of the fathers” As speculated in the commentary for verse 28, this may be a copy of the book of remembrance kept by Adam’s righteous posterity, which contained not only genealogical records but also the things the patriarchs wrote “by the spirit of inspiration” (Moses 6:5). The Jaredites also had copies of the writings of the antediluvian prophets (Ether 1:3-4), which would have included priesthood lines of authority enabling each priesthood holder to trace his authority back to Adam.

“a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars” Elder Mark E. Petersen observed: “The fact that Abraham had the records of the fathers is most interesting. . . . It is notable that these records contained information about the stars and the planets. What an insight this gives concerning the ‘fathers’! How had they learned astronomy? Did God teach them in the days of their righteousness as he later taught both Abraham and Moses? . . . Through his faithfulness, Abraham understood the value of those records, appreciated them, and sought to obtain the blessings that the gospel had offered to the fathers” (*Abraham, Friend of God*, 44).

Abraham Chapter 2 The Life of Abraham

Chapter 2 contains more details of Abraham's life after he leaves Ur of the Chaldees, bound initially for Haran and then for Canaan. God promised Abraham and his posterity the latter land—Canaan (verses 1-5, 14-20). Chapter 2 also contains Abraham's plan to go on to Egypt because of the continuing famine (verses 21-25). We also find here a detailed description of the covenant God made with Abraham, including important elements of this covenant that are not found in Genesis (verses 6-13). See especially the commentary for verse 6.

Though the book of Abraham contains many additional details not found in the biblical account of Abraham's, the close similarity of language of some of the verses contained in both the book of Abraham and Genesis (compare Abraham 2 with Genesis 12, and the Creation accounts in Genesis 1-2 with that in Abraham 4-5) seems to indicate that Moses may have used the book of Abraham as one of his sources in the writing of Genesis.

1 Now the Lord God caused the famine to wax sore in the land of Ur, insomuch that Haran, my brother, died; but Terah, my father, yet lived in the land of Ur, of the Chaldees.

verse 1 “insomuch that Haran, my brother, died” The biblical account tells of Haran's death (see Genesis 11:28) but does not indicate it came by famine.

2 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife, and Nahor, my brother, took Milcah to wife, who was the daughter of Haran.

verse 2 “I, Abraham, took Sarai to wife” As Abraham was known as “Abram” until God changed his name to “Abraham” in token of the covenant he made with him, so Sarai's name was changed at the same time to “Sarah” for the same reason (Genesis 17:15). Sarai (Hebrew *saray*) and Sarah (Hebrew *sarah*) seem to be variants of the word meaning “princess,” the *-ah* being the standard Hebrew feminine ending, and *-ay* being an older feminine ending (Francis Brown et. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 979).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “The Lord never sends apostles and prophets and righteous men to minister to his people without placing women of like spiritual stature at their sides. Adam stands as the great high priest, under Christ, to rule as a natural patriarch over all men of all ages, but he cannot rule alone; Eve, his wife, rules at his side, having like caliber and attainments to his own. Abraham is tested as few men have been when the Lord commands him to offer Isaac upon the altar (Genesis 22:1-19); and Sarah struggles with like problems when the Lord directs that she withhold from the Egyptians her status as Abraham's wife. And so it goes, in all

dispensations and at all times when there are holy men there are also holy women. Neither stands alone before the Lord. The exaltation of the one is dependent upon that of the other” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:302).

“who was the daughter of Haran” Earlier editions of the Pearl of Great Price had “who were the daughters of Haran,” implying that Sarai too was the daughter of Haran. However, the earliest manuscripts of the book of Abraham, which date to the Kirtland period, when Joseph Smith was doing this translation, all read “who was the daughter of Haran,” limiting the reference only to Milcah. In the latest edition (1981), this reading is restored. This agrees with the biblical account (see Genesis 11:29).

3 Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.

verse 3 “Abraham, get thee out of thy country” President John Taylor had this verse in mind when he penned the following charming note: “I fancy I see some of his neighbors coming to him, and saying: ‘Abraham, where are you going?’ ‘Oh,’ says he, ‘I do not know.’ ‘You don’t know?’ ‘No.’ ‘Well, who told you to go?’ ‘The Lord.’ ‘And you do not know where you are going?’ ‘Oh, no,’ says he, ‘I am going to a land that he will show me, and that he has promised to give me and my seed after me for an inheritance; and I believe in God, and therefore I am starting.’ There was something very peculiar about it, almost as bad as us when we started to come off from Nauvoo . . . hardly knowing whither we went, just as Abraham did, and I do not think we were any bigger fools than he, for he went just about as we did, not knowing whither he went” (*JD*, 14:359).

4 Therefore I left the land of Ur, of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and I took Lot, my brother’s son, and his wife, and Sarai my wife; and also my father followed after me, unto the land which we denominated Haran.

verse 4 “the land of Canaan” Ancient Canaan is approximately equivalent to present-day Palestine. The Canaanites spoke a language closely related to Hebrew and were Semitic.

“Lot, my brother’s son” Two of Abraham’s brothers have been mentioned, the late Haran and Nahor, the husband of Milcah. Lot’s father was Haran.

“my father followed after me” This notation differs from the biblical account that maintains Terah took Abraham with him to Haran (Genesis 11:31). Abraham’s father Terah went along meekly, having been humbled by the famine. He was also temporarily repentant of his idolatrous religious practices, but he will revert to his apostate practices as soon as conditions improve. When Abraham eventually leaves Haran to go to Canaan, Terah will remain behind in Haran.

“unto the land which we denominated Haran” To “denominated” means to designate or name. This is not the same name as that of the brother of Abraham. In

Hebrew the name of Abraham's brother *Haran* means, perhaps, "mountaineer," whereas the name of the land *Haran* means "way, road; journey; caravan" (Francis Brown et. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 248; also Black, Jeremy, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, ed. *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 2nd ed. [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000], 108).

5 And the famine abated; and my father tarried in Haran and dwelt there, as there were many flocks in Haran; and my father turned again unto his idolatry, therefore he continued in Haran.

verse 5 While Abraham, Lot, and Terah were in Haran the famine abated. With the return of prosperity, Terah went back to his idolatry. Not wishing to continue with Abraham to the promised land of Canaan, he remained in Haran and subsequently died at the age of 205 years. See the supplemental article, *Abrahamic Lore that Supports the Book of Abraham*.

Bible dictionaries say that Nahor, who did not accompany Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, afterward went to Haran to live, no doubt to be with his father and any other relatives who may have gathered there.

6 But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

verse 6 "to make of thee a minister to bear my name" The Lord explains that his purposes in leading Abraham out of his homeland to Canaan are not only to preserve his life but also to call Abraham to be a prophet and to teach and warn the inhabitants of that land. As in Abraham 1:18, to bear God's name is to bear the priesthood.

"a strange land" A strange land is a foreign land.

"which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession"

At the time of the calling of Abraham to leave Haran and become the Lord's prophet, the Lord entered into a covenant with him and his posterity. This covenant promise was renewed with Isaac, and again with Jacob. Prior to his death father Jacob called his twelve sons to him, blessed them, and defined the future of their posterity, adding little to that which had before been promised, until he laid his hands upon the head of Joseph and not only conferred upon him the blessing and heritage of his fathers, but also declared that his heritage prevailed above that of his progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the Everlasting Hills, to a land choice above all other lands, a land rich in the blessings of the earth, of the heavens above, and the sea beneath. Upon Ephraim, the

younger of the two sons born to Joseph during his sojourn in Egypt, he sealed the heirship to the blessings and promises conferred upon his father.

Let us review these covenants. These covenants, as a group, are often referred to as the Abrahamic covenant as it was first made between father Abraham and the Lord. The reader has been referred to throughout this set of commentaries to the verse commentary for 1 Nephi 14:8 for a review of the Abrahamic covenant. For the convenience of the reader, this commentary is repeated here.

The Abrahamic covenant may be said to consist of five main provisions—five main promises of the Lord to those of Abraham’s seed who “hearken to my voice”—to those who obey the Lord’s commands. Abraham received from the Lord the gospel, baptism, the higher priesthood, and the ordinance of celestial marriage. He agreed to abide by the gospel law and honor his priesthood, or, as the Lord told Abraham elsewhere, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1). The Lord in turn made eternally binding promises to Abraham. They include:

1. Abraham would be blessed to become the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:19), and his posterity would be exceedingly numerous—even “as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore” (Genesis 17:2; 22:17-18; Abraham 2:9). Abraham’s seed would grow and continue forever.

2. Abraham and his posterity were blessed with certain lands as an eternal inheritance (Abraham 2:6; cf. Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:9-14). Initially this included the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:8) extending from the Nile River to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

3. Abraham and his descendants would be blessed to have a right to the priesthood and enjoy its blessings (Abraham 1:18; 2:11).

4. Abraham’s posterity would prove to be a blessing to all families of the earth (Genesis 12:3; Abraham 2:9-11). They would do this by bearing the priesthood and by having the right and responsibility to preach the gospel to all the world.

5. Thus will every individual and every family have the opportunity, through the posterity of Abraham, to enjoy the blessings of the gospel, which eventually include the “blessings of salvation, even of life eternal”—the blessing of salvation and exaltation (Abraham 2:9-11).

These covenants were renewed with Isaac (Genesis 26:1-4, 24) and again with Jacob (Genesis 28; 35:9-13; 48:3-4). The restoration of the fulness of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith is in fact the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant. Through this restoration God has renewed for the Latter-day Saints all he promised to the former-day Saints, including his covenants and his gospel, a “mighty nation among the Gentiles.” And in this dispensation of the fulness of times the Father will “make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations”—he will demonstrate his power to gather his children throughout the earth.

Today, individuals in the Lord's earthly kingdom actually enter into the Abrahamic covenant with the Lord at the time of their sealing in the temple. This is the new and everlasting covenant of eternal marriage, and each person who enters into this covenant makes the same promises to the Lord as Abraham did, and the Lord makes the same promises to him or her as he made to Abraham (D&C 132:31).

This verse particularly describes the Lord's promise of land (cf. Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:9-14).

Milton R. Hunter taught: "It should be observed at this point that on April 3, 1836, a heavenly messenger bestowed upon modern Israel through Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the same blessings, covenants, and promises which had been made approximately 4,000 years ago to Father Abraham. The revelation states that: 'Elias appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying, that in us and our seed, all generations after us should be blessed'" (*Pearl of Great Price Commentary*, 201-02).

Let us review the descent of the higher priesthood from Abraham to Moses. Moses received it from Jethro, a priest of the house of Midian. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham, through the children of Keturah, wife of Abraham, therefore the Midianites, who were neighbors to the Israelites in Palestine, were related to the Israelites, and were Hebrews. As descendants of Abraham they were entitled through their faithfulness to his blessings (see Abraham 2:9-11), and in the days of Moses and preceding them, in Midian the Priesthood was found.

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: "The promise that in him all nations should be blessed, brought Abraham's work beyond that of flesh and blood relationships. It made of him a universal figure in the Lord's plan of salvation for all who were sent upon the earth. It would seem that the acceptance of the knowledge of the gospel, and the possession of the priesthood which Abraham bore would make all mankind heirs to the blessings promised Abraham" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3:27).

Elder Widtsoe added: "This covenant with Abraham was also a call to leadership. Therefore, it has been interpreted to mean that Abraham and his descendants were chosen to conserve in purity and to advance on earth the eternal plan for human salvation" (*Gospel Interpretations*, 95).

7 For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

verse 7 This verse illustrates the magnificent power of God—indeed, his omnipotence. See a discussion of the power of God in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 14, *The Power of God*.

8 My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

verse 8 “My name is Jehovah” See the commentary on Abraham 1:16.

“I know the end from the beginning” The Lord is able to foresee the future—not because he is actually able to see future events as they happen—rather, he is able accurately predict the future because he knows intimately and perfectly all of the intelligences of the earth (human, animal, plant, and “inanimate”) and he can therefore predict what they will do in the future. His foreseeing of events does not, however, mean that they are absolutely predestined to happen. His foreseeing denies no intelligence its agency.

9 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

verse 9 “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations” Here is a mention of three of the other provisions of the Abrahamic covenant including the Lord’s promise of posterity (cf. Genesis 12:2; 18:18) (this promise is made even in more clear in Abraham 3:14). Also mentioned here are the promises that the posterity of Abraham will both receive the priesthood and bless the entire family of man by carrying the priesthood and gospel to them.

10 And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

verses 10 This verse expands upon the provision of the Abrahamic covenant that the seed of Abraham will bear the gospel message of salvation to the world. See also the following verse.

“as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name” As indicated by Paul (see Galatians 3:7-9), all who accept the gospel are adopted into the family of Abraham and are heirs to all that was promised him.

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “For as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed.’ Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the house of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham’s children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when

they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:246).

Orson F. Whitney gave important insight: “What was the purpose of Abraham’s call? Why was he taken out of his own country and from his father’s house and promised that he should become a great nation? It was because Mesopotamia was steeped in idolatry, and the time had arrived for the founding of a pure lineage through which the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior, would come into the world. Abraham was required to separate himself from his idolatrous surroundings, that he might establish such a lineage. The strict laws given to Israel, Abraham’s descendants, had as their object the preservation in purity of the lineage of our Lord” (*Elder’s Journal*, 17 June 1924, as quoted in Mark E. Petersen, *Abraham, Friend of God*, 58. See also John Taylor, in *JD*, 24:125 and Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:246, 249-50).

11 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

verse 11 “for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee” God promises Abraham that he and his posterity will have a right to the priesthood, and that through this priesthood they will make the blessings of the gospel, salvation, and exaltation, available to everyone on earth. Implicit in this is vicarious work for the dead, since most of the inhabitants of the earth have died without the opportunity. Note that this element of the Abrahamic covenant is not mentioned in the Bible. The cursing occurs when people reject the gospel and its power to save them.

“in thy seed . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” In this verse are described two additional provisions of the Abrahamic covenant—the Lord’s promise of the right to the priesthood and the Lord’s promise that the seed of Abraham will bear the gospel message of salvation to the world.

So Abraham had the priesthood and the gospel of salvation. The prophet Joseph gave valuable insight: “We would like to be informed in what name the Gospel was then preached, whether it was in the name of Christ or some other name [see Galatians 1:8]. If in any other name, was it the Gospel? And if it was the Gospel, and that preached in the name of Christ, had it any ordinances? If not, was it the Gospel? And if it had ordinances, what were they? Our friends may say, perhaps, that there were never any ordinances except those of offering sacrifices before the coming of Christ, and that it could not be possible for the Gospel to have been administered while

the law of sacrifices of blood was in force. But we will recollect that Abraham offered sacrifice, and notwithstanding this, had the Gospel preached to him. That the offering of sacrifice was only to point the mind forward to Christ we infer from these remarkable words of Jesus to the Jews [John 8:56: ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad’]” (*HC*, 2:17).

12 Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee;

13 Thou didst send thine angel to deliver me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

14 So I, Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I, Abraham, was sixty and two years old when I departed out of Haran.

verse 14 “I, Abraham, was sixty and two years old when I departed out of Haran” Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented, “From the Book of Abraham we learn that Abraham was sixty-two and not seventy-five years of age when he left Haran (see Genesis 12:4), showing at least that much of an error in the Old Testament account” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:71).

15 And I took Sarai, whom I took to wife when I was in Ur, in Chaldea, and Lot, my brother’s son, and all our substance that we had gathered, and the souls that we had won in Haran, and came forth in the way to the land of Canaan, and dwelt in tents as we came on our way;

verse 15 “the souls that we had won in Haran” Presumably this phrase refers to the converts to the gospel that Abraham had made. That there were a significant number of converts is indirectly implied by the events described in Genesis 14, wherein Abraham musters a force of 318 men from his own party to rescue his nephew Lot from a raiding party of four kings who had taken him captive (see Genesis 14:14).

16 Therefore, eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation, as we journeyed from Haran by the way of Jershon, to come to the land of Canaan.

verse 16 “eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation” Abraham clearly points out that his family’s literal and spiritual exodus from Haran to Canaan was fraught with larger meaning. Abraham seems to be confessing that he and his people were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” They were abjectly dependent upon the Lord—trusting that the Lord would take care of their worldly needs. *Eternity* here is an abstract title for Jehovah. With one eye directed heavenward and the other focused on the physical realities of their pilgrimage, Abraham and his group made their

way simultaneously to Canaan and an eternal land of promise. Paul supports this interpretation in his letter to the Hebrews, where he writes that these saints “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13), seeking for a “better country” than Canaan, “that is, an heavenly [country]” (Hebrews 11:16).

“we journeyed from Haran by the way of Jershon” Jershon is obviously a land located along the route Abraham traveled from Haran to Shechem (see verse 18). This place is not mentioned in the Genesis account of Abraham’s travels or elsewhere in the Bible. Neither is there a modern-day location which obviously corresponds to the land Jershon.

There is a Book of Mormon land called Jershon, which the Nephites gave to the Anti-Nephi-Lehites “for an inheritance” (Alma 27:22). The name may be derived from the Hebrew verb *yaras* which means “to inherit.”

17 Now I, Abraham, built an altar in the land of Jershon, and made an offering unto the Lord, and prayed that the famine might be turned away from my father’s house, that they might not perish.

verse 17 “prayed that the famine might be turned away from my father’s house” Abraham’s prayer was answered. This is important because, years later, both his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob obtained wives from the descendants of Abraham’s father, Terah. Rebekah, Isaac’s wife, was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (see verse 2), and Leah and Rachel, the wives of Jacob, were the daughters of Laban, who was Rebekah’s brother (see Genesis 28:2).

18 And then we passed from Jershon through the land unto the place of Sechem; it was situated in the plains of Moreh, and we had already come into the borders of the land of the Canaanites, and I offered sacrifice there in the plains of Moreh, and called on the Lord devoutly, because we had already come into the land of this idolatrous nation.

verse 18 “unto the place of Sechem” The ancient city of Shechem lies near present-day Nablus.

“plains of Moreh” In the parallel biblical account (Genesis 12:6), the King James translation reads “the plain of Moreh.” The Hebrew word translated as “plain” is *‘elon*, which is regularly translated as “oak” (Francis Brown et. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 18). However, there is question as to whether the Hebrew *‘elon* might have another plausible translation, another meaning. In an apocryphal Aramaic version of Genesis called the Onkelos Targum of Genesis, this phrase is translated *mesre moreh*, “plains of Morey” (Aberbach, Moses, and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis*, [Denver: Ktav Publishing House, 1982], 79). The book of Abraham reading shows that the reading

“plain” rather than “oak” is preferable for the biblical text. “Moreh” may be the Hebrew *moreh*, “teacher,” or it may be a proper name.

“we had . . . come into the land of this idolatrous nation” Like the Chaldeans, the Canaanites practiced human sacrifice, and Abraham was justifiably concerned as he entered into their territory (Adams, William James Jr. “Human Sacrifice and the Book of Abraham,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 4, summer 1969; Day, John, *Molech A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989]).

19 And the Lord appeared unto me in answer to my prayers, and said unto me: Unto thy seed will I give this land.

20 And I, Abraham, arose from the place of the altar which I had built unto the Lord, and removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched my tent there, Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there I built another altar unto the Lord, and called again upon the name of the Lord.

verse 20 “Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east” Bethel (Hebrew *bet’ el*, “house of God”) was a town about ten miles north of Jerusalem. Here the Lord also appeared to Jacob, making the same covenants with him that he had made with Abraham. A sanctuary of the Lord was located there during the days of Samuel the prophet (see 1 Samuel 7:16; 10:3). Hai (Hebrew *ha-’ay*) was another town less than a mile southeast of Bethel.

21 And I, Abraham, journeyed, going on still towards the south; and there was a continuation of a famine in the land; and I, Abraham, concluded to go down into Egypt, to sojourn there, for the famine became very grievous.

verse 21 “I, Abraham, concluded to go down into Egypt” Because the famine continued in the land of Canaan, Abraham traveled on to Egypt. Unlike most of the rest of the Near East, Egypt was not dependent on rainfall because the Nile provided a constant source of water for irrigation. Whenever famine was brought on by drought, many of the peoples of Palestine would go to Egypt for food. One ancient Egyptian papyrus from the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah describes how a group of Bedouins from Palestine were allowed to enter the delta region of Egypt “in order to keep them alive and to keep alive their flocks by the goodness of Pharaoh” (Gardiner, Alan H., *Egypt of the Pharaohs: An Introduction* [London: Oxford University Press, 1961], 196).

22 And it came to pass when I was come near to enter into Egypt, the Lord said unto me: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon;

23 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say – She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise:

24 Let her say unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister, and thy soul shall live.

verse 24 “Let her say unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister” Some people are bothered by the deception practiced by Abraham in preserving his life by claiming Sarah to be his sister. Also some have been concerned that the episode suggests that the Lord is commanding Abraham to tell a lie. Hence, this episode has led to much speculation. For example some have wondered whether Sarah might have been Abraham’s literal blood sister. Others have suggested that perhaps a double entendre was intended by the Lord when he asked Sarah to claim that she was Abraham’s sister. Perhaps it was hoped that the Egyptians would take his meaning in the strictly literal sense of a blood relative, while actually intending the terms “brother” and “sister” as affectionate synonyms for husband and wife. Still others have commented on the judicial status of wife-sistership, whereby a woman, in addition to becoming a man’s wife, was adopted by him as sister and thereby merited higher social status and greater privileges than an ordinary wife (Ephraim A. Speiser, “The Wife-Sister Motif in the Patriarchal Narratives,” in Alexander H. Altmann, ed., *Biblical and Other Studies*, 123-41).

It would seem, however, that all of these explanations are of second significance. Of primary importance is obedience to God’s commands. Joseph Smith wrote:

That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be and often is, right under another. God said thou shalt not kill,—at another time he said thou shalt utterly destroy. This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire (Dean Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 256).

The Lord used this method to introduce Abraham into the high courts of Egypt while protecting Sarai’s virtue.

In the parallel biblical account (Genesis 12:11-13), there is no hint that it was God who told Abraham to ask Sarah to say this. This account makes it clear that Abraham acted at God’s suggestion. Moreover, as the Bible indicates, Sarah was in fact Abraham’s half-sister, a daughter of Terah but from another wife (Genesis 20:12).

The Genesis Apocryphon, an apocryphal book, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, describes how Abram had a dream of a cedar tree and a beautiful date palm. Some men come to chop down the cedar, but the date palm pleads with them to spare the cedar. The idea is that Abraham was warned of the danger by God in a dream. Abram then awakens and tells the dream to Sarai, explaining that the dream means the Egyptians will try to kill him. But if she will tell them that Abram is her brother, his life will be preserved (1QapGen 19:14-21). This similarity is particularly notable as the Dead Sea Scrolls were not discovered until the 1940s.

25 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, told Sarai, my wife, all that the Lord had said unto me—Therefore say unto them, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee.

The book of Abraham as we now have it does not include a narrative of the events in Egypt and the remainder of Abraham's life. Presumably, if we had the full text of the book of Abraham, it would include this.

Abraham Chapter 3 The Visions of Abraham

It has become a well-established tradition in commentaries on this chapter to entirely miss both the point and purpose of Abraham's revelation. Faith in Christ and an understanding of the gospel are essential to salvation. a knowledge of astronomy and the rotation of various planets is not. Why then was this revelation given to Abraham? Why in the providence of God was it preserved to come forth as a special treasure to faithful Saints of the last days? Surely all truth is profitable, but not all truth is of equal worth. We would expect a revelation specially preserved to come forth in this day to be more than an invitation for the student of the scriptures to contemplate the heavens. In short, why all the fuss about stars and their rotations? The answer is that Abraham 3 is a prototypical example of the principle of "likening." Abraham is teaching about the Savior, but he does it by the mechanism of likening the heavens to him.

This chapter divides itself into very natural parts: the first seventeen verses deal with planets and their relationship one to another; the last eleven verses speak of pre-earth spirits and their relationships one to another. At first glance, it may appear that Abraham is dealing with two separate ideas, each deserving a chapter of its own. A more careful reading, however, reveals that the second part of the chapter is a deliberate restatement of the first. Each principle describing the relationship of one star or planet to another proves to be equally descriptive of the nature and relationship of pre-earth spirits one to another and each to the Savior. The revelation on planets ends in the eighteenth verse where the revelation on pre-earth spirits begins. The two parts of the revelation are welded at that point with the words "as, also," which is simply to say what is true of the stars is "also" true of the spirits.

Chapter 3 contains several visions experienced by Abraham, none of which appears in the Bible. These visions disclose three fundamental doctrinal concepts that are unique to the Church. They are found in no other Christian denomination. These are:

1. This earth is only one of innumerable worlds that God has created as dwelling places for his children, and these worlds are ordered in a hierarchical manner (verses 1-17).
2. The primal essence of man, here called intelligence, is uncreated and eternal (verses 18-21).
3. All mankind dwelt in God's presence prior to this mortal earth life and there participated in councils where we deliberated about our future state (verses 22-28). The doctrine of the premortal existence of man is one of those fundamental concepts that set Latter-day Saints apart from other Christian denominations. It is an exalting and motivating doctrine that helps answer the critically important questions of where we came from and why we are here. Each of us is not simply one of God's creations—one

of his creatures—rather we are his literal spirit sons and daughters with the innate, inherited potential to ultimately become like him.

We will discuss how all three of these doctrines have far-reaching and profound philosophical and theological implications.

verses 1-17 Abraham is shown, through the Urim and Thummim, the structure and hierarchy of God's universe.

One major issue that plagues the student of the scriptures as he begins to grapple with the cosmology of God's universe is that we have no way of knowing the extent of this round of the Father's creations. Does it consist, for example, of only the Milky Way Galaxy? Or, is it much larger, perhaps consisting of the millions of galaxies now identified by scientists through the use of the Hubble Telescope? Intuitively, many would like to believe the former possibility since it would be simpler for us to conceptualize. For example, if our round of creation consists of only the Milky Way Galaxy, then it would be easier to propose a central location for Kolob and the other governing "stars" about which we will read in chapter 3.

It is obvious from Abraham 3 that Abraham was shown by revelation from God much about the heavens. One interesting question, however, is whether or not the average man in Abraham's day knew anything about astronomy. This question is discussed by Dr. R. Grant Athay under his subtitle, "Pastoral Astronomy," in his article "Worlds Without Number: The Astronomy of Enoch, Abraham, and Moses" (*BYU Studies* 8 [spring 1968], 258-63). Part of his discussion is included here because of its informative nature.

The history of civilization is filled with folklore of the moon, sun, and stars. The farmer is alerted for frost when the moon is full. He plants by the moon and harvests by the Harvest Moon. A month later he harvests game by the Hunter's Moon under the constellation of Orion the Hunter. In the spring we celebrate Easter on a date set in accordance with the full moon following the spring equinox, a practice stemming from ancient tradition identifying the spring moon with the rejuvenation of earth life following the winter's death-like sleep. These and other traditions have carried over into our day.

We associate summer and winter with the annual excursion of the sun. We are vaguely aware that the moon is periodically full then absent from the night. The stars somehow look different in the winter than in the summer. Aside from these vague associations, however, most of us are oblivious to the regular calendar-like changes of the moon and stars. How many of us have noticed, for example, that the full moon is high in the northern sky during winter and low in the southern sky during summer, just out of phase with the sun? Or, having noted this, how many of us have also noted that for nine or ten successive years the full moon in the dead of winter moves progressively further north, then for the next nine or ten years swings back to the south, repeating the cycle in approximately 18.6 years?

Chances are that few if any of us have noticed these curious, but regular wanderings of the moon. Suppose, however, that you were a shepherd or a farmer living in Abraham's day anxiously watching the deadened pasture of winter or a dwindling food supply. You have no calendar on the wall to keep track of the passage of weeks and months. But you do have a moon whose phases mark off the months and whose position on the horizon at full moon marks off the seasons as well. This, then, is your calendar, reliable, mysterious, and carefully watched.

At rather frequent intervals, as our ancient pastoral ancestors ritually mark off the position of the full moon, an alarming event takes place. The full moon is slowly eaten away by an ominous, invisible something. Soon, however, the moon gradually reappears unharmed. The shepherd boy soon notices that this happens only when the moon is full. He hears stories from neighboring villages and travelers that sometimes the sun is similarly eaten away. Perhaps once during his life he sees this awesome, terrifying event. He is profoundly moved by its gravity and its beauty. What if the sun didn't reappear? Surely his life would end. What if some powerful god were doing this to demand a sacrifice?

One of this shepherd boy's friends noted, sometime after the sun had been eclipsed, that it happened at new moon. He learns from others who have experienced or heard of an eclipse of the sun that it too happened at new moon. He now knows two very important facts: the moon is eclipsed at full moon and the sun is eclipsed at new moon. Sooner or later our ancient shepherd friends decide to appoint an official family moon and sun watcher. . . . [Eventually] our official observer begins to chart the daily locations of the sun and moon among the constellations.

Dr. Athay then describes these lay astronomers' eventually having success in predicting the eclipses of the sun and moon, before they happened, using the records which they had created. Such developments lay behind the building and rebuilding of the great Stonehenge monument in England over a period of about 300 years in Moses' era. This monument is now believed by many astronomers to be a giant observatory designed to foretell eclipses. The original builders of this amazing bronze-age observatory are unknown. Biblical man was forced to have an interest in astronomy and was far better informed than we are prone to believe.

1 And I, Abraham, had the Urim and Thummim, which the Lord my God had given unto me, in Ur of the Chaldees;

verse 1 **"I, Abraham, had the Urim and Thummim"** We have previously discussed the Urim and Thummim (called "interpreters" in the Book of Mormon) in the commentary for Mosiah 8:13. For review and for the convenience of the reader, we will repeat that discussion here.

We understand the "Urim and Thummim," or the "interpreters," to be two special stones prepared by God and used by prophets for receiving revelations and for

translating scriptural records written in a language unknown to the prophet. God's prophets who are allowed to use the Urim and Thummim have been referred to as "seers." The term "interpreters" is unique to the Book of Mormon. The name "Urim and Thummim" is the transliteration of two Hebrew words which mean "lights" and "perfections." The *-im* ending on both words apparently represents the Hebrew masculine plural suffix. The term "Urim and Thummim" is not found in the Book of Mormon text. For a detailed physical description of the interpreters, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, Appendix A, *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon*.

Is there more than one set of interpreters in ancient scripture? There are at least two and possibly three or more. The brother of Jared was the first to receive a set (Ether 3:22-28). Joseph Smith, of course, possessed the interpreters, and we are told that his were the same given to the brother of Jared (D&C 17:1). King Mosiah in the Book of Mormon had a set (see Mosiah 8:13). Where did king Mosiah get his? There is no mention of Lehi and his party's bringing these stones with them. Some have suggested that Mosiah obtained his from his father and grandfather, Benjamin and Mosiah. This idea originates with the account of the older Mosiah's translating the Mulekite's large stone "by the gift and power of God" (Omni 1:20-21). Were King Mosiah's interpreters the same as those given to the brother of Jared? It is possible, but it seems unlikely they were, unless the early Mulekites found them among the artifacts previously belonging to the Jaredites and handed them down to eventually be delivered by the people of Zarahemla to Mosiah. In this verse—verse 1 of Abraham 3—we learn that Abraham received a set. Either Abraham's set was passed along or Moses received another (Exodus 28:30). The fate of this set or these sets is unknown. There are several other mentions of this type of device in the Old Testament (Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65).

Other devices for receiving revelation include the Liahona (see the commentary for 1 Nephi 16:10) and Joseph Smith's "seerstone" which, according to Martin Harris, Joseph sometimes used in translating (Roberts, Brigham H., *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:128-9), and which President Wilford Woodruff later "consecrated upon the altar" during the private dedicatory services of the Manti Temple (*Ibid.*, 6:230).

The planet on which God dwells is also described as being "a great Urim and Thummim" (D&C 130:8), and the earth itself in its "sanctified and immortal state" will also be a Urim and Thummim (D&C 130:9). Finally, a white stone will be given to each inhabitant of celestial glory which is a Urim and Thummim "whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known" (D&C 130:10).

2 And I saw the stars, that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; and there were many great ones which were near unto it;

verse 2 “I saw the stars” Both biblical and latter-day prophets (including Enoch, Moses, Abraham, and Joseph Smith), have been shown visions of the heavenly realms to orient them to God’s dominion and eternal purposes.

From the outset, there are difficulties and ambiguities in trying to place Abraham’s writings on astronomy in a modern perspective. One is that he seems to use the words *star* and *planet* interchangeably for the same object, but they denote vastly different objects in modern usage. In other words, he may be using the word *star* or *planet* for any heavenly body. Another difficulty is his use of the term *revolution* and *revolutions* in verse 4. Today, we say that a heavenly globe *rotates* or spins on its axis, for example the earth *rotates* on its axis once per day. We also say that a heavenly globe *revolves* around another heavenly body. For example, the earth revolves around the sun in one year. Abraham does not use the term *rotate* or *rotation*, and his use of the terms *revolution* and *revolutions* in verse 4 seems to refer to what we would call today *rotation*.

“stars . . . were very great, and . . . one of them was nearest unto the throne of God” Our modern concept of the heavens is that there are many stars that are sometimes surrounded by planets which revolve around the stars. The stars themselves rotate on their axes and revolve in space about other stars according to “set periods” of time. Thus stars belong to star systems, and there are central governing stars.

Our Milky Way Galaxy contains several billions of stars much like our sun. Most of these stars may not have a planet similar to that of earth, but millions undoubtedly do. Since science has no way, at present, of knowing exactly what fraction of the stars have planets, we must rely upon intelligent guesses. In order for a planet to sustain life there are certain conditions which must be met. Consider some of the more obvious ones. The planet must be at such a distance from its star that water remains liquid most of the time. If the planet is too far away, the water will freeze; if it is too close the water will evaporate. Thus, the planet must have a nearly circular orbit at a proper distance from its star. The gravity at the surface of the planet must not be too large or too small. If it is too large, land masses will not rise above the oceans. Even if they did, animals would not be able to move about erect. If the gravity is too small, the atmosphere will escape into space. The planet we seek must therefore be approximately the size of the earth. A substantial portion of a life-sustaining planet must be alternately exposed to sunlight and darkness at a reasonable frequency. Otherwise, the dark side will be unbearable cold. The atmosphere would cool into liquid form and drain off the atmosphere from the hot, exposed side. This means that the planet must have its axis of rotation nearly at right angles to the plane of its orbit. Furthermore, it must rotate at such a rate that the days and nights are of reasonable length. In other words, for a planet to sustain life similar to that found on earth, it must be similar to the earth in several essential respects. In all, about nine such requirements can be identified. Each

requirement decreases the chance of finding such a planet, and nine is a rather large number. Suppose, for example, that the probability of fulfilling any one of these requirements is one in ten; that is, for each star with planets the chance of finding a planet at the proper distance is one in ten, then the chance of finding a star with a planet having all nine of the required characteristics would be $(1/10)^9$, or one chance in a billion. Only one star of each billion would have such a planet and only a few would be found in our galaxy. On the other hand, suppose that each of the requirements imposed on the planet we seek has a probability of occurrence of one in two. Then one out of each 500 stars will have such a planet, and millions would be found in our galaxy. Overall the requirements for a life-sustaining planet are each believed to occur with a relatively high probability. Our best available evidence indicates that our single galaxy has millions of planets similar to earth.

Intuitively, the stars themselves would seem to be inhospitable places for any of the intelligences of this round of creation to dwell. We would rather think that some of the planets are suitable and likely habitations of intelligences at all stages of their progression. A mortal world revolving around its star seems the ideal dwelling place for morals like us. On the other hand, we have no idea of the ideal physical nature of an exalted and celestialized world.

The combination of a star plus its planets is referred to as a solar system. It may well be that the celestial planet where lives our Father in Heaven is a glorified, celestialized planet that revolves around the greatest star Kolob and is thus part of Kolob's solar system (see verse 3). Might it be that God's celestial planet is the star Kolob itself?

This particular verse, verse 2, speaks of "many great" stars that seem to exceed our own star in hierarchical importance. In the following verse, we will learn that these many great stars have "governing" function. For the moment, we will assume that these "stars" are, indeed, stars in the modern sense. Unfortunately we are not given to understand the nature of these many great stars. Many questions arise in the mind of the student of the gospel for which we are not given answers. For example, are there mortal earths revolving around these "many great" stars? Or, perhaps there are terrestrial millennial planets in their solar systems? Might there be perfected exalted celestialized planets revolving around them? And might these celestialized planets function as the abodes of the human intelligences who have been resurrected with celestial bodies who are awaiting the exaltation of their own home planets?

And what of the governing function of these stars? Does this mean that by the force of their gravity these great stars provide the natural force to maintain the cosmic organization of God's created universe, and therefore govern the universe? Or are the planets revolving around these many great stars the site for human priesthood administration of God's universe?

3 And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones; and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God: I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.

verse 3 “These are the governing ones” The antecedent for the pronoun *these* is the “many great” stars that are near to the greatest star Kolob discussed in the previous verse.

“the name of the great one is Kolob” Some members of the Church have assumed that Kolob is the dwelling place of God. We have mentioned, in the commentary for verse 2, the fact that we cannot be sure that Abraham was able to accurately distinguish between a true star, by a modern scientific definition, and a planet. A star, of course, emits its own light which results from a nuclear fusion reaction, while a planet is seen in the heavens only by virtue of reflected light. We will assume that Kolob is, in fact, a true star, but the reader should keep in mind that this assumption is by no means certain. While it is not impossible to imagine that God dwells on a star, it is more likely that Kolob is the star around which revolves the celestial planet where God dwells. Thus, the star Kolob is, indeed, “near unto” God. The actual location of Kolob has not been revealed.

In the introduction to this chapter, we made the point that Abraham utilizes the technique of “likening” and that his major purpose in this chapter is not to teach astronomy, but rather to teach of Christ and his purposes. It seems clear that Kolob is utilized as a symbol or type of Jesus Christ. Let us summarize the characteristics of Kolob that will be taught in this chapter. The reader should take note of the fact that these are also characteristics of the Savior:

1. “It [Kolob] is near unto [God]” (verse 3).
2. Kolob is “after the manner” or in the likeness of the Lord (verse 4). The apostle Paul taught that Christ is in the “brightness” of God’s “glory, and the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3).
3. Kolob is the “first creation” (Facsimile 2:1). “I was in the beginning with the Father,” Christ said, “and am the Firstborn” (D&C 93:21).
4. Kolob is the “nearest unto the throne of God” (verse 2; Facsimile 2:1). Christ is described as being “in the bosom of the Father” (D&C 76:25).
5. Kolob is “first in government” (Facsimile 2:1) and is “to govern all those which belong to the same order” (verse 3). Christ has promised, “I will be your ruler when I come” (D&C 41:4). Prophesying of his coming, Isaiah said, “the government shall be upon his shoulder” (Isaiah 9:6). He is “Lord of lords, and Kings of kings” (Revelation 17:14).
6. Kolob holds “the key of power” (Facsimile 2:2). It is Christ who holds the keys of all power. All who hold keys in the kingdom of God here on earth received them

under his direction (D&C 132:45), and an accounting of how all keys and authority have been utilized will yet be made to him (see Daniel 7:9-14).

7. There are “many great ones” near Kolob; these are the governing ones (verses 2-3). Joseph and Hyrum Smith, along with Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff, are specifically mentioned as being “among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God” (D&C 138:55).

8. Kolob is the source of light for others (Facsimile 2:5). Christ is the source of “light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:13).

9. “Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam [stars] . . . because it is nearest unto [God]” (verse 16). Christ was the greatest of all the pre-earth spirits. He is described as being “like unto God” (Abraham 3:24).

The other part of the symbolism or likening in this chapter is concerned with the parallels between the planets and stars and the “noble and great ones [spirits].” We can summarize these likenesses as follows:

1. “The stars . . . were very great” (verse 2). There were “many great ones . . . near unto” Kolob (Christ) (verse 2). Abraham was shown that among the great hosts of premortal spirits many had—through “exceeding faith and good works” (Alma 13:3)—merited the designation “noble and great” (verse 22).

2. These stars were the “governing ones” (verse 3). Of these “noble and great” spirits the Lord said, “These I will make my rulers” (verse 23).

3. All stars are to sustain or be governed by “the great one” (verse 3). Each ruling star has a “set time” for its revolutions. Those spirits who rebelled at the choice of Christ as their Redeemer were cast out (verses 27-28).

4. The star with the longer “set time” rules above the star with the lesser “set time” (verses 4-7). All prophets of God were subject to the discipline of the house of God. None knew this principle better than Abraham.

5. Anytime there is a star with a set time that has another star above it, then there will be another “planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still” (verse 8). That is, for every star there is a greater star until we come to Kolob (Christ), for Kolob (Christ) “is set nigh unto the throne of God, to govern all those planets which belong to the same order” (verse 9). Abraham was also told that whenever there were two spirits, one more intelligent than the other, “then there shall be another more intelligent than they” (verse 19).

6. To Abraham the Lord said: “It is given unto thee to know the set time of all the stars that are set to give light, until thou come near unto the throne of God” (verse 10). Though it is not recorded for us, Abraham undoubtedly had revealed to him some knowledge of the destiny and mission of his fellow prophets. Such experiences were common to the ancient seers.

“I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest” The Lord declares that the star Kolob performs a function vital to the governance of this mortal earth and all of the mortal earths in his universe. As discussed in the previous verse, this function could be purely to provide the essential cosmic gravitational force for cosmic stability. Or, the environs of Kolob could be the place of priesthood administrative governance of the universe (“those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest”). The control that Kolob exerts over the earth and the sun is simply not stated explicitly enough to have physical scientific meaning.

“the same order as that upon which thou standest” This expression refers to worlds on which mortals dwell, like our earth in its present state.

4 And the Lord said unto me, by the Urim and Thummim, that Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof; that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord’s time, according to the reckoning of Kolob.

verse 4 “Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof” This phrase suggests that Kolob is being utilized by Abraham as a likeness of Christ—“Kolob [is] after the manner [or likeness] of the Lord.

This phrase also suggests that God does exist in an environment where time is an element. Judeo-Christian concepts of God generally see him as independent or outside of time, but God makes it clear to Abraham that he also exists in time. He has a past, a present, and a future. Indeed, the concept of eternal progression requires such a concept of time—progression means improving over time.

Credit is given to Kent E. Robson for the following delightful discussion of the concepts of time and eternity (“Time and Eternity” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* [4 volumes], 1479).

In Latter-day Saint understanding, time and eternity usually refer to the same reality. Eternity is time with an adjective: It is endless time. Eternity is not, as in Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, supratemporal or nontemporal. In religions where eternity is radically contrasted with time, time is seen as an illusion, or utterly subjective, or an ephemeral episode. God and the higher realities are held to be “beyond” [time]. . . . This is still the premise of much classical mysticism, [and] . . . it is written into many Christian creeds. But scriptural passages that ascribe eternity to God do not say or imply that God is independent of, or outside of, or beyond time. Nor do they say, with Augustine, that God created time out of nothing. In context they stress that he is everlasting, that he is trustworthy, that his purposes do not fail. The view that time and

eternity are utterly incompatible, utterly irreconcilable, has taxing consequences for theology. If God is supratemporal, for example, he could not have been directly related to the Creation because being out of time—and also beyond space and not subject to change—he could not enter this or any process. . . . In LDS understanding, God was and is directly involved in creation. The creative act was a process (the book of Abraham speaks of creation “times” rather than of “days”). His influence on creation, then and now, is not seen as a violation of his transcendence or of his glory and dominion but a participative extension of them. The dogma of a supratemporal eternity led to another set of contradictions in postbiblical thought, the paradoxes of incarnation. The coming of Jesus Christ was recast within the assumptions of Greek metaphysics: God the universal became particular; God the nontemporal became temporal; God, superior to change, changed; God, who created time, now entered it. Most Christian traditions have embraced these paradoxes, but LDS thought has not. In LDS Christology, Jesus was in time before he entered mortality, is in time now, and will be forever. . . . Several assurances are prominent features of LDS understanding: (1) Time is a segment of eternity. One may distinguish eternities, long epochs of time, within eternity. . . . In any case, time itself had no beginning and will have no end. (2) Time unfolds in one direction. It extends rather than repeats precisely. The view of eternal recurrence common in the Far East . . . is rejected. Worlds and world systems may come and go, as civilizations may rise and fall, but history does not exactly repeat itself. Individual creative freedom modifies the outcomes. (3) Eternity, as continuing time, is tensed: past, present, and future. God himself, eternal in identity, self-existent, and therefore without beginning or end, is nevertheless related to time. At his own supreme and unsurpassable level, he has a past, a present, and a future. Neither he nor his creations can return to or change the past. He has become what he is through eons of time gone by. He is now in relation to, and responsive to, his creations. Response implies time and change. (4) In a cosmic sense, the reckoning of time is according to the rotations of the spheres. It is presumed that God, angels, men, and prophets reckon time differently (see Abraham 3; D&C 130:4). . . . The eternal is sometimes contrasted to time as the permanent is contrasted to the transitory. “Every principle proceeding from God is eternal” (*TPJS*, 181). The phrase “for time and eternity” is equivalent to “now and forever.” LDS thought is uncommon in the Christian world in its affirmation that intelligence, truth, the “principles of element,” priesthood, law, covenants, and ordinances are eternal. Time is occasionally used in scripture as a synonym for mortality. In this sense, the time will come when “time shall be no longer” (D&C 84:100; 88:110). The mortal probation will end. But another segment of measurable existence will follow, namely, the Millennium. Time and eternity also function as place names or situations as in such expressions as “not only here but in eternity,” or “the visions of eternity” (heaven). Eternal is also the name of God—

“Endless and Eternal is my name”—hence, eternal life is God’s life, as it is also everlasting life (*HC*, 1:136; cf. *D&C* 19:10-12; *Moses* 1:3; 7:35).

The thesis that God is beyond time has sometimes been introduced to account for God’s omniscience or foreknowledge. Only if God is somehow transtemporal, it is argued, can he view past, present, and future as “one eternal now.” This position is assumed by much postbiblical theology. But, again, this leads to contradiction: What will happen in the infinite future is now happening to God. But “now” and “happening” are temporal words that imply both duration and change. For Latter-day Saints, as for the Bible, God’s omniscience is “in time.” God anticipates the future. It is “present” before him, but it is still future. When the future occurs, it will occur for the first time to him as to his creatures. The traditional concept of “out-of-time” omniscience does not derive either from the Old or the New Testament but is borrowed from Greek philosophy.

“that one revolution was a day unto the Lord” The “revolution” here seems to be the apparent visual movement of the star Kolob in the sky of the planet where God dwells, which is the result of the rotation of that celestial planet about its own axis, just as the sun appears to “revolve” about the earth, indicating the passage of a day for us.

“after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest” This phrase simply means that one complete rotation of the celestial planet on its axis (“a day unto the Lord”) takes one thousand earth years.

“This is the reckoning of the Lord’s time, according to the reckoning of Kolob” God reckons time in a manner analogous to the way we do.

5 And the Lord said unto me: The planet which is the lesser light, lesser than that which is to rule the day, even the night, is above or greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow; this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest, therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years.

verse 5 “The planet which is the lesser light, lesser than that which is to rule the day” Here, Abraham refers to the moon which he calls the “lesser light,” meaning that it provides less (reflected) light than the sun (the sun’s light is, of course, generated by a nuclear fusion reaction). The sun is referred to as “that which is to rule the day.”

Even though the concept of the “set time” will not be introduced until the following verse, this verse compares the “set time” or mechanism for reckoning time of the moon and the earth. The difficulties and the ambiguities of the concept of the “set time” in the book of Abraham are mentioned above in the commentary for verse 2. In this particular verse, we can safely assume that the time parameter being referred to for both the

moon and the earth is the time of one rotation of the body about its axis. The earth requires one day; the moon, one month (actually 29 days).

“even the night” This phrase simply refers again to the moon, the “planet” which “rules” the night.

Abraham is in the process of describing a hierarchy of heavenly bodies—especially the earth, the moon, and Kolob. He has a definite and clearly defined paradigm for creating this hierarchy, but it is hardly scientific and it is based on misconception. It is therefore confusing to the modern reader. His idea seems to be that the hierarchy is measured by two things—(1) the location in the heavens (the “lowest” body being the lowest ranking and the “highest” body being the highest ranking), and (2) the length of the day (the body with the shortest day being the lowest ranking and the body with the longest day being the highest ranking).

“The planet which is the lesser light . . . is above or greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning” The “point of reckoning” being referred to is the same as the “set time” in verse 6, and both refer to the time required for the body to rotate about its axis. This phrase simply states that the moon requires longer to rotate about its axis (29 days) than does the earth (one day).

“for it moveth in order more slow” The referent for the pronoun *it* is the moon. This phrase simply reiterates the idea that the moon rotates more slowly about its axis than the earth.

“this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest” Thus, one reason the moon ranks higher in the hierarchy than the earth is because of its location—“it standeth above the earth.”

“therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years” The other reason the moon ranks higher in Abraham’s hierarchy than the earth is because its “day” (the time for the moon to rotate about its axis) is longer than the time for the earth to rotate about its axis. Because its day is longer, fewer days, months, and years pass relative to those same parameters of time on the earth.

In the ensuing verses, Abraham will continue on with his description of the hierarchy of heavenly bodies, indicating that the hierarchy has to do with the governance of the heavens. By verse 9 he will describe the highest ranking body, Kolob, which by his paradigm is found in the “highest” location and has the longest day. I think we may take from this the truth that the planet or star called Kolob somehow has a “governing” function over the solar systems like ours. As stated previously, this governing function may be one of physical gravitational governance or one of priesthood administration governance. The obvious misconceptions in Abraham’s paradigm are that there is such a thing as “higher” and “lower” in the universe, which there is not, and the idea that the moon has any sort of governing function over the earth. The converse is true, in that the moon is gravitationally “governed” by the earth.

6 And the Lord said unto me: Now, Abraham, these two facts exist, behold thine eyes see it; it is given unto thee to know the times of reckoning, and the set time, yea, the set time of the earth upon which thou standest, and the set time of the greater light which is set to rule the day, and the set time of the lesser light which is set to rule the night.

verse 6 “these two facts exist” The two facts that exist are (1) the “times of reckoning” and (2) the “set times” for the earth, the sun, and the moon. Commentary on these two “facts” follows.

“the times of reckoning” “the set time” The Lord tells Abraham that he is given in vision to know the “times of reckoning” and “the set time” for the earth, the sun, and the moon. Abraham’s “times of reckoning” seems to refer to that physical parameter which may be used to determine the passage of time on a given heavenly body. It is basically the same as “the set time,” specifically it seems to probably be the time required for a heavenly body to rotate or spin about its axis. This is the basis for the determination of the passage of time on any given heavenly body. This is the “set time.”

The “set times” for the earth, the sun, and the moon are as follows: The earth takes one day to rotate on its axis. The sun rotates on its axis once in about 25 days, and the moon rotates once every lunar month or every 28 or 29 days.

Though it is of interest to learn that each planet has its “set time,” it is of infinitely greater importance for us to recognize that order is the first law of heaven. Here, again is evidence of the likening which Abraham and the Lord intended to be found in Abraham 3. It is absolutely essential that the Lord’s house be a house of order (D&C 132:8) and, similarly, that this principle be brightly reflected in our own households. The heavens are the pattern for the Church. The Church is the pattern for the home. The home is the pattern for the individual. The principle of unity and order is equally important in each sphere. Further, Abraham’s vision illustrates that without gradation of assignment and responsibility, there can be no order. Two people cannot occupy the same position at the same time any more than can planets. All are to function according to their divine ordination. In the Church, all are to serve as they have been called. All are to stand in their own office and labor in their own calling. In the family, women are not to act as men, and men are not to act as women. Each is to assume his or her own divinely given sphere of responsibility. All serve in capacities in which there are those who are greater and lesser in authority. If we have been called to preside over someone, then someone else has been called to preside over us, and so on until we come to the very throne of heaven itself. As the stars are governed, so the heavens are governed. As the heavens are governed, so the kingdom of heaven is governed. So, all who would be its citizens must learn to govern themselves.

7 Now the set time of the lesser light is a longer time as to its reckoning than the reckoning of the time of the earth upon which thou standest.

verse 7 A “day” on the moon (the time required for the moon to spin on its axis) is 28-29 days.

8 And where these two facts exist, there shall be another fact above them, that is, there shall be another planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still;

verse 8 “where these two facts exist” The “two facts” are (1) the set time of the moon and (2) the set time of the earth.

“there shall be another fact above them” Abraham seems to simply be saying that the earth and the moon belong to a larger hierarchy of heavenly bodies of increasing importance or governing potential.

9 And thus there shall be the reckoning of the time of one planet above another, until thou come nigh unto Kolob, which Kolob is after the reckoning of the Lord’s time; which Kolob is set nigh unto the throne of God, to govern all those planets which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.

verse 9 And the most important heavenly body (star or planet) in this hierarchy is Kolob.

10 And it is given unto thee to know the set time of all the stars that are set to give light, until thou come near unto the throne of God.

verse 10 Abraham is assured by the Lord that he has seen in vision the entire hierarchy of heavenly bodies all the way up to Kolob, the throne of God. The allusion here to “set time” is a reference to the hierarchy, since it is by the set time that heavenly bodies are ranked.

“the stars that are set to give light” It would seem unlikely that this phrase tries to distinguish between actual stars and planets, as all heavenly bodies are seen as bright objects in the night sky. This phrase also implies an element of the Lord’s deliberately “setting” the stars in the heavens that they may be useful to man upon the earth.

11 Thus I, Abraham, talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made;

verse 11 “I, Abraham, talked with the Lord, face to face” Abraham’s vision began with his receiving revelation through the Urim and Thummim (verse 1), but now the Lord is actually speaking to him face to face.

12 And he said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw

those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof.

verse 12 “My son, my son . . . behold I will show you all these” The spirit of this interaction between the Lord and Abraham, is that Abraham, the literal son of God with potential to become as God is, is being shown what he might one day create.

13 And he said unto me: This is Shinehah, which is the sun. And he said unto me: Kokob, which is star. And he said unto me: Olea, which is the moon. And he said unto me: Kokaubeam, which signifies stars, or all the great lights, which were in the firmament of heaven.

verse 13 “Shinehah, which is the sun” Shinehah may be related to Hebrew (*sanah*), Akkadian (*santu*), and Arabic (*sana*), all meaning “year.”

“Kokob, which is star” Kokob is clearly Hebrew (*kokab*), “star” of which Kokaubeam (see also Abraham 3:16) is the plural (*kokabim*). If we exchange the *k* for *l*, we have Kolob.

“Olea, which is the moon” Olea may be related to Hebrew (*yareah*)—if we exchange the *r* for *l*—or Akkadian (*arhu*) “moon”—if we exchange the *r* for *l*.

14 And it was in the night time when the Lord spake these words unto me: I will multiply thee, and thy seed after thee, like unto these; and if thou canst count the number of sands, so shall be the number of thy seeds.

verse 14 “I will multiply thee, and thy seed after thee, like unto these; and if thou canst count the number of sands, so shall be the number of thy seeds.” Here is another mention of one of the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant—the Lord’s promise of posterity (cf. Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 17:2; 22:17; this promise was reiterated to Isaac in Genesis 24:60; 26:4, 24, and to Jacob in Genesis 28:3, 24; 35:11; 48:4). See also Abraham 2:9.

15 And the Lord said unto me: Abraham, I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words.

verse 15 “before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all the words” Abraham was the head of a dispensation, the man through whom all peoples of the earth in that day were to receive the saving principles of the gospel. When the Lord says to Abraham in this verse, “I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words,” did the Lord have in mind that Abraham would be a visiting professor of astronomy, or a witness of Christ? Surely it is of lesser importance what the Egyptians knew about the revolutions of planets if they had no idea of how they are to receive a remission of sins or become citizens in the kingdom of God. Yet, as is often the case, the great difficulty in missionary work is simply getting people to listen to the message. And what better way to captivate the attention of the

Egyptians than to first teach them of Kolob and the stars, and then having done so to say, “Now, behind all that I have taught you about the heavenly bodies there stands an even greater truth, a truth through which you become the inheritors of endless blessings—this is the truth about God and his eternal plan for the salvation of all his children.”

16 If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them; therefore Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me.

17 Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it; and there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it.

verse 17 “there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it” In Abraham 3:1-17, the Lord has not just been teaching Abraham a lesson in astronomy, but rather he is showing him that the universe and all that is in it is the result of God’s creative activity. He has organized it all and continues to control and sustain it for his ultimate purpose of exalting his children.

18 Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal.

verse 18 This verse states simply that the intelligences which were made available to the Father to include in this round of his creation have already existed, and they vary in their “intelligence.” Let us explore these concepts a bit further.

Abraham does not always make the careful distinction between a spirit and an intelligence that we are inclined to do today, and it is possible here that he is referring to two intelligences. An intelligence is the essence of man—that part of him that is eternal. For a discussion of intelligences, see “The Building Blocks of Creation” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 3, *The Creation*. Following the spirit birth of an intelligence, that is following the divine process of birth which involves our heavenly Parents—during which the intelligence is embodied with a body of spirit matter—we then refer to the individual as a *spirit*. We may thus say that our spirit had a beginning, that is, the spirit was born to the Father and Mother at a finite point in time in the past. Our intelligence, however, had no beginning. It has always existed; there was never a time when it did not exist. Though we may easily utter these words, we must acknowledge that, given our finite minds, we cannot completely comprehend this concept.

The noun *intelligence* in the scriptures has two separate meanings. First, it may refer to the individual uncreated essence of each individual as described in the previous

paragraph. Second, it may refer to the amount of spiritual growth that each individual has made. Hence, the adjective *intelligent* in the scriptures is figuratively, and roughly, analogous to the secular adjective *intelligent*. In a secular sense, the word intelligent refers to an individual's capacity for learning—his I.Q. In the scriptures, intelligent refers to the divine attributes which an individual possesses through his obedience to gospel law. The more intelligent a person is spiritually, the more divine attributes he possesses.

“Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other” The Lord says, just as there is a hierarchy in the stars, that is, just as one star is greater or more important than another, so do spirits vary in their intelligence. There is a gradation or a hierarchy of intelligences. This gradation exists because they vary in their “intelligence”—their spiritual progress.

The reader may wonder what application of the principle the Lord intended to emphasize by pointing out that there is a hierarchy of intelligences based on their spiritual progress or “intelligence.” The first application is that there is one intelligence or spirit that is more intelligent than all of the other spirit children of the Father—the man Jesus Christ. The other application of the principle is that there is an endless chain of exalted beings, an eternal family of Gods.

“these two spirits . . . have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end” These two hypothetical intelligences being referenced in this verse have no beginning and no end (see D&C 93:29). There never was a time in the past when they did not exist; they have always existed. Also, they will never cease to exist.

“they are gnolaum, or eternal” *Gnolaum* is the Hebrew *‘olam* which means “eternity.”

19 And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.

verse 19 “These two facts do exist” Here, the two facts that exist are (1) there is a gradation in the intelligence of the intelligences, and (2) God is more intelligent, or spiritually accomplished, than all of the other intelligences included in this round of creation. Here the Lord Jehovah may certainly be speaking of himself. Also he may be speaking as though he were the Father, by the principle of the divine investiture of authority. Certainly the Father is the supreme intelligence of our universe.

20 The Lord thy God sent his angel to deliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah.

verse 20 It would seem that this verse serves to identify, for Abraham, the God to whom he is speaking as the very same individual who intervened to save Abraham

when the priest of Elkenah sought to sacrifice him on the altar. That God is the Lord Jehovah (see Abraham 1:15-16).

21 I dwell in the midst of them all; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen.

verse 21 “I dwell in the midst of them all” Here the Lord Jehovah identifies himself as one of the nearly infinite number of intelligences in this round of the Father’s creation.

“I now . . . have come down unto thee” The Father and the Son are now preparing for a great family council prior to the physical creation of the earth and the rest of God’s universe. This great council will be described in verses 24-28 of this chapter and verses 1-25 of chapter 4. This statement suggests that this council may have been held on the spirit earth, and that the Lord therefore came “down” from the celestial planet for that council.

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

verse 22 “the intelligences that were organized before the world was” We commented previously that Abraham does not always make the careful distinction between a spirit and an intelligence that we make today, and in this verse it is difficult to know whether he is referring specifically to intelligences or spirits. Most students of the scriptures have concluded that his use of the word intelligences here simply means spirits. However, let us suspend this question for a moment.

The organization of these “intelligences” has two possible interpretations. It may refer to the spirit birth of intelligences, that is, the intelligences were organized when they were embodied with spirit bodies. In this case, Abraham may be referring here specifically to intelligences since in the following verse he will say that he “stood among those that were spirits.” This implies that the process of spirit birth was not complete at the moment when Abraham was shown the premortal world, and that some individuals still existed as intelligences, while others had been born as spirits.

Alternatively, the organization of these intelligences may refer to their foreordination to various earthly callings (see Acts 17:26). Joseph Smith explained, “At the first organization in heaven we were all present, and saw the Savior chosen and appointed and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it” (*TPJS*, 181). After Joseph Smith’s death, he appeared to Brigham Young and explained, “Be sure to tell

the people to keep the Spirit of the Lord; and if they will, they will find themselves just as they were organized by our Father in Heaven before they came into the world” (Brigham Young, “Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-47,” located in the archives of the Church).

“among all these there were many of the noble and great ones” Among these spirits which Abraham was blessed to see, were those, like Abraham, whom the Lord would “make [his] rulers.”

23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

verse 23 “And God saw these souls that they were good” In his latter-day vision of the spirit earth, the prophet Joseph F. Smith saw that the “noble and great ones” not only included Abraham, but the prophet-leaders of every gospel dispensation. He also saw that it included “other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter day work” (D&C 138:53).

“Abraham . . . thou wast chosen before thou wast born” For a discussion of the principle of foreordination, see the commentary for Alma 13:3. For a more complete discussion, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 15, *Foreordination*. Joseph Smith explained, “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was” (*TPJS*, 365).

We will learn in Abraham 4:1 that these “noble and great ones” are given the assignment to help organize the physical earth and that each is granted the title of “god” or creator.

verses 24-28 Abraham now begins his account of the physical creation by describing a family council in “heaven.” This is actually the fourth Grand Council in the heavens of which we are aware. This council is attended by the spirit family of the Father. Note that the Lord is required to “come down” (verse 21) to meet with the Father’s spirit family. This means the council was possibly held on the spirit earth (which is sometimes referred to as “heaven” in the scriptures) and not on the celestial planet. However, the celestial planet is also a strong possibility for the venue of this council (see verse 24). Two important subjects were on the agenda. First, someone had to be chosen to direct the creation of the physical earth. Second, we needed to consider the creation of the physical earth itself. This physical earth was to be a carefully designed planetary environment where the human family could obtain a

physical body and experience for themselves the lessons of mortality. Little did we know that this family council would provoke an all-out war.

It has been suggested by some that Abraham 4:1-25 is actually an account of the “minutes” of this fourth Grand Council, but since all of the items on the agenda were in fact accomplished, they consider it to be an account of the physical preparatory creation of the earth, the second creation epoch. While this is possible, the verb tenses in Abraham 4:1-25 suggest that Abraham is describing a creative process as it is actually occurring.

24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

verse 24 “there stood one among them that was like unto God” Presiding over this assembly of noble and great creators was a pre-eminent personality “like unto God.” This was the pre-mortal Jesus Christ.

“he said unto those who were with him” Here he announces to his companions—some of “the noble and great ones”—that the time had arrived for them to leave their celestial planet and “go down” to an area of space to obtain unorganized matter. There they will command the unorganized physical elements—“these materials”—to combine with the myriad spirit bodies which make up the spirit earth, resulting in a brand new physical earth whereupon the spirit children of the Father—“these”—will work out their mortal probation.

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

verse 25 “we will prove them herewith” The word *herewith* means “by means of this”—here referring to the physical earth. The purpose of our mortal existence is to see whether we can truly be obedient to the commandments of God in a telestial environment of opposition and evil outside of the Lord’s presence.

26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

verse 26 “they who keep their first estate shall be added upon” The “first estate” refers to our lives as spirits in the premortal existence. To “keep” one’s first estate is to progress satisfactorily there and to agree to follow the Lord Jehovah and come to the mortal earth. The only biblical reference to the “first estate” is Jude 1:6, which refers to “the angels which kept not their first estate” which seems to refer to the

third of the hosts of heaven who chose to not come to the mortal earth. The expression “added upon” has reference to our spiritual growth.

“they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate” Those of our Father in heaven’s children who chose to follow Satan rather than God have forfeited the opportunity to enter a kingdom of glory. All who kept their first estate, with the exception a relatively few sons of perdition, will eventually enter a kingdom of glory (celestial, terrestrial, or telestial).

“they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” The “second estate” begins with mortal birth and ends with resurrection. Thus, it includes mortal life and life in the postmortal spirit world. To “keep” one’s second estate is to progress satisfactorily in mortality and in the spirit world and qualify to be judged worthy of celestial glory. There the inhabitants of the celestial kingdom will progress forever.

27 And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first.

verse 27 “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send?” The “Lord” in this verse is the Father. Here the Father is selecting the individual to head the process of the creation of the universe under the Father’s direction. The “first,” of course, is Jesus Christ. The second is Lucifer. The Father based his judgment on his intimate knowledge of the two volunteers. This incident took place during the fourth Grand Council of the Gods, and is not the same incident described in Moses 4:1 which took place later at the fifth Grand Council of the Gods. For a summary of all of the premortal councils, see the introductory discussion for Moses 4:1-4.

28 And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.

verse 28 “the second was angry” This is Satan. The scriptures make it plain that Lucifer aspired to this office of creator. He was an angel “in authority in the presence of God” and was called a “son of the morning” (D&C 76:25-27). The title “son of the morning” probably implies that he was among the first children to be born into the Father’s spirit family. Ironically his character was seriously flawed. He was both a “liar from the beginning” (D&C 93:25) and a “murderer . . . from the beginning” (John 8:44). His anger at being passed over for this assignment has led to jealousy of the Son and resentment and hatred for both the Father and the Son.

“the second . . . kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him” Satan “kept not his first estate” in that he failed to progress satisfactorily, and he refused to come to the mortal earth to be tried and tested. A third of the hosts of

heaven were also reluctant to come to the mortal earth and were persuaded by Satan. They were sealed up to outer darkness and cast out of heaven to become angels of the devil (see Revelation 12:4; D&C 29:36; Moses 4:1-4).

Abraham Chapter 4 The Physical Creation of the Earth

Abraham 4 is likely the scriptural account of the creation or organization of the physical earth, the so-called “preparatory physical creation” (for a summary of the three creative periods or epochs, see the introductory commentary for Moses 2).

As previously stated Abraham 4:1-25 is likely more an account of the “minutes” of the fourth Grand Council in the heavens, but since all of the items on the agenda were in fact accomplished, we consider it to be an account of the physical preparatory creation of the earth, the second creation epoch.

We will learn that the physical earth was brought forth in seven great “times” or periods of time. The purpose of this physical creation was to begin to prepare the earth for the eventual placement of modern life forms, an event which would occur millions of years hence.

In Abraham 5, Abraham will describe the placement of modern life forms on the earth.

The Second Creative Epoch: The Physical Creation of the Earth – the Preparatory Creation

The First Creative Period or Time (verses 1-5): The Birth of the Physical Earth and its Exposure to light and dark.

According to the dating techniques of earth scientists, the physical earth was first formed about 4.6 billion years ago.

1 And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

verse 1 “the Lord said: Let us go down.” The Lord is Jehovah, the pre-existent Christ. The “Gods” “went down” from the place of their Great Council, the fourth Grand Council of the Gods which may have been on the celestial planet, to the spirit earth to begin the process of physical creation. We should be reminded that during the physical creation the earth was not located in our present solar system. Rather it was located in the region of space near Kolob. It did not leave this location until after the fall of Adam and Eve.

“And they went down at the beginning” The antecedent for “they” in this phrase is “the noble and great ones” in Abraham 3:23. They are given the title “Gods.” This accords with our knowledge concerning the plurality of gods in the organized universe. It also tells us that some exceptionally worthy spirit children are given the title and responsibility of being gods (called to be part of the process of creation) even

before they are born into mortality. This is obviously true of the Savior. It also turns out to be true of all those called “noble and great ones.”

The physical creation began under the direction of the presiding quorum of the physical creation, the Father, Jehovah, and Michael.

“they . . . organized and formed the heavens and the earth” If one reads this phrase carefully, one might conclude that the heavens were “organized,” and the earth was “formed.” What is the difference? The word *organized* seems to emphasize that the solar system was not created *ex nihilo* but was organized from pre-existent unorganized matter. The word translated as “created” in Genesis is *bara’* which means “to make,” without any connotation of creation out of nothing. “Form” or “formed” is a key word used throughout the creation story and means “birth.” So far as we know, only two types of beings can give birth to another body. These are celestial eternal beings and mortal physical beings. Thus, the earth was “formed,” that is it did not simply condense out of some dusty and gaseous nebula. It was born of a mother planet, in this case a celestial eternal planet.

What are the “heavens”? The term “heavens” seems to represent all of the organized bodies of the cosmos—the planets, the moons, and the stars—that can be seen from earth (Moses 1:37). In addition to creating the earth which was located near Kolob during its creation, the Gods had to organize a place in the cosmos which the physical earth might inhabit during its sojourn in the solar system. This sojourn may have lasted millions or even billions of years through the preparatory creation until the fall of Adam and Eve. Likely the creation or “forming” of some of these myriad heavenly bodies had taken place long before the earth’s creation, and their creation stories are separate and not included in the creation account that Abraham saw.

2 And the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate, because they had not formed anything but the earth; and darkness reigned upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters.

verse 2 “the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate” Shortly after its birth as a physical mortal planet, the earth was “empty and desolate” and dark. It was a sterile and bleak environment, hostile to plant and animal life. This is the beginning of the preparatory process where this empty and desolate earth will become, over millions of years, a fertile, fecund, and delightful place, fully capable of providing “enough and to spare” (D&C 104:17) to the family of Adam and the modern life forms over the millennia which they will inhabit the earth.

“the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters” The word from which *brooding* is translated also means “fertilizing”. This seems clearly to be describing the life-giving and life-sustaining power of the light of Christ that makes possible all life, not only on this earth but throughout all of God’s creations. The light of Christ “proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. It is

also “the light which is in all things, which given life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:11-13).

3 And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light.

verse 3 Light from the great governing stars was allowed to flood over the newborn earth. Keep in mind that at this point in time, the earth was not in our present solar system, but rather was near the great governing star Kolob.

4 And they (the Gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright; and they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness.

verse 4 “they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness” The earth was given the power of rotation. Thus began its cyclical exposure to day and night.

5 And the Gods called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. And it came to pass that from the evening until morning they called night; and from the morning until the evening they called day; and this was the first, or the beginning, of that which they called day and night.

The Second Creative Time (verses 6-8): The Creation of the Earth’s Atmosphere

6 And the Gods also said: Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and it shall divide the waters from the waters.

verse 6 “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters” To this point in the physical creation, the physical earth was a solid body covered with water. Now the Gods needed to create a gaseous atmosphere or “expanse.” It was created “in the midst of the waters,” that is it was placed between two layers of the embryonic waters that surrounded the physical earth at its birth. It divided these waters into two layers: (1) the water that would remain in contact with the earth’s solid surface—later to be known as the “sea” and (2) what remained of the embryonic waters—the “waters above.”

Just what exactly was this layer of water “above the expanse”? We addressed this same topic during the story of the spirit creation of the earth (see the commentary for Moses 2:7). It has been suggested that this was a liquid canopy which enveloped the earth until after the great Flood of Noah’s day. This seems most unlikely. Others have suggested that the “waters above” represent the clouds and other water vapor in the earth’s atmosphere. This is also unlikely since almost all of the atmosphere’s water vapor resides in the lowest regions of its atmosphere. So just what are these waters “above the expanse” and where are they today? It seems likely that this part of the earth’s embryonic waters which were separated from the earth’s seas by the

atmosphere was soon removed—the earth was removed from its watery womb. Abraham never refers to this layer of water again in his account of the creation.

Most scientists today accept the idea that the atmosphere came to exist very early in the earth's creative story, about 4.0 billion years ago, but initially it contained mostly methane, ammonia, sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, and little in the way of oxygen. About 3.5 billion years ago, photosynthesis by cyanobacteria (also called blue-green algae—primitive one-celled organisms without a distinct nucleus) began to release oxygen into the atmosphere. However, prior to 2 billion years ago, there seems to have been little free oxygen in the earth's atmosphere. Sometime between 2.0 and 1.5 billion years ago, levels of oxygen increase because of the biologic activity of the cyanobacteria. About 1.5 billion years ago, green algae, the first eukaryotes (organisms with nuclei in their cells), began to appear. Green algae are very efficient photosynthesizers, and they added more oxygen to the atmosphere until about 800 million years ago when it reached about 5 percent of the present value (Emiliani, Cesare, *The Scientific Companion*, [New York: John Wiley & Sons], 1988, 156).

Another important element of the atmosphere also formed during this period—the ozone layer. Ozone is O_3 , consisting of three molecules of Oxygen. Energetic ultraviolet photons began to dissociate water molecules in the atmosphere. The hydrogen escaped into space, and the oxygen atom was left behind. The oxygen molecules in turn combined to form molecular oxygen (O_2). As O_2 accumulated in the upper atmosphere, it was again dissociated into free oxygen atoms, which in turn combined with other O_2 molecules to form ozone— O_3 . The disassociation-association process eventually stabilized, forming the ozone layer. This layer filtered out the harmful ultraviolet light, preventing further dissociation of water and allowing life to flourish, since ultraviolet light is lethal to most organisms (Shu, Frank H., *The Physical Universe, An Introduction to Astronomy*, [Mill Valley, California: University Science Books], 1982, 492).

The earth's magnetic field, produced by its rotating liquid nickel-iron core, also helps protect life on the earth's surface. This field deflects the potentially harmful stream of charged particles coming from the sun, called the solar wind, and forms the well-known Van Allen radiation belts (Zeilik, Michael, Stephen A. Gregory, and Elske V. Smith, *Introductory Astronomy and Astrophysics*, 3d ed., [New York: Saunders College Publishing], 1992, 72-74).

7 And the Gods ordered the expanse, so that it divided the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so, even as they ordered.

verse 7 “the Gods ordered the expanse” Note that the Gods directed their command to the expanse itself, indicating that the elements composing the expanse were the embodiment of intelligences which maintained their full agency and

prerogatives. The Gods then had to wait to see if the command would be obeyed. Eventually “it was so, even as they ordered” (see Abraham 4:18).

8 And the Gods called the expanse, Heaven. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that they called night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that they called day; and this was the second time that they called night and day.

verse 8 This verse suggests that the creation of the earth’s “expanse” or atmosphere occurred during the second complete rotation of the earth. That, of course, is unlikely. It is more likely that the second creative period during which the atmosphere was created lasted much longer than one rotation of the earth. In fact, the events of the second period, in which the present atmosphere of the earth was formed, seem to have occurred from around 4.0 billion to 600 million years ago, thus overlapping with both the first and third periods.

The Third Creative Time (verses 9-13): Land Appears Surrounded by the Ocean. The land is prepared to receive modern plant life such as grass, herbs, and fruit trees.

9 And the Gods ordered, saying: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the earth come up dry; and it was so as they ordered;

verse 9 “the Gods ordered” Again, the Gods set out to accomplish their purposes by ordering or commanding (actually requesting) that the appropriate intelligences carry out their desires.

Eric Skousen has pointed out that this separation of the waters and the earth was accomplished by the Gods commanding a “chemical separation in the upper layers of the earth’s globe so that a portion of it would rise above the global sea” (*Earth in the Beginning*, 88). The solid parts of the earth vary in density. In order for a part of the solid mass of the earth to rise above sea level, the less dense materials of the solid earth had to rise to the top of the earth’s solid mass.

“Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place” Abraham’s account suggests that all the earth’s water was concentrated into one single ocean. This would, of course, suggest that the first dry land consisted of one single continent.

“let the earth come up dry” Four-fifths of the earth’s surface is underwater. If the solid surface of the earth were all at the same level, the entire land mass of the earth would be completely underwater. The only way dry land exists is for there to be deep ocean basins and mountains. The initial sculpting of ocean basins by the impacts of large meteors, and later by plate tectonics, so fashioned the surface of the earth as to

allow for both seas and dry land. In one version of the Egyptian creation stories, one of the first things to happen is dry land in the form of a “primeval hill” rising out of the primeval waters (Bonnet, Hans, *Realxikon der agyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter], 1952, 847).

With the cooling of the earth’s crust about 3.7 billion years ago, the major continental plates formed and the process known as plate tectonics began. As the various continental plates collided with each other, mountain ranges emerged, a process that continues to the present time. The weathering of the earth by rain and wind also caused major changes over time.

10 And the Gods pronounced the dry land, Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, pronounced they, Great Waters; and the Gods saw that they were obeyed.

11 And the Gods said: Let us prepare the earth to bring forth grass; the herb yielding seed; the fruit tree yielding fruit, after his kind, whose seed in itself yieldeth its own likeness upon the earth; and it was so, even as they ordered.

12 And the Gods organized the earth to bring forth grass from its own seed, and the herb to bring forth herb from its own seed, yielding seed after his kind; and the earth to bring forth the tree from its own seed, yielding fruit, whose seed could only bring forth the same in itself, after his kind; and the Gods saw that they were obeyed.

verses 11-12 “Let us prepare the earth” Abraham’s description of the creation of plant life differs markedly from the account of the spirit creation of plant life given by Moses. Moses’s account suggests that God placed all varieties of plant life on the spirit earth without any preparatory period: “Let the earth bring forth [plant life] and it was so even as I spake” (Moses 2:11). In these two verses, Abraham is not describing the placement of modern varieties of plant life on the physical globe. Rather he is describing the preparation of the earth to receive the modern plant varieties. In its initial state, the physical earth was hostile to plant and animal life. There was an atmosphere of carbon dioxide, hydrogen, sulfur, and methane, but it was lacking any free oxygen. Plants are the obvious thing to place first on the earth. Their ability to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen would in turn prepare the earth for animal life. The oldest fossils, called stromatolites, consist of cyanobacteria dating back some 3.5 billion years, and they remained the dominant form of life until about 1.5 billion years ago (Emiliani, 151), although in Precambrian rocks found in South Africa, from the oldest age of the earth, there are also fossil remains of tiny rod-shaped forms resembling living bacteria in their cell-wall structure (Rich, Patricia V., Thomas Hewitt Rich, Mildred Adams Fenton, and Carroll Lane Fenton, *The Fossil Book, A Record of Prehistoric Life*, 2d rev. ed. [Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.], 1996, 91). This means that life appeared on the earth very soon after the crust solidified.

In an interesting side note: Carl Sagan first proposed “terraforming” the planet Venus (converting it to an earthlike environment) by seeding its clouds with cyanobacteria, which would convert the predominantly carbon dioxide atmosphere to oxygen. The reduction of carbon dioxide would in turn reduce the greenhouse effect, and the temperature would drop. Eventually, water vapor in the atmosphere (which contains enough water to cover the entire surface of Venus with 100 inches of water) would condense and fall as rain. Over time, the surface temperature of Venus would drop to 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit with oceans forming in the depressions (“The Planet Venus,” *Science*, 133, 24 March 1961).

Conditions on the physical earth had to be modified over millions of years to produce an environment conducive to life. We will later learn that modern botanical systems were not brought to the earth until the third creation epoch—millions of years after the extensive preparation and development of the earth’s crust had been completed. All modern life forms were placed on the earth at the time of the Garden of Eden.

Land plants appeared much later, some 420 million years ago, and did not become common until about 360 million years ago. The first appearance of flowering plants (angiosperms) was not until about 120 million years ago. Grasses are not found until around 57 million years ago (Rich, 67, 33-35). The progressive appearance of plant life on the earth thus stretched over an enormously long period of time—from about 3.5 billion years ago to 57 million years ago.

13 And it came to pass that they numbered the days; from the evening until the morning they called night; and it came to pass, from the morning until the evening they called day; and it was the third time.

verse 13 “and it was the third time” Beginning with this verse, Abraham will use the word *time* to describe the creative periods. This word does not necessarily imply a fixed time period, or time periods of the same length.

verses 14-19 These verses describe the creation of the solar system in which our earth now resides. The spiritual and physical creations of the earth took place while the earth was in orbit near Kolob and did not fall into our present solar system until after the fall of Adam. Our sun and moon and stars were created for our earth well in advance, in preparation for the earth’s eventual arrival. Thus, Genesis 1:14-19; Moses 2:14-19; and Abraham 4:14-19 all describe the same thing—the spirit and physical creation of our present solar system, minus our earth.

The Fourth Creative Time (verses 14-19): The Sun, Moon, and Stars are Organized

14 And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years;

verse 14 “the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven” It is obvious that the earth was destined to inhabit a region of space that had been prepared according to several stringent requirements. The sun and the moon have been placed in relation to the rotating earth so as to produce proper days, months, years, and the seasons of the earth (see also the commentary for Moses 2:14).

15 And organized them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so.

16 And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also;

verses 14-16 Here Abraham describes the organization of the solar system in which the earth will eventually reside, our present solar system.

It also seems likely that both the sun and the moon were created in the solar system in which they now reside. It is also possible that originally the moon was orbiting the sun alone, some ninety-three million miles from the sun, before the arrival of the earth.

verse 16 “to rule” The sun and moon “rule” the day and the night in the sense that they are the brightest objects in the day and night skies, respectively.

17 And the Gods set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to cause to divide the light from the darkness.

verse 17 The pronoun “them” refers to the sun and the moon. The stars had been previously organized and operate independently of our solar system. Note that Abraham uses the phrase “expanse of the heavens” to describe the star-filled cosmos which would later be seen from the earth’s surface. He will later use the phrase, “the open expanse of heaven” to refer to the earth’s atmosphere (verse 20).

18 And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed.

verse 18 Again, we are reminded that the Gods do not compel or coerce the intelligences which are embodied by the elements of the earth. These intelligences maintain their agency and it is given unto them to choose whether or not they will choose to obey. Because they collectively love and honor the pre-existent Christ and those called to work with him in the creation of our earth, they are inclined to obey.

19 And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time.

The Fifth Creative Time (verses 20-23): The oceans and atmosphere are prepared, so that they may one day receive aquatic and aerial life.

20 And the Gods said: Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life; and the fowl, that they may fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven.

verse 20 “Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life” Even now, more than 90 percent of all life on earth is found in the oceans.

21 And the Gods prepared the waters that they might bring forth great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters were to bring forth abundantly after their kind; and every winged fowl after their kind. And the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good.

22 And the Gods said: We will bless them, and cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas or great waters; and cause the fowl to multiply in the earth.

verses 20-22 Again, we see in these verses that the earth is simply being prepared for the later placement of modern life forms upon it. No modern aquatic and aerial life forms are actually placed on the earth as yet, though many prehistoric aquatic and aerial life forms will eventually be placed in the waters and in the air during the second creation epoch. Abraham does not really give an account of the “creation” or placement of early life forms on the earth which we know were here in abundance. He only records a preparation of the waters and the atmosphere for modern life forms. However, the placement on the earth of all of the earthly life forms—plants and animals—was a vital part of the “creation” or preparation of the earth as these early forms each played vital roles in the preparation of this physical globe to serve as a place of abode for all modern life forms.

This second creative epoch account—Abraham’s account of the preparatory physical creation—is much different than Moses’s first creative epoch account, his account of the spirit creation. Note Moses’s wording: “let the waters bring forth [aquatic life] and every winged creature . . . and I, God, saw that all things which I had created were good (Moses 2:20-21).

One cell organisms appeared in the oceans of the earth about 1.5 billion years ago. Only when oxygen levels reached about 5 percent of the present value, some 800 million years ago, did more complex multicellular life appear. About 600 million years

ago, there was a rapid increase in the variety of higher life forms. Around 590 million years ago, exoskeletal animals such as trilobites, brachiopods, and shelled mollusks appeared. By 550 million years ago, the first vertebrates, such as jawless fish and graptolites, appeared (Rich, 33-35). It is not until 145 million years ago that birds first appear. Why birds are included with sea animals rather than land animals is not clear, but as we stated before, the separation into periods is, in a sense, artificial since the creative process was a continuous one.

23 And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that they called night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that they called day; and it was the fifth time.

The Sixth Creative Time (verses 24-31): The land is prepared to eventually receive modern animal life.

24 And the Gods prepared the earth to bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind; and it was so, as they had said.

25 And the Gods organized the earth to bring forth the beasts after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind; and the Gods saw they would obey.

verses 24-25 “the Gods prepared the earth” “the Gods organized the earth” Again, we see the type of creative process necessary in the preparatory creation of the earth. Contrast this with the direct and simple spirit creation process described in Moses 2:24-25.

The cattle and “creeping things” referred to in these verses are part of the modern life forms that will inhabit the earth millions of years hence. When they arrive they will propagate “after their kind.”

“the Gods saw they would obey” Who is *they*? *They* either refers to the intelligences which inhabited the inanimate things of the earth which were involved in the preparatory creation process or it refers to the spirit animals and their willingness to eventually take upon themselves physical bodies when the time arrives for them to come to earth. This suggests that all animal life, as well as all humans, have come to this earth voluntarily.

The fossil records show that about 370 million years ago, amphibians first appeared. By 340 million years ago the earliest reptiles were present, and by 320 million years ago mammal-like reptiles were found. Winged insects appeared around 310 million years ago. By 220 million years ago, there was a large variety of mammal-like reptiles, but it was not until about 90 million years ago that marsupials (animals with

pouches like the kangaroo) and placentals (animals in which the young develop in a womb or placenta) appeared (Rich, 33-35).

Around 65 million years ago, there was a period of mass extinction in which dinosaurs and many other kinds of life disappeared. This may have been caused by the impact of a giant asteroid producing so much debris in the air that a situation analogous to a “nuclear winter” developed (Rich, 33-35). The fossil record also shows other major extinction events, such as the Permian period around 250 million years ago (Rich, 247). Sixty-two million years ago, the first primates appeared, and by 60 million years ago, there was a great diversity of mammal types. Rodents first arrived on the scene about 45 million years ago, and hominids (man-like creatures) arrived about 19 million years ago (Rich, 33-35).

verses 26-31, plus Abraham 5:1-3 These verses contain an account of the fifth Grand Council of the Gods convened on the celestial planet. It was during this council that the war in heaven occurred. Since the beginning of the physical creation, Lucifer had been plotting and planning to gain control over the planet earth. We know that when he was rejected as the overseer for the construction of the physical earth, he became “angry,” and “many followed after him” (Abraham 3:27-28).

The forces of righteousness who opposed Lucifer and his followers from the beginning of his rebellion were led by Michael, the archangel (Revelation 12:7). This is, of course, the same Michael who would soon descend through the veil of forgetfulness and become Adam, the first father of the human family on the physical earth. The culmination of this ideological confrontation was a “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7), and “heaven,” as we may recall, refers to the spirit earth (Moses 3:5).

Now that the physical earth was prepared for modern life, and Adam and Eve were about to be placed on it, the time had come to choose a savior for all mankind. This is best described by the prophet Moses in his account of the fifth Grand Council which had begun on the celestial world. In this forum, Lucifer brazenly approached the throne of the Father and demanded: “Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor” (Moses 4:1). Jehovah, who was close at hand, approached the Father’s throne and simply said: “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2). The Father then announced that Jehovah would be our Savior. The Father then turned to Lucifer and his followers and thrust them out of the celestial realm and cast them down to earth (Moses 4:3; JST Revelation 12:4, 6-8). Lucifer and his followers were fully deserving of their awful fate. They had openly rebelled against the plan of the Father and against his Firstborn Son (D&C 76:25; Abraham 3:27). Lucifer had attempted to rob the Father’s spirit family of their agency, that is, their God-given capacity to choose for themselves (Moses 4:3). Or at least he had attempted to greatly curtail their freedoms so they had little choice left but to obey

him. He had also openly coveted God's own power—the honor from a cosmos of intelligences by which God rules and reigns (D&C 29:36-37). Lucifer and his followers were not simply asked to leave the celestial realm. Rather they were “thrust” down to a specific region on the spirit earth to which they had been condemned. This is “hell,” where the former Lucifer has become Satan; where he and his angels reign; and which was prepared “from the beginning” (D&C 29:38). This is also the region which is largely bereft of the Lord's comforting Spirit to which the disobedient are condemned to suffer because they would not partake of the gift of the Savior's atonement (D&C 19:16-20). Since the time of their condemnation, these rebellious spirits have unremittingly made “war with the saints of God and encompassed them round about” (D&C 76:29). Furthermore, Satan has not accepted defeat. He is still attempting to regain his former status as Lucifer—and more (see Isaiah 14:13-14). The immediate reaction in heaven to Lucifer's rebellion and eviction was one of shock and dismay (see Isaiah 14:12; D&C 76:26-27).

Now that the celestial home planet was cleansed of its rebellious inhabitants, it was time to prepare the physical earth for the arrival of modern life forms. The grand councilors left the celestial realms and reconvened their Grand Council on the earth. Abraham's account of the remainder of this council consists of only nine verses (Abraham 4:26-5:3) and is but a partial agenda of the work of the council. It is apparent that the council had to accomplish the following work:

1. They would remove all remaining preparatory life forms from the earth.
2. Then they would “sanctify” the earth, that is, elevate it to a translated state in which no death, decay, or dissolution could take place.
3. The Gods would then return to their celestial residence and rest from all their labors.
4. Following their rest, the Gods would come down again to the physical earth to modify its crust one last time in order to prepare it for the arrival of modern life forms from other planets.
5. Then they would bring the parental stock of modern life forms to the physical earth from other planets—first vegetation and then animal life.
6. Then the first parents of the human race, Adam and Eve, would be brought to the earth—actually, more likely born here.
7. A special garden would be planted and prepared for Adam and Eve for their use and enjoyment.

As stated previously, the creation quorum of the earth consisted of three individuals, namely Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael (*JD*, 1:51). The power of creation is delegated through the eternal priesthood. Adam seems to have functioned as “construction foreman.” He did not work alone. Rather he functioned “with the help of his brethren” (Brigham Young, speech of June 8, 1873, *Deseret News*, 22:308). Joseph F. Smith indicated that these assistants included Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses,

Nephi, Joseph Smith and others of the “noble and great ones” who had been foreordained in their pre-mortal state to become the spiritual leaders of each gospel dispensation (Abraham 3:22; D&C 138:53-56). Under the direction of the quorum of creation, the Gods and their associates went down to the newly prepared physical earth. They would first organize its environment and then bring in a host of modern life—including man.

Possible Chronology of the Events of Creation **

Period	Activity	Details	Years Ago
First	Formation of solar system	Earliest meteorites formed	4.7 billion
		Solar system formed	4.6 billion
		Oldest lunar rocks	4.2 billion
		Oldest terrestrial rocks	3.8 billion
Second	Formation of Atmosphere	First (original) atmosphere	4.0 billion
		Volcanic activity formed second atmosphere	4.0 billion
		Blue-green algae begins to produce O ₂ in atmosphere	3.5 billion
		Oxygen level reaches 5% of present value	800 million
Third	Formation of continents and ocean plant life	Plate tectonics begins	3.7 billion
		Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)	3.5 billion
		Green Algae	1.5 billion
		Land plants	420 million
		Flowering plants	120 million
		Grasses	57 million
Fourth	Appearance of sun, moon and stars	Light pressure from the sun clears out residual gas and dust	4.5 to 4.4 billion
Fifth	Sea birds and animals	Cambrian explosion of complex life forms	600 million
		Exoskeletal animals	590 million
		Vertebrates	550 million
		Birds	145 million
Sixth	Land Animals	Amphibians	370 million
		Reptiles	340 million
		Mammal-like reptiles	320 million
		Marsupials and placentals	90 million

		Primates	62 million
		Rodents	45 million
		Homonids	19 million

** The dating of the events listed in this table and in the commentary are science's best estimates of when these things occurred. These dates are not to be taken as church doctrine. They could be completely wrong. God may have ways of accomplishing his works that are far beyond our present (or even future) scientific understanding.

26 And the Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

verse 26 “**And the Gods took counsel among themselves**” This is the fifth Grand Council of the Gods. This council begins on the celestial planet but is concluded on the earth during the seventh time. This is the Grand Council in which plans were made for the third creative period, the placement of man and modern life forms upon the earth.

27 So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.

verse 27 Here we are still in the sixth creative period. Adam and Eve were not actually placed upon the earth until the seventh creative period. In this verse, the Gods had simply come to earth to do it.

Note carefully here a most profound truth. The physical bodies of the human race have been made in the general image of the Master Creators of the universe. We know that the Gods have created many other intelligent beings in an innumerable variety of forms. John the Revelator saw some of these intelligent creatures in vision (Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-14; 6:1-8; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 18:13; 19:4). Nevertheless, the Gods have reserved to themselves and their offspring the human form. Those who have speculated as to the appearance of the dominant life forms on other earth-like planets should make careful note of this fact.

28 And the Gods said: We will bless them. And the Gods said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

verse 28 Here the Gods state their intent to admonish the human family to:

1. “**be fruitful, and multiply**” This commandment is to be obeyed only under the conditions of the sacred order of marriage. Those capable of bringing children into

mortality through marriage and family, but refuse to do it for any reason, are guilty of disobedience of this important command.

2. **“replenish the earth”** The Hebrew word in Genesis translated as “replenish” (*male*) means “to fill,” without the implication of “refilling” which “replenish” suggests in modern English. This is an extension or expansion of the first commandment. We are not just to “multiply,” that is, to have children, but to have as many as our circumstances will permit. This ensures that earth will be filled with the spirit inhabitants of heaven who are anxiously awaiting their turn to receive a physical body.

Some of those who refuse to raise up a family complain that we are already suffering from a “population explosion” that will surely exhaust the earth’s capacity to sustain them all. The Lord has revealed that the earth’s resources are more than sufficient to comfortably sustain all the human beings assigned to it: “I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork . . . For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves” (D&C 104:14, 17).

3. **“subdue it [the earth]”** This means to render the physical earth usable and useful for the human race. This would include farming the soil and domesticating the animal life of the earth to bring forth the necessary resources for humanity’s food and clothing. It would also include drilling and mining out the mineral resources from the earth’s crust. It would also include building highways and railways for the transportation of people and resources. It might also include employing the earth’s river systems for transportation and the generation of energy.

4. **“have dominion . . . over every living thing”** This is the Lord’s command for man to take control of and maintain dominion or lordship over the earth’s plant and animal life. This dominion must be a “righteous” and wise one. Perhaps “stewardship” best describes this dominion of man over the rest of creation. There should be no wanton or purposeless destruction of animal or plant life. The Lord has warned: “And wo be unto that man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need” (D&C 49:21). He has also cautioned that animal life is to be taken “only for meat, and to save your lives.” Further, “the blood of every beast [killed otherwise] will I require at your hands” (JST Genesis 9:11). The antithesis of those who would wantonly abuse the earth’s life forms is those who would elevate the plants and animals of the earth above the needs of the human race. Motivated by the dogmas of heathen religions or popular movements of the day, some have sought to deify non-human life forms, both in the name of “religion” or “the environment.” These are also apostate doctrines.

These are the same commandments the human family received on the spirit earth.

29 And the Gods said: Behold, we will give them every herb bearing seed that shall come upon the face of all the earth, and every tree which shall have fruit

upon it; yea, the fruit of the tree yielding seed to them we will give it; it shall be for their meat.

verse 29 “it shall be for their meat” The Grand Council plans to provide vegetables and fruit for the “meat” of man. The Hebrew word translated as “meat” is *’oklah*, which is better translated as “food; eating.” In King James English, “meat” had the broader sense of “food” rather than just “flesh” as it now does.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, behold, we will give them life, and also we will give to them every green herb for meat, and all these things shall be thus organized.

verses 29-30 Here the Gods declare in their fifth Council that man and animal life will be given herbs and fruits for food once they have been placed on the earth. This modern plant life, which included vegetables and fruits, was not yet upon the physical earth, but after it arrived, they said, “it shall be for their meat.” Note that this vegetarian diet was limited to the sanctified conditions that prevailed before Adam’s fall. It will again apply to humans and animals when the earth returns to its sanctified state during the Millennium. Brigham Young wrote: “When men live to the age of a tree, their food will be fruit” (*JD*, 8:63).

31 And the Gods said: We will do everything that we have said, and organize them; and behold, they shall be very obedient. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning they called night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that they called day; and they numbered the sixth time.

verse 31 “We will do everything that we have said, and organize them” Again, we are now reading the minutes of the fifth Grand Council of the Gods which is planning for the introduction of modern life forms (plants, animals, and man) into the earth.

“they shall be very obedient” The antecedent of the pronoun *they* is “every beast of the earth, and . . . every fowl of the air, and . . . every thing that creepeth upon the earth.” It would seem that the animals and fowls of the earth have more of a natural tendency to be obedient to the laws under which they are placed than do the human family.

This verse concludes the sixth creative period. The fifth and final Grand Council of the Gods will continue into the seventh period of creation.

Abraham Chapter 5 The Final Preparatory Creation

As we have discussed previously, Abraham 5 (plus Genesis 2 and Moses 3) is likely the account of the third creative period. This is the final preparation of the mortal earth for the introduction of modern life forms including man upon the earth and the introduction of those modern life forms to the earth (see also the introductory commentary for Moses 3). This third creative period follows millions or perhaps billions of years of preparatory physical creation.

verses 1-3 These verses conclude the abbreviated account of the fifth Grand Council of the Gods wherein the final preparatory creation of the earth and the introduction of modern life forms was planned. The actual account of the third creative period begins in verse 4.

1 And thus we will finish the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of them.

verse 1 “**And thus we will finish the heavens and the earth**” It is obvious that the earth was not yet fully prepared for modern life, as the Gods are still contemplating its completion.

“**and all the hosts of them**” The “hosts” are the modern life forms—the physical plants, the physical animals, and the physical bodies of mankind whose spirits had been previously created on the spirit earth (Moses 2:1-31). The term “heavens and the earth” must refer to the land, marine environment, and atmospheric environment of the physical earth since the Gods are about to bring into the “heavens and the earth” the land, marine, and aerial life forms that comprise “all the hosts of them.”

2 And the Gods said among themselves: On the seventh time we will end our work, which we have counseled; and we will rest on the seventh time from all our work which we have counseled.

3 And the Gods concluded upon the seventh time, because that on the seventh time they would rest from all their works which they (the Gods) counseled among themselves to form; and sanctified it. And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth.

verse 3 “**and sanctified it**” It should be noted that in the spirit creation, God sanctified the seventh day of the week as a day of worship (Moses 3:4). This isolated term “and sanctified it” refers not just to a day of worship but to the earth itself. The earth will be sanctified before modern life forms can be brought to the earth. The prophet Joseph Smith drew an analogy between the completion and sanctification of the physical earth and the final stages of the earth’s mortal existence (the Millennium): “As God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and

sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, so in the beginning of the seventh thousand years [of the earth's mortal existence] will the Lord sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man" (D&C 77:12). That is, in the physical creation the Lord "finished his work" by removing all remnants of preparatory life and then sanctifying the earth in preparation for the arrival of modern life forms and Adam and Eve. In like manner will the wicked be destroyed and removed and the earth be sanctified in preparation for the Savior's Millennial reign.

Joseph Smith revealed that during the Millennium the earth "will be renewed, and receive its paradisiacal glory" (Tenth article of Faith). Apparently in that day the earth will be restored to those conditions that prevailed near the beginning of the third creation epoch when it had been prepared for modern life.

This sanctification of the earth is to be repeated yet a third time. At the end of the Millennium the earth will be filled with wickedness again. However, the wicked will be swept away in a final and victorious confrontation between the armies of God, led by Michael, and the armies of evil, led by Lucifer (D&C 111-16). Then the earth will undergo for the last time a sanctification in preparation for its celestial inhabitants (D&C 29:22-24). This last sanctification will last "forever and ever" (D&C 88:20, 28-29; 130:9).

Just what does it mean to "sanctify" the earth? Sanctification is a state of perfection in which no intervening veil hides the Father and his celestial residence from view. In this state of existence, the seeds of death are suspended. All living things are quickened and can never die. They are thus in a sense immortal.

Brigham Young said of this first sanctification of the earth—this third creation epoch: "[God] formed and organized [the earth] as it was in the beginning, and made it perfect, pure, and holy" (*JD*, 2:300).

"And thus were their decisions at the time that they counseled among themselves to form the heavens and the earth." To which decisions does this phrase apply. Some students of the creation story have concluded, as we have previously mentioned, that the entire creation account in Abraham 4 (verses 1-25) is the minutes of a planning session among the Gods. One point against this idea, however, is that the verb tenses in Abraham 4:1-25 suggest that Abraham is describing events as they actually occurred. All principle verbs are in the past or present tense—the Gods "went down," "comprehended," "divided," "called," "ordered," "pronounced," "prepared," "organized," "numbered," and "watched." Only after all these events have transpired does Abraham's account shift to a future verb tense (Abraham 4:26-5:3) indicating that the Gods are planning for events that are yet to happen. Alternatively this phrase in Abraham 5:3 could simply be referring to those decisions made by the fifth Grand Council of the Gods described in Abraham 4:26-5:3.

The Third Creative Epoch: The Placement of Modern Life Forms Upon the Earth

verses 4-21 These verses describe the placement of modern life on the earth by the Gods. Note that most of the events included in this third and concluding section of Abraham's creation account are also described by Moses in Moses 3 (compare also Genesis 2). For the commentary on these verses, also see the commentary for Moses 3:6-25.

The waters of the earth are now ready to accept the physical bodies of modern aquatic life. The air is ready to accept the physical bodies of modern aerial creatures. And, the land is ready to accept the physical bodies of all modern animal life including its highest and most perfected form—man.

Verses 4 and 5 refer to the initiatory events of the third and last creation epoch of the earth. These events, though only briefly alluded to here, involved an enormous and extensive labor by the Gods on the physical earth.

4 And the Gods came down and formed these the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were formed in the day that the Gods formed the earth and the heavens,

verse 4 “And the Gods came down” Here Abraham refers to Jehovah and Michael who had been sent down to the physical earth to prepare it for modern life. Although Michael (later, Adam) had been assigned to work directly under Jehovah (D&C 78:16), he was given the primary responsibility to see that the earth was organized and prepared to receive modern life. Brigham Young taught: “Our father Adam helped to make this world, and was the chief manager in that operation” (*JD*, 3:319).

The “forming” going on in this verse does not in fact refer to creation. Rather it refers to the process of sanctification of the entire earth in preparation for the arrival of modern life forms.

5 According to all that which they had said concerning every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for the Gods had not caused it to rain upon the earth when they counseled to do them, and had not formed a man to till the ground.

verse 5 “for the Gods had not caused it to rain upon the earth” This phrase has led some to the mistaken conclusion that it had not rained at all on the physical earth before this time. More likely this phrase refers to the fact that since the onset of the third creation epoch, that is, during the period of the introduction of modern life forms, it had not yet rained upon the earth. Of course it had rained as many times as necessary during the preparatory or second creation epoch that had ended not long

before. Rain was withheld until the planting of the modern plants and trees was complete. When the rain did fall, it moistened a freshly-seeded soil.

6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

verse 6 The Hebrew word translated in the KJV as “mist” is *‘ed*, which refers to a freshwater stream or fountain. The word occurs only here and in Job 36:27. The Septuagint (Greek version) has *pege*—“spring or well.” A better rendering might be “fresh water welled up and watered the entire surface of the ground.” Here is the first water to be applied to the modern life forms. This rain preceded the formation of man.

7 And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man’s spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

verse 7 See also the commentary for Moses 3:7. There is a significant difference between the spirit creation and the physical creation. During the first creation epoch, the spirit children of the Father were placed on the spirit earth on the sixth day (Moses 2:26-27). During the physical creation, man did not arrive on the earth until the seventh creative period or “time.”

Though it is not clearly stated, this verse is describing the creation of both male and female, or more specifically, Adam and Eve (see Abraham 4:27).

From this verse’s brief description, one may mistakenly assume that Adam’s creation simply consisted of molding a manlike form from the dust of the earth and placing Adam’s spirit into it. That aspect of the verse is, of course, metaphorical. Both Adam and Eve were born to celestial parents, Elohim and his eternal companion.

8 And the Gods planted a garden, eastward in Eden, and there they put the man, whose spirit they had put into the body which they had formed.

verse 8 **“a garden eastward in Eden”** There are two possible explanations for the immortal, paradisiacal condition which existed in the Garden of Eden. First, it is possible that the Lord removed all of the early life forms from the earth and then sanctified the entire earth in association to the third creation epoch. Thus, it might have been that all plant and animal life forms, including of course, Adam and Eve, were immortal at the time of the Eden story. The other possibility is that the rest of the world was mortal (as it had been for millions or even billions of years) and only in the Garden of Eden did an immortal, paradisiacal condition prevail.

“there they put the man” Both Adam and Eve were placed in the garden.

9 And out of the ground made the Gods to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life, also, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

verse 9 “pleasant to the sight and good for food” God created the various forms of plant life not only for food but also to appeal to our esthetic sense of beauty.

“the tree of life” The fruit of the tree of life, when ingested, had the power to restore immortality to a mortal body, which is why Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden after their transgression—so they could not partake of the fruit of this tree.

“the tree of knowledge of good and evil” It is not clear whether the story of this tree is literal or figurative. If it is literal, then an immortal being’s ingesting the fruit of this tree resulted in a state of mortality and a cessation of the immortal state. But perhaps it is only a figurative story as Elder Bruce R. McConkie has implied: “What is meant by partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is that our first parents complied with whatever laws were involved so that their bodies would change from their state of paradisiacal immortality to a state of natural mortality” (“Christ and the Creation,” *Ensign*, June 1982, 15).

10 There was a river running out of Eden, to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became into four heads.

verse 10 “There was a river running out of Eden” This verse refers to a river not named by the Lord running out of the continental land mass of Eden. Upstream from Eden there were four “heads” or tributaries that fed it. The Book of Moses gives additional information about these four tributaries (see Moses 3:10-14 and the commentary for these verses).

11 And the Gods took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

verse 11 “to dress it and to keep it” Paradise is not a place of idle rest and relaxation but a place where meaningful work is done.

12 And the Gods commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

13 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord’s time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning.

verse 13 See the commentary for Moses 3:17

“in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” Adam did, of course, eat the forbidden fruit and died within one thousand years. Thus, this phrase

has given rise to the idea each of Abraham's "times" was only one thousand years long. We have amply previously discussed the age of our earth.

14 And the Gods said: Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man should be alone, therefore we will form an help meet for him.

verse 14 "it is not good that the man should be alone" A person's eternal potential can be realized only within the bonds of eternal marriage (see D&C 131:1-4).

"we will form an help meet for him" The Hebrew for "help meet" is *ezer k'negdo*, which literally means "a help corresponding to him," one that is "equal to and adequate for him." Adam needed a mate who was complementary to him, who would make him complete.

verses 15-19 These verses contain the figurative telling of the birth of Eve. We know that Eve, just as was Adam, was born of the body of the celestial Eternal Father and a celestial Mother.

15 And the Gods caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and he slept, and they took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof;

16 And of the rib which the Gods had taken from man, formed they a woman, and brought her unto the man.

17 And Adam said: This was bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; now she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man;

verse 17 "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" Again, this does not mean that Eve's physical body was derived from Adam's body but rather that the bodies of Adam and Eve derive from a common source—they are genetically related. They at least had a common Father (God the Father) and perhaps a common mother who gave birth to their paradisiacal bodies. This interpretation is supported by the account of Jacob's initial meeting with Laban. When Laban learned that Jacob was his sister's son, he said, "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh" (Genesis 29:14).

"she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" There is a play on words here. In Hebrew "man" is *'is*, and "woman" is *'isah*—the same word but with the addition of a feminine ending.

18 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

verse 18 "shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" Marriage is to be a decisive alteration of the earlier family relationship. A new household is set up, and one's spouse has priority over any earlier familial relationships. One of the primary purposes of mortality is to form an eternal

companionship in the bonds of celestial marriage. Adam and Eve were the first on this earth to be sealed together for eternity.

“they shall be one flesh” This can be understood both literally and figuratively. Figuratively, it refers to the unity that should be an integral part of the marriage relationship. Literally, it is a reference to sexual relations between husband and wife, in which the two become “one flesh.”

19 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

verse 19 Adam and Eve before the fall were in a state of childlike innocence, and they felt no shame or embarrassment when they were both naked.

20 And out of the ground the Gods formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that should be the name thereof.

21 And Adam gave names to all cattle, to the fowl of the air, to every beast of the field; and for Adam, there was found an help meet for him.

Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham

Before beginning your study of this chapter, please review the supplemental article, *The Book of Abraham Facsimiles*. Also, you must have the facsimile images immediately available to you. One of the most important points made in that supplemental article is that when Facsimiles 1, 2, and 3 were initially encountered on the papyri by Joseph Smith there was likely no actual connection between them and the book of Abraham. Today we include them and associate them with the book of Abraham because the facsimiles were used by the prophet Joseph as a trigger for receiving further revelation about Abraham. There is likely a near complete disconnect between Joseph's "explanation" or "interpretation" of each of the facsimiles and how Egyptologist might interpret them.

Joseph's "interpretations" of the facsimiles of the book of Abraham contribute to the story of Abraham's life in a logical, sequential order. In Facsimile 1, Abraham is saved from being sacrificed. Facsimile 2 contains the knowledge of astronomy revealed to Abraham. Facsimile 3 depicts Abraham's teaching this astronomical knowledge in Pharaoh's court.

A word on the "Explanation" of each of the facsimiles that is found in the Book of Abraham is in order here. The "Explanation" of each identifies the various elements found in the facsimile. The explanation of what is actually happening in the facsimile is found in the text of the Book of Abraham itself. Our present text of the Book of Abraham stops before the explanation of Facsimile 3 occurs. No passage in the Book of Abraham actually discusses Abraham's sitting upon the throne of Pharaoh and teaching or "reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy."

Facsimiles No. 1 and 3

As discussed in the aforementioned supplemental article (*The Book of Abraham Facsimiles*), Facsimiles 1 and 3 were, respectively, the opening and closing vignettes (illustrations) of the Sensen (Breathing) text found on the Joseph Smith papyri. As also mentioned in that article, the purpose of the Sensen or Breathing texts was to prevent annihilation of the ba and ka of the individual (the spirit and the intelligence).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Facsimile No. 3 does not have the advantage of a text within the Book of Abraham to accompany, complement, and determine the sense in which this Egyptian scene is to be understood.

Facsimiles Nos. 1 and 3 are located in the Book of Abraham in such a way as to appropriately illustrate the text of Abraham. For example, Facsimile No. 1 illustrates the first chapter of Abraham. Facsimile No. 3 (in all editions before 1981) appears at the very end of the Book of Abraham, suggesting that it was intended to illustrate an additional but yet unpublished text of Abraham. Just such an addition to the Book of

Abraham was promised by Joseph Smith. John Taylor became the editor of the *Times and Seasons* after the publications by the prophet Joseph of all we now have in the Book of Abraham. President Taylor encouraged the saints at that time to renew their subscriptions so that they would not miss the “further extracts.” Facsimile No. 3 was published in May of 1842, unaccompanied by a text other than the brief “Explanation” included with the Facsimile. These “further extracts” may well have included the text which Facsimile No. 3 illustrates. Growing public hostility perhaps made it inadvisable to expose mankind to more scripture with the prospect that it would, if rejected, damn more lives than it would bless. Consequently the “further extracts” never saw the light of day.

Facsimile No. 2

Facsimile No. 2 was created from a small disk-shaped amulet that was placed under the head of the deceased, and hence is known as a hypocephalus (literally meaning “under the head”).

The Joseph Smith hypocephalus was not among the papyri fragments given to the Church in 1967 by the New York Metropolitan Museum. The oldest known rendition of the Joseph Smith hypocephalus is the copy found in a document titled “Valuable Discovery of hidden records that have been obtained from the ancient burying place of the Egyptians, Joseph Smith, Jr.” On page 13 of that document the hypocephalus is sketched. This sketch includes blank spaces where signs were missing. Presumably this is because the original hypocephalus that was part of the Joseph Smith papyri was damaged and therefore incomplete. Signs that now occupy the blank spaces in the “Valuable Discovery” sketch are signs restored or replaced by Joseph Smith. We thus learn that the Book of Abraham, Facsimile No. 2 is a modified restoration of a damaged hypocephalus. Comparing this sketch with our present Facsimile No. 2 allows us to clearly identify the signs that were restored. This “Valuable Discovery” sketch, however, is considered to be a poor copy of the original.

Another resource copy is the 1842 *Times and Seasons* woodcut of Facsimile No. 2. The sketch also shows some blank areas in the hypocephalus. These include (1) the right third of the border, (2) the right half of figures 12, 13, 14, and 15, (3) the segment where figure 3 now exists, and (4) the head of the god in figure 1. These areas were probably destroyed by white Egyptian ants which frequently eat the linen of hypocephali. Hence, our present-day Facsimile No. 2 contains extensive restorations made under the direction of the prophet Joseph.

But the restoration has some errors. For example, a careful comparison of the figures on the original outer border of Facsimile No. 2 (those portions that were not damaged) with the restored figures shows differences. The restored signs are hieratic (a later abbreviated form of hieroglyphics), not hieroglyphic, and are inverted, or upside down, compared to the rest of the text. In fact, they are a fairly accurate copy of lines 2,

3, and 4 of the Joseph Smith Papyrus XI, which contains a portion of the Book of Breathings. Especially clear is the word *snsn* (the Egyptian word for breathing) in figure 14. Also found in the restored figures is part of the name of the mother of the owner of the papyrus. Someone, probably the engraver, Reuben Hedlock, copied the lines from the Book of Breathings papyrus to fill in the missing parts.

The head of the central figure (figure 1) was replaced by the head of the standing figure at the top center, minus the feather headdress (figure 2). Note that the head in figure 1 is also misaligned, being placed over the figure's left knee rather than over its torso. The boat that was missing in the upper right (figure 3) probably came from the Book of the Dead papyrus belonging to Osiris Hor (Horus). Interestingly, a figure of a boat just like this and in the same position is found on several other hypocephali that have been discovered.

Specific characteristics of Facsimile No. 2 indicate an approximate date of 325 BC for the origin of this hypocephalus pattern. It is presumed that the particular hypocephalus that was part of the Joseph Smith papyri was created around the time its owner lived—AD 60 or shortly thereafter and was produced as a copy of an earlier hypocephalus. It could not have originated in its present form in the time of Abraham. It is an Egyptian illustration of the Book of Breathings that was adopted by Joseph Smith as an illustration for the text of the Book of Abraham in this dispensation.

Today, surviving hypocephali are few in number. The rarity of these documents indicates that they were never a part of mainstream Egyptian practices. The term hypocephalus was given to these documents by Champollion, the foremost of the Rossetta Stone interpreters. They may be made of papyrus, stuccoed linen, bronze, gold, wood, or clay. At times the papyrus was “plastered” to the back of the head of the deceased with moist clay or simply placed under the head. The hypocephalus was intended to protect, preserve, and to enliven the mummy. The Egyptians believed it would magically cause the head and body to be enveloped in flames or radiance, making the deceased divine (Richard Lepsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Agypter nach dem hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin* [Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1842], ch 162, line 10). The hypocephalus symbolized the eye of Ra or Horus (Samuel Birch, “Hypocephalus in the Possession of Sir Henry B. Meux, Bart” in *Proceedings for the Society of Biblical Archeology*, November 1883, 3), that is, the sun. The contents of these hypocephali often included rather high-sounding religious commitments and aspirations. The scenes portrayed on it relate to the Egyptian concept of resurrection and life after death. The various figures found on the hypocephali generally deal with the Egyptian hope of resurrection and eternal life with the gods. The text of the hypocephali which have been discovered contain prayers to Osiris, the god of the dead, that the deceased may be resurrected and dwell with Osiris in the hereafter. To the Egyptians, the daily rising and setting of the sun was a vivid symbol of the resurrection. The hypocephalus itself represented all that the sun encircles, the whole world. The upper portion represented

the world of men and the day sky, and the lower portion (the part with the cow) represented the netherworld and the night sky. The earliest samples of these objects are from a period of about 600 BC with text and illustrations written on papyrus. After 300 BC, linen stiffened with plaster was used to form these amulets. The disk shape of the hypocephalus, which represented the eye of the Sun God, continued in use through Roman times.

The writings on the known hypocephali are expressions of the hypocephalus owners. They were expected to insure their owners' success while "on earth" as well as to perpetuate his continued existence "in the Netherworld."

A Comparative (Egyptologists vs. Joseph Smith) Interpretation of the Facsimiles

Our commentary for each of the Facsimiles will include a comparison between the consensus interpretations of Egyptologists and Joseph Smith's inspired explanations. The former will be preceded by an "E." The latter will be marked with a "J." Those parts of the text that are part of the scripture will be identified with blue text. These are obviously a part of Joseph's inspired explanations.

A FACSIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM No. 1

E The Egyptologist's interpretation of Facsimile 1 is that the deceased owner of the papyrus, Osiris Hor or Horus, is lying on a lion-couch and is being resurrected. Above his head is a bird representing his soul (Egyptian ba). The standing figure is Anubis, god of mummification and guide of the dead, who leads the resurrected person to the hall of judgment and, if the person passes the judgment, into the presence of Osiris, the god of resurrection. There are other surviving Egyptian scenes portraying a resurrection. These show some differences when compared to the scene in the book of Abraham Facsimile 1. For one thing they show an unclothed figure lying on the lion couch with only one arm raised, and the other at his side. Facsimile 1 is unique in that the figure is clothed, and both of his hands are raised in the classical Egyptian gesture of prayer. Also unique to this illustration is the water with a crocodile.

J Joseph Smith's inspired interpretation of this facsimile is that Abraham is being saved from being sacrificed by an angel of the Lord in the form of a hawk.

One of the observations of the Egyptologists that worked with the Facsimiles was that there are differences between the damaged original papyrus version of Facsimile 1 and the book of Abraham version of Facsimile 1. These have been discussed above. The conclusion that is quite correctly drawn by these observers is that an accurate interpretation of the original vignette or text would not be possible without an accurate restoration. But was it desirable or necessary for Joseph Smith to restore the original vignettes or the hypocephalus? The message of the Sensen text, if perfectly restored, interpreted, and translated, would be of little use or interest to Latter-day Saints. The only value of the first vignette of the Sensen text was its near-perfect appropriateness

as an illustration for the Book of Abraham as it was interpreted by Joseph Smith. Consequently, restorations were made to fill in the blank spaces and occasionally to compliment the text of Abraham, not the Sensen text.

In comparing the Egyptologists interpretation of these various figures with the explanations of Joseph Smith, please note the remarkable similarities as well as the differences. There is nothing in Joseph's interpretation of Facsimile No. 1 that does not correlate in some way with the interpretations of the Egyptologists.

It is obvious, common-sense knowledge that when Joseph Smith was not operating under the inspiration of the Spirit, he knew nothing about Egyptian hieroglyphics. He was incapable of making the most elementary kinds of judgments concerning the meaning or form of hieroglyphic signs. That very inability makes his accuracy when inspired all the more profound. It is difficult to believe that this outcome could result from anyone except a prophet of God.

Fig. 1. The Angel of the Lord.

E Most opening vignettes from Sensen texts have here a ba-bird which is representing the human soul. In this particular case, the bird would represent the soul of the owner of the papyrus (Osiris Hor or Horus) which is hovering over his head as he is lying on the lion couch.

J But it is peculiar in that this particular vignette has been restored with a hawk. The Hawk is the sign of a powerful divine or celestial being. In Egyptian mythology it is Horus (the hawk) who delivers his father Osiris from death.

Just as the hawk delivered his father Osiris from death, so the hawk is here delivering Abraham from death.

Fig. 2. Abraham fastened upon an altar.

E The god Osiris represents the deceased, whose posture indicates that he is in the act of offering prayer. Egyptians believed that the deceased wished to become like Osiris, and that he literally becomes an Osiris, a god. Osiris is the Egyptian god and judge of the dead. Osiris is a Messianic figure. He is both the god of the dead and the god of the resurrection. He is the good shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep.

J In Abraham 1:15, the figure is identified as Abraham who says, "Behold, I lifted up my voice to the Lord my God." It is not surprising that Abraham, who is also a type of the Messiah, should be portrayed in one of these messianic settings.

Fig. 3. The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.

E In the original vignette, this figure was likely Anubis, the jackal-headed Egyptian god who guided the dead to judgment.

J A note about the expression “priest of” or “god of” (figures 5-8) is appropriate here. This priest is acknowledged as a priest in the land of Elkenah (Canaan). The gods discussed below in the discussion for figures 5-8 are acknowledged as gods by those who live in their respective countries.

It is notable that Dr. John Gee has found an illustration of an Egyptian priest wearing a mask of Anubis. An actual mask of Anubis has also survived from ancient Egypt (*A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* [Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000], 36).

Fig. 4. The altar for sacrifice by the idolatrous priests, standing before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and Pharaoh.

E A “lion couch” often associated with Osiris and appears in ancient Egyptian scenes in many variations including Osiris begetting Horus, Osiris being renewed, Osiris being prepared for burial, Osiris ruling from the Netherworld, Osiris being resurrected, and Osiris triumphant and overcoming his enemies.

In this particular scene, the Egyptologists feel that this item is an embalming table.

Figs. 5-8. The idolatrous gods of (5) Elkenah , (6) Libnah , (7) Mahmackrah , and (8) Korash.

E Four canopic jars (jars used in Ancient Egypt to hold the entrails of an embalmed body) collectively called the Sons of Horus. They are four gods identified with the four lands adjacent to Egypt: Elkenah (Canaan) on the east; Libnah (Libya) on the west; Mahmackrah (Anatolia) on the north; and Korash (Cush) on the south. The east, west, north, and south orientation of these lands is consistent with the tradition that these sons of Horus were guardians of the pillars “which formed the four cardinal points.” The four gods held the pillars of heaven and earth in position as gods of the four cardinal points “who embrace the four Pure Lands” and are devoted to the service of Osiris. The sons of Horus were also guardians of the liver, intestines, stomach, and kidneys and therefore are represented on lids and bodies of jars used to store these visceral parts. In earlier times such jars all had the form of a human head, but by the end of the eighteenth dynasty (1370-1305 BC) they were crowned with the head of a man, an ape, a jackal, and a hawk (left to right).

J Elkenah (Canaan) seems clearly related to the Hebrew *elqanah* or *elqoneh* which mean “God has created” or “God is the creator.” Elkanah appears in the Old Testament as the name of Samuel’s father as well as several other people (see 1 Samuel 1:2; Exodus 6:24; 2 Chronicles 28:7; 1 Chronicles 6:8, 10, 21; 9:16; 15:23). It is also found as a divine name in Mesopotamian sources as *Il-gi-na*, *Il-ki-na*, or *El-ke-na* (Anton Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum, Sumerisches Lexikon*, part 4, volume 1, [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1950], 48).

Libnah (Libya) may be related to the Hebrew *l'banah* which means “moon” (Isaiah 24:23). A city captured by Joshua was called Libnah (Joshua 10:29).

No ancient etymology suggests itself for the place Mahmackrah (Anatolia).

The name Korash (Cush) is found as a name in Egyptian sources (John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, “Historical Plausibility: The Historicity of the Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” in *Historicity and the Latter-Day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson, [Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001], 75 and footnote 110). The connection with *kores*, the Persian king Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28), is also possible.

Fig. 9. The idolatrous god of Pharaoh.

E Sebek (also Sobek) the crocodile. According to Thebean tradition, the Pharaoh’s claim upon the throne was based upon his relationship with the crocodile god, Sebek. He (Sebek) dwelt on the “mountain of Sunrise” where he assisted Horus to be reborn daily. In so doing he overthrows every enemy of Osiris. His most impressive service was the role he played with the child Horus, who was to become the new king (Pharaoh). Sebek the crocodile god helped Horus take his seat upon the throne of his father Osiris.

The pharaohs of the 13th Dynasty (1783-1640 BC) particularly revered the crocodile god Sobek; several of them had the name Sobek-hotep—“the god Sobek is satisfied.”

Fig. 10. Abraham in Egypt.

E A lotus on an offering table, with perfume or ointment containers. As a symbol of light and life emerging from the primeval pond, it is appropriately located at the head of the altar of renewal. This symbol was also sacred with regard to Nefertum, the Lord of Perfumes.

The lotus was the symbol of Upper Egypt, including the area where the papyri of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Collection were found.

Fig. 11. Designed to represent the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians.

E The pillars of heaven. Egyptian terminology *shn.wt n.t p.t* means “pillars of heaven” (Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, [Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962], 241). The pillars are appropriately placed under the heavens, even though the heavens portrayed are beneath the earth.

Fig. 12. Raukeeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament over our heads; but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shaumau, to be high or the heavens, answering to the Hebrew word, Shaumahyeem.

E To the Egyptians the heavens were represented as seas which had no consistent orientation to the earth. The home of Sebek is both the solar sea above and the sea beneath. These seas were the mythological avenues to the Netherworld that must be traveled by everyone who would enter the presence of the gods.

J The word Raukeyang (Hebrew *raqi'a*) means “expanse” (Francis Brown e. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 956).

Shaumau (Hebrew *samah*) means “to be high or lofty” (*Ibid.*, 1029).

Shaumahyeem (Hebrew *samayim*) means “heavens, sky” (*Ibid.*, 1029).

A FACSIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM No. 2

J After receiving instruction on astronomy and the creations, which is recorded in the book of Abraham, Abraham was told by the Lord to “declare all these words” to the Egyptians (Abraham 3:15). Facsimile 2 contains the knowledge of astronomy revealed to Abraham. It is possible that gospel principles and concepts found among Egyptian beliefs may have been influenced by these things that Abraham taught.

The explanations given by the prophet Joseph for the figures in the Facsimile are not translations of an Egyptian text but are possible interpretations of ideographic signs. An ideogram is a sign or figure that represents an idea or concept. They are usually quite flexible and can be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the context in which they are placed. The explanation of Facsimile No. 2 resulted from the Prophet’s work with the ideograms and was not a translation of the accompanying text. Joseph interpreted appropriately nine of the eleven or so ideographic groups of signs on the Facsimile. A comparison of the original meaning, according to Egyptologists, of the hypocephalus illustrations with the Joseph Smith “explanations” demonstrates that every explanation made by Joseph is both a possible and a reasonable interpretation, well within the broad scope of possible meanings for each ideogram, while conveying a meaning uniquely suited to the Book of Abraham and its revealed message.

We will continue our same pattern of comparing the Egyptologist’s interpretation of the figures with the prophet Joseph’s interpretation.

Fig. 1. Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God. First in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. The measurement according to celestial time, which celestial time signifies one day to a cubit. One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth, which is called by the Egyptians Jah-oh-eh.

E This figure portrays a two-headed deity with head positioned on two back-to-back bodies with knees extended. With rare exception this deity is always portrayed with four heads. This four-headed deity represents Geb (earth), Shu(air), Ra (fire), and Osiris (water), the primary or first elements of creation. The god represented with the

ram's horned heads (to the reader's right) is Khnum-Ra, the great creator often portrayed at a potter's wheel fashioning human beings. As Khnum-Ra he combines the characteristics of Khnum the Creator with those of the sun god Ra. Khnum-Ra is he who "shines upon the earth and is creator of all things."

J The word Kolob may derive from either of two Semitic roots. One is the Hebrew *qarob* which has the meaning "to be near (Francis Brown e. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 898). The other root is the Hebrew *qereb*, meaning "middle or midst" (*Ibid.*, 899).

An inscription is added to figure 1 at the top near the center. This is a combination of signs that is not found on any fragments of the J. S. Papyri collection, nor on any other hypocephalus that is available for examination. This inscription consists of three signs. From the top of it and moving downward is the three horizontal lines. This is the sign for the primeval ocean, "Nu." One Egyptologist described Nu as "a deep and boundless watery mass out of which had come into being the heavens, and the earth, and everything that is in them. The next sign—the right angle—represents half the sky. The sky is located in mythology just below the water mass (Nu). The diagonal line which protrudes from this latter sign toward the left signifies water emerging from the side of the half sky sign. This sign is often associated with the Nile River. Traditions of Upper Egypt explain how "the Nile flood came forth from the Island of Elephantine whereon stood the first city that ever existed: out of it rose the sun when he went forth to bestow life upon man." The ideographic representation of water flowing from the half heaven signs, suggests the celestial or Heavenly Nile flowing from its primeval source on the Island of Elephantine "whereon stood the first city that ever existed" and from which "all good things poured forth." This is the Egyptian equivalent of Kolob. We thus see a combination of signs compatible with Joseph Smith's interpretations and with the references to Kolob in the text of Abraham.

"First in government" As explained in Abraham 3:9, Kolob governs all the planetary systems that belong to the same order as the earth.

"one day to a cubit" A cubit is typically a measure of length (the length of the forearm and hand) rather than time. We do not know how to interpret this.

"One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth" As is made clear in Abraham 3:16, Kolob is a star. The planet on which God dwells orbits this star, and this planet rotates on its axis once every thousand of our years.

"this earth, which is called by the Egyptians Jah-oh-eh" This is the only place the book of Abraham gives an actual translation of an Egyptian word. There is an Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol, which I am unable to reproduce here, which means "field, arable land, earth" (Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* [Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962], 4). In the latest stage of Egyptian, Coptic, which used a modified Greek alphabet, this word is pronounced "yohe" (with a long "o"). If we

assume that Joseph Smith is using the biblical convention of rendering a Semitic “y” as an English “j,” as in the name Jehovah, this word becomes “johē” which matches Jah-oh-eh quite closely.

Fig. 2. Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation near to the celestial or the place where God resides; holding the key of power also, pertaining to other planets; as revealed from God to Abraham, as he offered sacrifice upon an altar, which he had built unto the Lord.

E The deity in this figure is found on many hypocephali of the same period. In Egyptian mythology he is identified as Amen-Ra. He is described as a “double-faced deity, with two feathers on his head, and holding in his left hand a standard surmounted by a jackal. This is Amen, the supreme god of Thebes, identified with Ra, the Sun, under the name of Amen-Ra.” The two heads are thought to represent the rising and setting sun.

Amen is the Hidden One, i.e., “the personification of the hidden and unknown creative power . . . associated with . . . primeval . . . gods in the creation of the world and all that is in it.” The name Amen means “what is hidden,” or that which is not seen and not known. When Amen was coupled with Ra, forming the composite god Amen-Ra, he became the mysterious creative power that was the source of all life in heaven, earth, and the underworld. (Note: Amen-Ra is conceptually congruous with the idea that the Son of God is the manifestation of divine power while the Eternal Father is more remote or hidden.)

Jackal scepters and masks are symbols of power often associated with Anubis, the guide to the dead. The scepter is a key to power. Possession of a god’s name or his symbol on a scepter constitutes a key to power over his domain. (Note: The scepter therefore may be said to symbolize what some would call the keys of authority, or the power of presidency.)

The offering table in the lower right-hand corner can well be a symbol of sacrifice.

J “Oliblish” Apparently this is a planet which “stands next to Kolob.” We will learn in the explanation for figure 4 that it is “equal with Kolob in its revolution and in its measuring of time.” No Egyptian etymology for the word is readily apparent. We also learn that this planet “is the next grand governing creation near to the celestial [Kolob] or the place where God resides.” Further we learn that this planet holds “the key of power also, pertaining to other planets.” In the hierarchical ordering of stars and planets, Oliblish stands somewhere between Kolob and our solar system. Abraham learned about this planet from God by revelation as Abraham was offering sacrifices upon an altar that he had built unto the Lord.

Fig. 3. Is made to represent God, sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority; with a crown of eternal light upon his head; representing also the grand Key-words of the Holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed.

E The Bark of the Great God. It contains the hawk-headed Ra with the sun disk on his head, seated on the solar bark. In his hand he holds a scepter which is a symbol of dominion. He is Amen-Ra in his day bark.

This god is the great creator and mover of the sun. He is the dispenser of power and strength, seated upon his throne, a causer of life. All creation responds to his decrees and commands.

The symbol above and behind the head of the hawk-headed god is a most important sign. It is the wd3t (wedjat) eye. This is symbolic of resurrection, life, wholeness, and the nourishment of the gods. The eye represents an almost complete personality. All parts of the eye equal 63/64, leaving 1/64 unidentified. To understand the full symbolism of the eye was to have the key to eternal life. Perhaps the 1/64 could be what the Egyptians regard as the secret/sacred name of god. Those possessing the secret of the eye reached a new and higher level of consciousness.

The inscription which begins just back of the head of the deity in the boat reads: "sacred bark."

J Figure 3 is an addition to the Facsimile and was likely copied onto the Facsimile from another of the papyri in Joseph's possession. Apparently it illustrated concepts that Joseph Smith and the Lord wished to have illustrated.

"clothed with power and authority" In his right hand is the scepter (Egyptian was), symbolizing "dominion" (Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* [Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962], 54).

"with a crown of eternal light upon his head" The object on Ra's head is the sun.

"representing also the grand Key-words of the Holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed" This is the only place in the scriptures indicating that all these ancient prophets received the temple ordinances.

Fig. 4. Answers to the Hebrew word Raukeeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament of the heavens; also a numerical figure, in Egyptian signifying one thousand; answering to the measuring of the time of Oliblish, which is equal with Kolob in its revolution and in its measuring of time.

E A "mummified hawk expanding his wings over a boat which symbolizes the resurrection of the soul." Other Egyptologists (Worfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, *Lexikon der Agyptologie* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973-89], 5:1056) described the

mummified hawk as a symbol of the sky, or as a representation of the expanse of heaven with wings stretched out as one of the ancient gods of Memphis.

The boat is called the Seker boat or the “ship of a thousand” and symbolizes the winding up of the clock of the universe to insure that the cycles of sunrise and sunset, births, and deaths will continue year after year, for thousands and thousands of years and cycles.

J The word Raukeeyang (Hebrew *raqi'a*) means “expanse” (Francis Brown et al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 956).

Fig. 5. Is called in Egyptian Enish-go-on-dosh; this is one of the governing planets also, and is said by the Egyptians to be the Sun, and to borrow its light from Kolob through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash, which is the grand Key, or, in other words, the governing power, which governs fifteen other fixed planets or stars, as also Floeese or the Moon, the Earth and the Sun in their annual revolutions. This planet receives its power through the medium of Kli-flos-is-es, or Hah-ko-kau-beam, the stars represented by numbers 22 and 23, receiving light from the revolutions of Kolob.

E The Cow goddess (Hathor). The goddess standing behind the cow is holding the lotus in her hand. The lotus is the symbol of rebirth, here indicating the daily and annual renewal of the sun. Hathor is the house of the stars and of the sun and the moon. The sun is reborn of her each day—recharged and renewed in the body of Hathor. She is the source that sustains the life and existence of all things, including the stars. The sun is a representation of the right eye of Ra, who is the sun god, and in the representation found on the Facsimile the head of the goddess is filled with a large right eye, the wedjat eye. As an anthropomorphic goddess (behind the cow), Hathor is specifically the sun. She can be the sun in its most benevolent manifestations or the sun as a scorching vengeful tool of the sun god, Ra, exacting judgments upon mankind.

J **“Enish-go-on-dosh”** This word apparently means “the sun.” No Egyptian etymology for this word is apparent. It is interesting that one chapter of the Book of the Dead, which describes how to make a hypocephalus, also gives a number of strange names that do not seem to be Egyptian but derive from some foreign language.

“to borrow its light from Kolob” This seems to be the same concept found in D&C 88:44, which describes how the heavenly bodies “give light to each other in their times and in their seasons” as mediated by the light of Christ, which is the source of light and power by which the sun, moon, earth, and stars were energized (D&C 88:6-13).

“through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash” This medium is the light of Christ. The name also does not seem to be Egyptian. See *The Concept of Light in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1 chapter 15. In this chapter the reader will learn that the

light of Christ is the “law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:13), and it is the energy by which all things, including the sun, the stars, the moon, and the earth exist—the light of Christ “giveth life to all things” (D&C 88:13).

“fifteen other fixed planets or stars” Apparently in the hierarchy of heaven bodies, likely under the direction of Oliblish, there are fifteen other planets or stars that have governing function over our solar system.

“Floese or the Moon” The normal Egyptian word for moon is pronounced in Coptic “o’oh.” The “eese” part of the name may be the Egyptian goddess Isis, who is sometimes associated with the moon (Hans Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Agyptischen Religionsgeschichte* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1952], 472).

“This planet receives its power through the medium of Kli-flos-is-es, or Hah-ko-kau-beam, the stars represented by numbers 22 and 23, receiving light from the revolutions of Kolob” The phrase “this planet” likely refers to our sun which is the main subject of this explanation. This suggests that in some way we do not understand, between Kolob and our sun, there are intermediate planets or stars which transmit Kolob’s light or energy to our sun. These are “Kli-flos-is-es” and “Hah-ko-kau-beam.” These two names are not of Egyptian origin. “Hah-ko-kau-beam” is from the Hebrew *ha-kokabim*, which is the plural of star, literally “the stars” (Francis Brown e. al., eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 456). They are represented by figures 22 and 23 on the hypocephalus.

Figures 22 and 23.

E These apes are in fact identified by Egyptian scribes with the morning stars that greet the rising sun. One hypocephalus includes an inscription above the heads of the apes that reads, “The god is adored four times.” That is, the source of light and life is adored by the morning starts.

J These two baboons are identified by Joseph Smith with “Kli-flos-is-es,” or ‘Hah-ko-kau-beam,’ the stars . . . receiving light from the revolutions of Kolob.” See Joseph’s inspired explanation for figure 5.

Fig. 6. Represents this earth in its four quarters.

E The four sons of Horus. As already mentioned, they are the guardians of the four pillars of Heaven “which formed the four cardinal points of the compass” (John Gee, “Notes on the Sons of Horus” [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991]) and as such they “embrace the four Pure Lands.”

Fig. 7. Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.

E The composite god Horus-Min who is seated upon his throne. The bird body projecting from the back of this seated figure is the Horus-hawk, representing deliverance from all enemies, protection, and redemption. The ithyphallic (symbolic of a phallus) seated figure represents the attributes of Min, the god of fertility.

The deceased Egyptian wished to be identified with every god whose attributes and characteristics he desired to acquire in order to secure a happy existence in the Netherworld. His identification with Min would insure eternally his powers of procreation (a feature the Egyptians reserved for the gods).

J Here the dove is holding and presenting the wedjat eye. The eye represents “all good gifts” and the “food of the gods.” Joseph Smith identified the dove as the Holy Ghost. Certainly all good gifts come through the Holy Ghost. The gifts of the Spirit are the tools to unlock the gates to eternal life. To the Egyptian, the eye was a symbol of wholeness and perfection, and a knowledge of its mystic parts was a key to eternal life.

“revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood”

The positions of the figures’ arms had particular meaning to the Egyptians. The seated figure is holding up his arm, whip in hand, symbolizing the power to punish wrongdoing. In front of him is a standard with two arms raised in the Egyptian gesture for worship. The bird has one arm extended holding the eye, the other raised in greeting. These arm gestures may be intended to represent the grand signs or the grand keywords of the priesthood.

“also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove” The Egyptians portrayed a person’s spirit as a bird.

Fig. 8. Contains writings that cannot be revealed unto the world; but is to be had in the Holy Temple of God.

E Reading the signs from right to left as an Egyptologist would read this line, it means “Grant that the soul of the Osiris Shishonk may live.” All of the dead took upon them the name of the god Osiris so that they might overcome death as he (Osiris) did. The second name (Shishonk) is the personal name of the deceased. Another Egyptologist wrote, “The Egyptians received a second name, which was their ‘name for Eternity,’ a name without which they could not enter into the Netherworld nor would any god accept them into the congregation of the righteous. The possession of a papyrus containing this name would be an assurance that the gods would never forget this name.” Whether this “second name” was in fact a name received in the temple or, as seems more likely, the given name of the deceased, it was a key to the company of the gods. If a person’s name lived, i.e., was written and spoken in the temple, that person’s ba and ka would live even if his or her mummy and statuary were destroyed.

J **“to be had in the Holy Temple of God”** The basic purpose of the hypocephalus and all Egyptian religious writings associated with the dead was to help the person recall the necessary rituals to be able to enter the presence of the gods and

there become a god himself. This, of course, is an important aspect of our own temple ceremonies.

Fig. 9. Ought not to be revealed at the present time.

E Stressing the secrecy of these things is entirely in harmony with Egyptian religious documents such as the hypocephalus and the Book of the Dead. One statement in the 162nd chapter of that book reads, “This is a great and secret book. Do not allow anyone’ eyes to see it!”

Fig. 10. Also.

E No Egyptologist’s interpretation available.

J It is presumed that “also” means what we might term today as “ditto,” referring to the interpretation of figure 9.

Fig. 11. Also. If the world can find out these numbers, so let it be. Amen.

E No Egyptologist’s interpretation available.

Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 21. [The meaning] will be given in the own due time of the Lord.

E No Egyptologist’s interpretation available.

The above translation is given as far as we have any right to give at the present time.

A FACSIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM No. 3

There is no Book of Abraham text associated with Facsimile No. 3. It depicts Abraham’s teaching his astronomical knowledge in Pharaoh’s court. It is of interest that the ancient Jewish historian Josephus states that Abraham taught the Egyptians astronomy (*Antiquities*, 1.8.2).

Again, we will continue our pattern of comparing the Egyptologist’s interpretation of the figures on Facsimile No. 3 with Joseph Smith’s inspired interpretation.

Fig. 1. Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh’s throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.

E Osiris, the god of the dead. He is seated on a throne with his sister/wife, Isis (figure 2) standing behind him.

J A major point of concern among those critical of Joseph Smith is his interpretation of Figure 1. Egyptologists generally are in agreement that this character

represents Osiris. There are, however, several historically documentable examples of foreign and non-royal personalities that impersonated the king by sitting upon his throne when dressed in his royal garb. In Egyptian myth and history such a man was called *rp't*, meaning a substitute for the king. In the Bible, Joseph in Genesis 41:41-45 was a *rp't*. Perhaps Abraham also played the role of substitute king.

Abraham is depicted as wearing a “crown . . . representing the priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in heaven.” Abraham was both a king and a priest with the powers of presidency (see D&C 110:12; a dispensation was committed unto Abraham). The Pharaoh was also a king and a priest. He was the Official High Priest of Heliopolis and of every other temple in Egypt. His crown is the two plumed *atef*, a symbol of power, priesthood, light, and holiness.

The prophet Joseph’s explanation of the Facsimile includes “the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.” The scepters carried by Osiris are the flail (whip) and the shepherd’s crook. He is the good shepherd who cares for the flock. He must also prod them and at times drive them with his flail. The flail is shaped like a compass above his arm and is also the shape of a pyramid (a symbol of regenerative power). Crook and flail are symbols of mercy and justice and are instruments of rescue and punishment, respectively.

Fig. 2. King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head.

E Hathor (Isis) is the sister/wife of Osiris. She is standing behind Osiris who is seated on a throne. An invitation to enter the presence of Osiris and Isis was the desired conclusion of every judgment scene.

Fig. 3. Signifies Abraham in Egypt as given also in figure 10 of Facsimile No. 1.

E A lotus on an offering table, with perfume or ointment containers. The lotus was the symbol of Upper Egypt, including the area where the papyri of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Collection were found. As a symbol of light and life emerging from the primeval pond, it is appropriately located at the head of the altar of renewal. This symbol was also sacred with regard to Nefertum, the Lord of Perfumes.

Fig. 4. Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as written above the hand.

E This is the goddess of truth, Ma’at. She is introducing the deceased, Osiris Hor, into the presence of Osiris.

J Another major point of concern from some critics of Joseph Smith is his interpretation of figures 2 and 4. A representative comment is Baer’s statement: “It is obvious that figures 2 and 4 are women and not Pharaoh or his heir-apparent Prince.”

Although this criticism is generally considered to be correct, the Egyptologists' interpretation of these characters is not the only possibility. Egyptian ritual drama frequently employed the principle of impersonation. Adorning a person with the clothing and paraphernalia of a god or goddess was a means of endowing him with powers, characteristics, and attributes associated with the deities thus impersonated. One example was the "Heb Sed" festival in which the king was dressed as the goddess Hathor (R. Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969], no. 335).

Fig. 5. Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand.

E In the original vignette, he is the deceased, Osiris Hor, and he, having been found worthy, is being introduced into the presence of the god Osiris (figure 1), the god of the dead, by the goddess of truth who is Ma'at, there to live with him throughout eternity and to become a god himself. The name of the deceased owner of the papyrus, Osiris Hor, appears three times in the hieroglyphic writing in Facsimile 3.

Fig. 6. Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.

E This is the jackal-headed god Anubis.

Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court.

Summary of a Few of the More Important Egyptian Gods:

Anubis. Anubis was depicted as a jackal, or as a jackal-headed man; in primitive times he was probably simply the jackal god.

Probably because of the jackal's tendency to prowl around tombs, he became associated with the dead and was worshipped as the inventor of embalming, who had embalmed the dead Osiris, thus helping preserve him in order to live again. His task became to glorify and preserve all the dead. Anubis also conducted the souls of the dead to their judgment, and monitored the Scales of Truth to protect the dead from the second death in the underworld.

Four Sons of Horus. The four sons of Horus were the protectors of the parts of the body of Osiris, and from this, became the protectors of the body of the deceased. They were: Imsety, Hapi, Duamutef, and Qebhsenuf. They were protected in turn by the goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Neith, and Selket.

Hathor. A very old goddess of Egypt, worshiped as a cow-deity from earliest times. The name "Hathor" is the Greek corruption of the Egyptian names *Het-Hert* ("the House Above") or *Het-Heru* ("the House of Horus"). Both terms refer to her as a sky goddess, and the latter shows her as the consort of Horus. In later times she is often connected with, or even equated with, Isis. She was usually shown with a solar disk

flanked by cow horns on her head. At Thebes, she was considered a goddess of the dead, and wore the hieroglyph for “West” (*amenta*) on her head.

Horus. One of the most important deities of Egypt. As the Child, Horus is the son of Osiris and Isis, who, upon reaching adulthood, avenges his father’s death, by defeating and castrating his evil uncle Set. He then became the divine prototype of the Pharaoh.

Isis. Perhaps the most important goddess (or god, for that matter) of all Egyptian mythology, Isis assumed, during the course of Egyptian history, the attributes and functions of virtually every other important goddess in the land.

Her most important functions, however, were those of motherhood, marital devotion, healing the sick, and the working of magical spells and charms. She was believed to be the most powerful magician in the universe, owing to the fact that she had learned the Secret Name of Ra from the god himself.

She was the sister and wife of Osiris, sister of Set, and twin sister of Nephthys. She was the mother of Horus the Child and was the protective goddess of Horus’s son Imsety, protector of the liver of the deceased.

Isis was responsible for protecting Horus from Set during his infancy; for helping Osiris to return to life; and for assisting her husband to rule in the land of the Dead.

Osiris. The god of the dead, and the god of the resurrection into eternal life. He was ruler, protector, and judge of the deceased, and his prototype (wherein English we use the euphemism “the deceased” or “the late,” Egyptians referred to “the Osiris”).

Osiris was the brother of Set, Nephthys, and Isis, who was also his wife. By Isis he fathered Horus, and according to some stories, Nephthys assumed the form of Isis, seduced him thus, and from their union was born Anubis.

Osiris ruled the world of men in the beginning, after Ra had abandoned the world to rule the skies, but he was murdered by his brother Set. Through the magic of Isis, he was made to live again. Being the first person to die, he subsequently became lord of the dead. His death was avenged by his son Horus, who defeated Set and cast him out into the desert to the West of Egypt (the Sahara).

Prayers and spells were addressed to Osiris throughout Egyptian history, in hopes of securing his blessing and entering the afterlife which he ruled; but his popularity steadily increased through the Middle Kingdom. By Dynasty 18 he was probably the most widely worshipped god in Egypt. His popularity endured until the latest phases of Egyptian history. Reliefs still exist of Roman emperors, conquerors of Egypt, dressed in the traditional garb of the Pharaohs, making offerings to him in the temples.

Pharaohs as Deities. From earliest times in Egypt the pharaohs were worshipped as gods: the son of Re, the son of Horus, the son of Amun, etc. depending upon what period of Egyptian history and what part of the country is being considered. The pharaoh was looked upon as being chosen by and favored by the gods, his fathers.

Sobek. The crocodile god. Sobek was worshipped to appease him and his animals. According to some evidence, Sobek was considered a fourfold deity who represented the four elemental gods (Re of fire, Shu of air, Geb of earth, and Osiris of water). In the Book of the Dead, Sobek assists in the birth of Horus. He fetches Isis and Nephthys to protect the deceased. And he aids in the destruction of Set.

So what are we to conclude? Did Joseph Smith make a futile attempt to restore and interpret the Facsimiles as they were originally recorded in the materials he had available to him? Or was Joseph inspired to see beyond the Egyptian catalyst to the age of the great Patriarch Abraham and his moment of triumph over false doctrine and magic in the house of the King of Egypt? It is important to remember that the Egyptians often successfully illustrated a wide variety of themes from the same basic scene by simply adjusting basic props and players. This is precisely what Joseph Smith did, and the overall assessment of his modifications, restorations, and interpretations is witness that he was divinely guided. There is no question that when Joseph restored and revised and “translated” the vignettes and the hypocephalus, his efforts show an advanced knowledge of things Egyptian, especially considering the period of his publications (1842). When he was not interpreting, he frequently made errors. The nature of the results achieved by Joseph justifies the conclusion that he was a prophet of God. The errors he made remind all that he was also a man. Let no one suppose that we are suggesting that God promotes error or spreads misconceptions. He does not. He works with men as they are and where they are (Moroni 8:16-17; 9:31).

Joseph Smith was not inspired to translate and restore the “Breathing Permit of Osiris Hor” with its vignettes, but he was inspired to restore an ancient and authentic record of Abraham and to modify, remodel, and reinterpret the original vignettes to complement the inspired text.

Joseph Smith–Matthew

An extract from the translation of the Bible as revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet in 1831: Matthew 23:39 and chapter 24.

Joseph Smith–Matthew (hereafter JS-M) is the prophet Joseph’s inspired revision of Matthew 23:39 and Matthew chapter 24. See the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible*.

Just three days before his crucifixion, Jesus and his disciples left the temple and climbed the Mount of Olives, where they had a dramatic view of the temple and Jerusalem. Here his disciples asked the Lord about his second coming in glory. They asked, “When shall these things be . . . and what is the sign of thy coming?” (JS-M 1:4). His lengthy and detailed answer provides one of the most important revelations on the signs of the times and of the second coming. Known as the Olivet discourse because it was given on the Mount of Olives, the full discourse is given in Matthew 24 and 25. Section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants also includes an important version of the Savior’s Olivet Discourse. As the Lord concluded the revelation of D&C 45, he told Joseph: “It shall not be given unto you to know any further concerning this chapter [likely referring to the “chapter” of the Lord’s second coming], until the New Testament be translated” (D&C 45:60). The day after D&C 45 was received, Joseph began his study and inspired revision of the New Testament. It was March 8, 1831. It did not take him long to reach Matthew 24. For a rather extensive discussion of the signs of the Lord’s second coming, see the sequence of chapters 24, 25, and 26 in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3—all concerned with the signs of the Lord’s second coming.

The documents from which the JS-M is derived show that Joseph spent more time revising Matthew 24 than any other portion of the New Testament. The record indicates that he edited the material three times before he was satisfied with it. In doing so, the Prophet added nearly four hundred fifty new words to the Matthew version, representing about a 50-percent increase in the text.

The Olivet Prophecy in Matthew 24 has caused considerable confusion in the secular Christian world, as it contains information both on the fall of Jerusalem (which occurred in AD 70) and on the second coming of the Savior. Yet it is so constructed that it is impossible to sort out which verses refer to which event. One major contribution of the JS-M is to clarify this confusion. The Lord has made it clear that he wants his saints in this latter dispensation to understand what is coming. For this reason he has given us the JS-M and D&C 45.

Even though there is considerable additional text, there is only one new verse added (verse 55) which has no correlation in the King James Bible. Thus, the additional material which the JS-M contributes is an expansion of that already in Matthew. There is also a significant reordering of the verses in Matthew 24 which aids in understanding.

The Prophet moved three verses (7, 8, and 9) from their position in the King James text and placed them at various points later in the narrative. This change gave the prophecy a new chronological sequence, or more accurately, it gave it a more definite and understandable chronological sequence. There is also a repetition of three verses which shows that there is to be a recurrence of ancient events in the latter days. It is this reordering and repetition of passages which brings understanding to that area in which there has been the greatest confusion among Bible scholars.

Joseph did not use all the material available to him as he translated Matthew 24. For example, he used none of the information the Lord revealed to him in D&C 45. Further, we find that Joseph incorporated material in Luke that we do not find in Matthew and, in fact, added changes that increased Luke's individuality. "All this suggests that Joseph Smith was not trying to restore the exact words the Savior spoke on the Mount of Olives. If that had been his intent, he surely would have used the material revealed to him in section 45 which is, in all probability, the most literal (D&C 45:23). After carefully looking at Joseph's rendition, one LDS scholar concluded that Joseph had a different intent. Speaking of Matthew 24, he said:

This is the most dramatic example of the Prophet's presenting historical material with long explanations that go far beyond any original writing. This suggests that the Prophet used the basic document . . . as a point of departure instead of a translation guide. Thus, his sweeping changes are only loosely tied to the written record that stimulated the new information. The result is *content* oriented. One may label this a "translation" only in the broadest sense; for his consistent amplifications imply that the Prophet felt that the expansion of the document was the best way to get at the meaning. If unconventional as history, the procedure may be a doctrinal gain if distinguished from normal translation procedure, for paraphrase and restatement are probably the best way to communicate without ambiguity (Richard L. Anderson, "Joseph Smith's Insights into the Olivet Prophecy: Joseph Smith and Matthew 24:1," *Pearl of Great Price Symposium* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1976], 50).

Joseph Smith's inspired corrections of the Olivet discourse are so significant that they have been included as part of the scriptural canon in the Pearl of Great Price. Mark and Luke also recorded portions of the discourse, though not as fully as did Matthew (see Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36). The JS-M gives us clear understanding of the chronological sequence of events in the last days and clear direction to the saints on how to prepare for the end time.

Why were these instructions and prophecies given? They are given to the true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to prepare us, not to scare us. Panic is not part of the gospel. We have his assurance that if we are prepared, we have no need to fear (D&C 38:30). We are actually commanded to study and learn the signs of his coming: "He that feareth [respects or reverences] me shall be looking forth for the great day of the

Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man . . . and he that watches not for me shall be cut off” (D&C 45:39, 44).

The revelation was initially published as a broadside (a single sheet with the revelation printed on one side), likely in Kirtland in 1835, though this is not certain. It was titled “Extract from the New Testament of the Bible, It Being the 24th chapter of Matthew; but in order to show the connection we will commence with the last verse of the 23rd chapter, viz.” The broadside does not follow the Joseph Smith Translation perfectly. Whoever prepared it for printing was not especially careful in his copying. In addition to punctuation and word differences, the broadside leaves out parts of three sentences. These differences give it a unique signature, showing that Franklin D. Richards used it as his source for the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price. Further, Elder Richards’ title follows closely that of the broadside: “An Extract from a Translation of the Bible—Being the twenty fourth chapter of Matthew, commencing with the last verse of the twenty-third chapter.” He did not, however, follow the broadside slavishly. He edited the punctuation, capitalization, and syntax so that it read more smoothly.

Orson Pratt, in 1878, edited this text, making it conform to the Joseph Smith Translation. James E. Talmage, in 1902, changed the title slightly, adding the caption “Writings of Joseph Smith II” before stating that the work was an extraction from the Bible. This remained the title until 1978, when the Church Scripture Committee changed the heading to “Joseph Smith–Matthew.”

The Setting

It was just four days before Passover. Jesus was in the temple at Jerusalem, once again being pestered by Pharisees. Piqued by their hardheartedness, he turned on them with a scathing rebuke, denouncing them as hypocrites (see Matthew 23:13-33). He closed his censure with remorse, lamenting, “I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:34-35). The Lord then sharpened his prophecy, saying, “All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:36-38). With the continuation of this prophecy, Joseph Smith then began his inspired revision.

Joseph Smith–Matthew can be divided as follows:

verses 1-11 AD 27-70 from the conclusion of Jesus’s ministry to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple

verses 12-20 AD 70 the destruction of the Jerusalem temple

verses 21-55 from the restoration of the gospel to the Lord's second coming see—all in this final dispensation.

In response to his disciples' questions he spoke of the temple in Jerusalem in their own day and in the latter days, the last days of the world, and of the signs that would precede his second coming. As Jesus spoke to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, it seems as though he had called their attention to the magnificent structure of the temple with its huge and imposing stone walls. He stunned those who stood near him with the awful words: "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Luke 21:6). This terrible prophecy troubled his disciples. He also said to them:

1 For I say unto you, that ye shall not see me henceforth and know that I am he of whom it is written by the prophets, until ye shall say: Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord, in the clouds of heaven, and all the holy angels with him. Then understood his disciples that he should come again on the earth, after that he was glorified and crowned on the right hand of God.

verse 1 "ye shall not see me henceforth" The phrase seems to have a double meaning—the first being the obvious meaning; and the second a more subtle meaning. First, he implies that following his ascension into heaven no one on earth will see him again until that time in the latter days when he will come a second time in glory. His other, more subtle, meaning is that he warns the faithless among the Jews that they have had their opportunity to recognize him as the Messiah. They will not get another chance to do so, and the Lord is, in effect, abandoning them—abandoning them at least until they are prepared to accept him.

"Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord" This expression refers to the Messiah and refers specifically to his own coming in glory at the end of the world—in clouds of heaven, with all the holy ones (the saints) accompanying him (see also D&C 45:16). The quote comes from Psalm 118:26. The Lord will follow this scriptural quote with another—Jeremiah 22:5 (see verse 2): "Your house is left unto you desolate," a chilling prophecy that the temple would be destroyed. The Lord uses these two scriptures to give insight into why the destruction of the temple would come. Psalm 118:22-28 predicts that the Jews will reject their Lord, and because the Jews will reject him, their temple will fall.

"Then understood his disciples" It was not until this moment that the disciples fully understood that there would be a second coming. It would occur following his death and his ascension to and glorification in heaven. As with the idea of the resurrection, though there was scriptural evidence and comment by the Lord, they seem to have missed the concept until this dramatic moment.

2 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him, for to hear him, saying: Master, show us concerning the buildings of the temple, as thou hast said—They shall be thrown down, and left unto you desolate.

verse 2 “show us concerning the buildings of the temple” When he departed from the temple court, they followed him, and they asked him the urgent question: “Tell us more about our temple being destroyed.” The disciples were puzzled and alarmed by the Lord’s pronouncement that the temple would be destroyed. They may have wondered if he might have been speaking metaphorically or applying a parable. Two factors argued against the literal fulfillment of the Lord’s words. First, there was a widely believed, but false, prophecy that the temple would never fall (see D&C 45:18). Second, the strength of the city, especially the temple mount, toughened by the master fortress builder, Herod the Great, suggested impregnability to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

3 And Jesus said unto them: See ye not all these things, and do ye not understand them? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here, upon this temple, one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

verse 3 “there shall not be left here, upon this temple, one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down” The Lord confirms to his disciples that he was speaking neither in parables nor in hyperbole. The temple with its courts and outbuildings, in spite of its strength, would be utterly destroyed. All of his apostles but Judas and James (James died at the hands of Herod Agrippa—see Acts 12:1-2) lived to see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Under the direction of the Roman general Titus, all the buildings on the more than forty-acre plateau were destroyed, and the rubble was pushed into the Tyropoean and Kidron valleys. Titus then ordered the area plowed and salted, thus assuring its uselessness.

Jesus’s prophecy was that not one stone would be left standing on another upon this temple. The last phrase (“that shall not be thrown down”) was added by the prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord was not referring to the massive retaining walls around the temple mount—eastern, southern, and western portions of which are still standing—but to the temple proper.

verses 2-3 Mark 13:1 notes that the disciples were impressed with the grandeur of the Jerusalem Temple. Of all the many building enterprises of Herod the Great, none was greater than in the capital, Jerusalem. He rebuilt the former Hasmonean fortress and named it the Antonia Fortress in honor of his Roman friend, Mark Antony. He constructed his royal palace and towers, a theater, an amphitheater, a stadium, and monumental gates and staircases to the Temple Mount. His grandest edifice of all was the temple in Jerusalem.

The temple of Herod was constructed beginning in 20 BC with the help of ten thousand workmen. One of Herod's main purposes was to provide greater space for the hundreds of thousands of worshippers who came to the temple during the pilgrimage festivals and high holy days. One thousand priests who had been trained as masons and carpenters helped to build the holiest parts, and a thousand wagons transported materials. The temple proper was under construction for a year and a half, and the courtyards and porticoes for eight years (though embellishment of the outer courts actually continued for more than eighty years). It was said that whoever had not seen the temple of Herod had never seen a beautiful building in his life (Talmud, Succah 51b; Baba Bathra 3b, 4a). No other temple complex in the Graeco-Roman world compared with it in expansiveness and magnificence.

Isaiah had once assured the Lord's people that as birds protectively hovered over their young, so the Lord of hosts would defend and preserve Jerusalem (Isaiah 31:4-5). But without allegiance and devotion to their God, the leaders of the Jews and many of their followers had abandoned the Hope of Israel. Without faith and faithfulness, the Lord's hand would not be stretched out to protect them or the Holy Temple. The Lord's hand, like his word, could be a sharp two-edged sword, providing either protection or destruction. In this case, the temple would be destroyed, as foreseen by Daniel, the prophet: "[Then] shall Messiah be cut off . . . and the people of the prince [Latin, *princeps*—referring to the Roman general Titus] that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Daniel 9:26).

4 And Jesus left them, and went upon the Mount of Olives. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews; and what is the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world?

verse 4 "as he sat upon the Mount of Olives" The mount is 2,645 feet above sea level and 743 feet higher than the temple mount. The climb from the Kidron valley up its steep slope is more than 800 feet, and many find it necessary to rest once they get to the top. From its height, the group could look down on the temple and its courts.

"the disciples came unto him privately" The apostles went to him privately and asked two questions involving two different dispensations: "[1] Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews; and [2] what is the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

The group of disciples consisted of two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John (see Mark 13:3). Driven by curiosity, but with enough sense to wait for further clarification outside the ears of their enemies, the disciples waited until they were alone with the Lord before asking their questions. The reader should note that the Lord's disciples had two pressing issues about which they wished to question him. He

had spoken to them of two quite separate matters (verses 1, 3)—the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem and his second coming.

It is the view of many scholars that the early Christians believed that Christ would come again immediately after the fall of Jerusalem. It is clear, however, even in the Bible that the Savior wished to communicate that there would be a delay between the fall of Jerusalem and his second coming. He outlined a number of events that had to follow the fall of Jerusalem. He further warned others of the Jews, in the form of a parable, that there would be those who would feel that they had plenty of time in which they could do evil and then repent. They would say, “My lord delayeth his coming.” To such the Savior warned: “The lord . . . shall come in a day when he [the wicked servant] looketh not for him, in an hour that he is not aware of” (Matthew 24:48-51). Also the Savior gave additional parables for the same purpose, such as the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents which, taken together, emphasize the idea that many would become weary of waiting for him because his coming would be delayed for a long time. In the parable of the ten virgins the Lord stated that the “bridegroom tarried” until midnight, such that the virgins fell asleep. In the parable of the talents he stated that the Lord went off into a far country and did not return for a “long time.” Both parables paint the same picture: the coming of the Lord would be after a period of delay which would be so long that many would not keep the faith (Matthew 25:1-30).

Thus, the Savior’s Olivet Prophecy points to events that would take place in two definite and distinct time periods: one which would occur during the generation of those then living and another which would occur at the end of the world. To each of those groups who would be living at the time of these two events, specific warnings were given so that the believers could withstand the evil day. The extant Greek manuscripts, as their translation into the various versions of the Bible show, are not clear as to what prophesied events are part of which period. It is for this reason that many are confused and have even given up hope of ever being able to understand. It is at this point where the JS-M is most helpful. Readers of Matthew 24 have repeatedly asked, “Does this event belong to the early era or to the later?” The JS-M makes it clear. In some instances the JS-M’s answer is: “Both!” The JS-M presents a scenario in which certain events in the latter days will parallel those which took place in former days. The prophecy to the disciples of what would (and did) happen in their day serves as the prologue of what will happen in our day. The proof that the latter-day portion of the prophecy will become a reality is grounded in the fulfillment of that of the former day.

“Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews” The Lord is intentionally loath to give a specific time for obvious reasons. Instead of asking when the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple will occur, the disciples should have asked, “How do we prepare for that happening?” The Lord answered the question the disciples should have asked. They understood that Jerusalem would be destroyed and, therefore, they should have been

concerned about how they could escape the destruction. The Lord will now proceed to give them pointed instruction on how to avoid being destroyed. The key will be to avoid deception and steadfastly hold onto the truth. Knowledge that destruction and deception were coming will not safeguard the saints. Steadfastness, however, will.

“the destruction of the temple, and the Jews” The disciples’ questions show the breadth of the understanding they gleaned from the Lord’s revelation. They knew that the temple would fall, and from that they correctly surmised that such a catastrophe would occur only if the back of the Jewish nation was broken.

“what is the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world?” The way this question was asked, seems to betray a false assumption by the Lord’s disciples. They seemed to expect the second coming to follow closely on the heels of the destruction of the Jewish nation. This phrase also reveals an important insight on the part of his disciples. They knew that his second coming marked the destruction of wickedness which is known as “the end of the world,” but not the end of the earth. The end of the world should not be confused with the end of the earth. The former occurs when Christ comes in his glory, the latter follows the Lord’s millennial reign (JS-M 1:4, 55; D&C 29:22-23). The latter will occur as the earth is changed to a celestial sphere by the glory of God.

verses 5-11 These verses describe conditions between the conclusion of the Savior’s ministry (AD 27, or so) and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, just over forty years later. The order of the verses in Matthew 24 was appropriately changed by the prophet Joseph Smith in his inspired revision.

5 And Jesus answered, and said unto them: Take heed that no man deceive you;

verse 5 The Lord’s apostles had just asked him two questions: When will the temple at Jerusalem be destroyed? And what will be the signs of thy second coming? Instead of answering their questions immediately, the Lord began by giving them a word of warning. The future will difficult for both the Christians and the Jews in ways that will be mentioned in the following few verses.

6 For many shall come in my name, saying—I am Christ—and shall deceive many;

verse 6 **“many shall come in my name, saying—I am Christ”** The Savior’s statement notwithstanding, Christ is not a name but rather a title. It is from the Greek word *christos*, from *chrío*, “to anoint,” and it denotes the Anointed One corresponding to the Hebrew word *messiah*. The Savior was the Anointed One, and those whom he placed at the head of his church were also anointed, having authority from him to preside (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965], 2:120).

The Savior is predicting here that men will arise purporting to have Jesus's authority or to be the promised messiah. This prophecy was quickly fulfilled. The book of Acts mentions three separate men: Judas the Galilean, Thadeus (Acts 5:36-37), and an Egyptian Jew (Acts 21:38), all pretending to be Jewish saviors. Within the Church, men also arose claiming authority. Not sixty years later, John lamented to the saints, "As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" who deceived many (1 John 2:18).

7 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations, for my name's sake;

verse 7 "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you"

The Lord's warning demonstrates that his church leaders needed to fear not only Jewish or Roman persecution, but also persecution from the ranks of so-called Christians as well. As an example, a regional leader named Diotrephes opposed John, refusing to receive him or any other church authorities, and excommunicating any who did (see 3 John). Paul came to death's door, it seems, because "Alexander the coppersmith [a Christian member] did [Paul] much evil" by turning away any who might help Paul at his trial before Nero Caesar (see 2 Timothy 4:14).

"ye shall be hated of all nations" In addition to facing persecution and rejection from members of the Church, opposition would arise from governments in every nation into which the saints took the gospel. The Jewish leadership used their henchman Saul of Tarsus to systematically go after Christian branches. So severe did the persecution become that many Christians chose to leave Judea rather than suffer more. Peter and John were both arrested numerous times and even beaten by the authorities. Stephen and James were martyred. By AD 64, the Romans turned on the Christians as well and, from time to time over the next two hundred years, made life miserable for them.

8 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another;

verse 8 "many . . . shall hate one another" The attacks by the antichrists failed to displace the Lord's true leaders, but there continued to be further Christian infighting. The divisive nature of the Church, so evident in the Corinthian letters, spurred animosity and even hatred. The early historian Hegesippus, according to Eusebius, gives a classic example. He reports that certain Christians, trying to rid themselves of a powerful church foe, secretly accused him before a Roman court of being a Christian and, as a descendant of King David, having messianic aspirations. They successfully hid their own church affiliation while getting him executed (quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980], 1:275).

9 And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many;

10 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold;

verse 10 “iniquity shall abound” The words used here are very strong. The particular kind of iniquity that will abound is lawlessness (Greek, *anomia*), describing the condition in which men and women will refuse to be governed by law, not necessarily the laws of the state but the laws of God. The Lord’s words show us that iniquity shall “be brought to the full” (Greek, *plethynthenai*), the Greek word emphasizing sin’s wide proliferation. Society will, by and large, not only be touched by sin but also condone it.

“the love of many shall wax cold” The world’s embracing lawlessness will cause love to change into something that is unfeeling, uncaring, and unforgiving. Acute selfishness will result, along with backbiting, hatred, and even persecution. It was the lack of love that greatly contributed to the divisiveness found in the branches of the early Church. The loss of love greatly contributed to the success of the apostasy that eventually overtook the Church.

11 But he that remaineth steadfast and is not overcome, the same shall be saved.

verse 11 “he that remaineth steadfast” These words give to the disciples the key to avoiding destruction. The text of Matthew 24:13 reads, “He that *shall endure* unto the end, the same shall be saved” (italics added). The Greek word translated here as “endure” (*hypomone*) denotes both steadfastness and endurance, but in the context of affliction or persecution. Therefore, Matthew 24 implies that the saints will come under persecution, but if they hold fast to their beliefs, they will overcome. Joseph Smith changed the word *endure* to *steadfast*. Endurance denotes holding firm, but it says nothing about the inward attitude of the person. Steadfastness adds this dimension, suggesting a firm, willful, and especially unwavering devotion to one’s beliefs. The point seems to be that endurance under pressure is not enough but that one’s attitude must be right as well.

“the same shall be saved” Note that in this verse and in the preceding few verses, the Lord promises only individual salvation, not the salvation of the Church as an institution. In fact, nowhere in the New Testament does the Lord indicate that the Church will survive. The one statement that the gates of hell will not prevail against the kingdom (Matthew 16:18) refers to the inability of any forces in the spirit world, including wicked forces—“the gates of hell”—to negate the keys of sealing which the Savior was about to give to Peter in Matthew 16:19. The word translated “prevail” (Greek *katischio*) means “to be superior to, master, or overcome.” The gates of the spirit world would be inferior to and thus unable to resist the power of Peter’s keys.

verses 12-20 These verses describe conditions and events in the fateful year of AD 70. “These things I have spoken unto you concerning the Jews” (verse 21) and their city of Jerusalem in AD 70 (verse 18).

12 When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, then you shall stand in the holy place; whoso readeth let him understand.

verse 12 “When you, therefore, shall see” The disciples asked the Lord for a time; instead, he gave them an event. This is the Lord’s usual pattern. He gives them signs or characteristics they were to watch for as a means of knowing when to act. By taking this approach, the Lord forces the saints to exercise continued faith and diligence. They were to watch and be prepared, for when they saw the sign, it would be time to move (D&C 45:35; see also the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13).

As it turns out, this sign, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple at Jerusalem, will occur in AD 70.

“the abomination of desolation” The terms *abominable* and *abomination* are used in the Old Testament to describe what God hates, what cannot fail to arouse his wrath. The term *desolation* refers either to God’s withdrawing his Spirit from a temple or a people—leaving them desolate—or it may even refer to the physical destruction—the desolation—of a temple or a people.

The expression “abomination of desolation” may be interpreted as referring specifically to a temple of God or it may imply a more general meaning. On this latter level, whenever people commit abominations, they bring upon themselves desolation. The Spirit of God withdraws, their priesthood is no more, and they are left to themselves and to the consequences they have freely chosen. Hence, we may point to examples of the “abomination of desolation” such as the desecration of the physical temple of God, or the desecration of the spiritual temple, the Church of Jesus Christ, and to the perversion of its doctrines and ordinances in a Great Apostasy (see D&C 1:15-16).

In this particular verse, the Lord refers to the spiritual and physical desolation or destruction of the temple at Jerusalem and the city itself which is one of the destructions of which the prophet Daniel prophesied. In the book of Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11; see also Luke 21:20), the “abomination of desolation” is that thing so hateful to God that its presence in the temple causes the divine presence to depart, leaving the sanctuary desolate. The term is usually associated with idolatrous worship or gross sexual immorality being practiced in the temple of God. The physical destruction of the temple at Jerusalem occurred shortly following the Savior’s mortal ministry.

In AD 68, the Roman general Vespasian and his son Titus took a large Roman army into Israel to subdue rebellious Judah. In AD 70 Titus surrounded Jerusalem and placed it under siege. Soon the starvation of the Jews inside the walls of Jerusalem began. Citizens of Jerusalem who ventured outside the walls to search for roots to eat,

if seized, were crucified by the Roman soldiers. Sometimes hundreds of Jews hanging on crosses could be seen from the city walls. A trench was dug around the city in order to make its isolation complete. Prisoners of war were cut open, while still alive, to enable soldiers to search their bodies for gold which they might have swallowed. Six hundred thousand persons died within the walls, and the dead bodies, too numerous to be buried, were left in the houses. The Zealots, a fanatical sect whose members maintained that God would save them at the last moment, went about murdering and urging the people to resistance. Within the walls of the Holy City, rival political factions stole the possessions of citizens and the food from the mouths of women and children. Pressed by the famine, mothers ate their babies. In their madness, the political gangs fought and killed each other for control of the city and even burned each other's food supplies, all while the common enemy, the Romans, waited outside the walls for the inevitable (see *The Jewish War*, translated by H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976-79], 387-401, 416-17). Even Titus was sick at heart at the daily horrors he witnessed or heard about.

At length the temple became a fort. Titus attacked it as such. A Roman soldier, contrary to order, set fire to it. After a while the scene was one of carnage and plunder. Six thousand Jews perished in the flames. In this awful war more than a million and a half of the Jews perished, and many were sold into slavery.

It should be noted that the Romans were not guilty of abominating the temple; they only destroyed it. According to Josephus, abomination came from the faithless among the ranking members of the Jews who used the temple for their own gain (*Ibid.*, 2.394-96). Had these Jews honored the temple and God's covenant, the Lord would have protected it and them. Instead, the Jews abominated his house and brought upon themselves destruction. The Romans acted only as the agents.

“then you shall stand in the holy place” The Lord indicated only one place. The irony is that it was not his temple. Because his holy house was no longer holy, he had to designate another place of holiness. According to the early Christian historian Eusebius, when the first wave Roman troops moved to and then away from Jerusalem in AD 66, the Christian leaders still remaining in Jerusalem, under inspiration, led all believing Christians across the Jordan River and went north to a city name Pella, where they remained safe from the forces of war (*Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Kirsopp Lake, 2 volumes, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980], 1:201). Generally speaking “the holy place” is among the pure in heart, or Zion (D&C 45:32; 87:8; 101:22).

“whoso readeth let him understand” The Lord fully intended for the prophecy to be written down and preserved for the sake of his people. The phrase suggests that the early disciples kept notes of this and other sermons at the Savior's behest, and that he expected the Church to preserve and use them.

13 Then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains;

verse 13 Once they saw the sign, the Christians were to act immediately. They did not have to wait for an actual attack. Rather, when they saw that an attack was inevitable, they were to flee, for there would be little time. Further, it was not just those in Jerusalem, but in all the province of Judea who were in danger. The entire area had to be vacated, and it was. According to Eusebius, the members of the Church of Jesus Christ fled Jerusalem before its destruction in AD 70 and settled in Pella, about twenty miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.5).

“flee into the mountains” At first glance, the reference to the inhabitants of Judea fleeing to the mountains may be puzzling, since those in Jerusalem already live in the tops of the mountains. But the other side of the parallelism in Luke 21:21 may help: “Let them which are in the midst of it depart out.”

14 Let him who is on the housetop flee, and not return to take anything out of his house;

15 Neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes;

16 And wo unto them that are with child, and unto them that give suck in those days;

17 Therefore, pray ye the Lord that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day;

verses 18-20 In these following verses, the Lord warns the Jews about the impending devastation which will occur among them. He makes it clear that his warnings in the previous several verses have not just been intended for the Christians, but also for the Jews. As it turns out, only the Christians responded to the warnings. Nephi, speaking of the Jews in and before his time, stated that “never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord” (2 Nephi 25:9). The same held true in Peter’s day—the days following the Lord’s mortal ministry. Those living in Jerusalem were destroyed because they would not listen; the Christians survived because they did listen (Draper, Richard D., *The Prophecies of Jesus: From the Fall of Jerusalem to the Second Coming* [American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2001], 110).

18 For then, in those days, shall be great tribulation on the Jews, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such as was not before sent upon Israel, of God, since the beginning of their kingdom until this time; no, nor ever shall be sent again upon Israel.

verse 18 **“in those days, shall be great tribulation on the Jews, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem”** History bears out the grim details of the fulfillment of the prophecy. As has been described above, in AD 68 the Roman Titus began a two-

year siege of Jerusalem which eventually devastated the temple, destroyed the city, and left as many as a million and a half Jews dead.

Following the burning and destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the hewers went to work pulverizing the stones, casting the debris into the valleys surrounding the mount. Finally, Titus ordered the soil to be plowed and salted. When he was finished, the hilltop was bare and the Jewish nation destroyed. The destruction of the Jewish nation was so complete that it would not exist again until AD 1948.

Eusebius, a fourth-century Christian historian, recorded the response of the Church to these events. He wrote that the “people of the church in Jerusalem were commanded . . . to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Terea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ migrated from Jerusalem” (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3, 136). Thus, the Christians were spared the suffering of their countrymen.

“nor ever shall be sent again upon Israel” This promise of the Lord is especially interesting in light of what Jews would subsequently experience at the hands of certain Muslims, Eastern Bloc nations, and especially the Nazis. How could Jesus say this would be the worst of all times? The answer probably lies less in the intensity of the brutalization than it does in its source. Though Rome would complete the destruction, its worst part came from Jews turning against Jews both before and during the siege. Josephus records how three leaders fought for control of the Jews and Jerusalem and in the process killed hundreds of their countrymen. They went not only after those who were in the other camps but also those who tried to remain neutral. Further, one of these leaders allowed his followers, during the siege, to pillage the houses of his fellow countrymen for food and valuables, leaving the residents to starve to death.

Another explanation of this phrase perhaps lies in the expression “of God” earlier in the verse. The Holocaust which would come in the twentieth-century would not be sent “of God.”

19 All things which have befallen them are only the beginning of the sorrows which shall come upon them.

verse 19 “only the beginning of the sorrows which shall come upon them”

For all the suffering the Jews would endure, more would come. Much of that suffering would come at the hands of evil men who shall feel God’s wrath. Even so, the forebears of the Jews helped bring persecution upon their descendants. The Book of Mormon explains how “those who are at Jerusalem . . . shall be scourged by all people, because they crucify the God of Israel, and turn their hearts aside, rejecting signs and wonders, and the power and glory of the God of Israel. And because they turn their hearts aside, saith the prophet, and have despised the Holy One of Israel, they shall wander in the flesh, and perish, and become a hiss and a byword, and be hated among all nations (1 Nephi 19:13-14).

Were the Jews scattered and scourged because they crucified Jesus? The answer is “certainly not.” It is pernicious and inaccurate doctrine to believe that an entire progeny would be punished because those few ruling Jews in the Jerusalem Sanhedrin sought to and succeeded in crucifying Jesus. The answer as to why all Israel, including the Jews, was scourged and scattered is that they “turn[ed] their hearts aside . . . and despised the Holy One of Israel.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Our Israelite forebears were scattered because they rejected the gospel, defiled the priesthood, forsook the church, and departed from the kingdom. They were scattered because they turned from the Lord, worshiped false gods, and walked in all the ways of the heathen nations. They were scattered because they . . . rejected the Lord Jehovah, who is the Lord Jesus, of whom all their prophets testified. Israel was scattered for apostasy” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 515).

This verse contains a fundamental and important truth. A people is scattered when they reject Jesus Christ and his gospel. Apostasy leads to scattering. The converse principle is just as important. A people is gathered when they accept the Messiah and his message and become disciples (see 2 Nephi 9:2, 2 Nephi 25:14).

20 And except those days should be shortened, there should none of their flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake, according to the covenant, those days shall be shortened.

verse 20 “except those days should be shortened” The siege and attendant slaughter of the Jews after the Romans set the temple grounds ablaze could have been so great that a general extermination might have resulted. However, the Lord intervened. Though the heart of the Jewish nations was destroyed, many of the Jews outside of Judea were spared from all but slight repercussions.

It seems likely that the Lord also has intervened in all of the subsequent sufferings of the Jews. Though the devastations of the Jews have been great in the European pogroms, including the Nazi debacle, the Lord likely had a hand in preserving the Jewish nation.

“but for the elect’s sake . . . those days should be shortened” The Greek phrase *dia tous eklektous*, here translated “for the elect’s sake” actually means “as a result of” or “on account of,” or “because of.” Because of the elect, the days have been or will be shortened. Judah can thank the elect for the fact it is saved. But who are the elect? They are the Jews themselves! See the following paragraph.

“according to the covenant” The covenant reaches all the way back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom God promised a great and protected posterity (see Genesis 17:2-8; 22:16-18; 26:4-5, 24; 28:4, 14-15; 35:10-13; Abraham 2:8-11). Israel blessed Judah particularly (see Genesis 49:8-12), not only giving him the scepter of royalty but also the promise that Israel’s posterity would gather to him. Thus, Judah’s descendants would prepare the way for latter-day Israel to gather to Judea. God

remembered his covenant, and, because of the Jews' elect status, he would not allow Judah as a people to be destroyed.

Though the Jews have, since AD 70, had many chances to say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," he certainly has not. For "can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee [O house of Israel]" (Isaiah 49:14-15). Thus, even in her unworthiness, though Judah might suffer, God has seen that a remnant survived.

verses 21-55 In the middle of verse 21 ("after the tribulation of those days"), the scene shifts to the latter days. Warnings are repeated (verses 22; cf. Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:21-22; Luke 17:23; 21:8). For example, we can anticipate and expect to see false Christs and false prophets, who will show great signs and wonders. The "miraculous" powers of Satan are quite visible in our modern world; spiritualistic phenomena are plentiful. "And he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation" (D&C 63:7). Not all supernatural manifestations are from God. "Ask of God . . . that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrine of devils, or the comandments of men; for some are of men, and other of devils" (D&C 46:7). Even the elect have to be careful, so as not to be deceived (cf. D&C 29:7). Each must have his own light and knowledge, his own faith and testimony. Elder Harold B. Lee warned, "Unless every member of this Church gains for himself an unshakable testimony of the divinity of this Church, he will be among those who will be deceived" (*Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 132). The remarkable promise is that "whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (verse 37).

21 Behold, these things I have spoken unto you concerning the Jews; and again, after the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe him not;

22 For in those days there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.

verses 21-22 "false Christs, and false prophets" As it was in the days of the apostles, so shall it be in the last days. There will always be those who would wish to take over the Church and usurp the power of its rightful leaders.

What is a false Christ, and what is a false prophet? Is there any distinction to draw between these two? A false prophet is a man who would try to lead people from the truth with false authority and false and specious doctrines. Elder Harold B. Lee noted that these included those who claimed authority the Lord did not give them, yet they "would deceive many, even members of the Church, by the signs and wonders they performed by occult powers" (*Decisions for Successful Living* [Salt Lake City:

Deseret Book, 1973], 66). Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted that a false Christ need not be a human individual, but could instead be a form of worship, a false philosophy or ethical system, or a false church” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 volumes [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965], 48).

“insomuch, that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect” The word “elect” (from the Greek *eklektos*) describes those whom God has invited into his work and who, through obedience, have accepted the call. As a result, they receive the Holy Ghost. This power acts as the sign of their election (see 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). The term “very elect” does not mean the *most* elect but the *truly* elect. In other words, the Lord is not taking just about church leaders but about all members who live so that they are close to his Spirit. The false prophets will even find it possible to seduce some of these.

The false messiahs and false prophets will be able to successfully influence others through great signs and wonders. Thereby they will give people a false sense of security. Some of the elect will not be immune to their pull. The phrase “if possible” suggests that some of the elect are able to be seduced and some are not.

23 Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect’s sake; and you also shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all I have told you must come to pass; but the end is not yet.

verse 23 “I speak these things unto you for the elect’s sake” The Lord speaks these warnings unto the Lord’s elect—the members of his Church in good standing. This verse applies to the last days.

“wars, and rumors of wars” The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith:

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations. And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war. And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation. And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations; That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the

saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies. Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen (D&C 87:1-8).

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that the Civil War was the Lord's sign that the beginning of the end had come.

Based upon what the Lord says in this Section 87 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the section on war which I read—I place the time of the beginning of the end at the rebellion of South Carolina. I say I place it there. I beg your pardon. The Lord places it there because it says beginning at this place these things would take place (*Signs of the Times* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1952], 127).

The history of the world has been full of wars and rumors of wars. The fact is, however, that the last days will see an escalation of wars of unusual proportions in both breadth and destructive power (see Ezekiel 38-39; Revelation 8-9, 16). Wars in our dispensation are and will continued to be fueled by greed, racial and religious prejudice, resentment of others because of their wealth, fear, mistrust, and hatred. While much of it may be due to pride and the natural man, there can be no question that Satan glories in the world's debacle.

These wars will continue until a great and final war, the most destructive the world has known, the great battle at Jerusalem.

24 Behold, I have told you before;

25 Wherefore, if they shall say unto you: Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not;

verse 25 “if they shall say unto you . . . he is in the desert; go not forth . . . he is in the secret chambers” If false prophets or false christs, these false religious systems with their false teachers, invite you into the desert to find Christ in a life of asceticism, go not forth, he is not there. If they call you to the secret chambers of monastic seclusion to find him, believe them not, he is not there.

26 For as the light of the morning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

verse 26 “as the light of the morning cometh out of the east . . . and covereth the whole earth” The Lord's second coming will be neither exclusive nor restrictive. Rather it will be a universally public event that can no more be hidden than the sunrise. Joseph Smith explained that as “the dawning of the morning makes its appearance in the east and moves along gradually, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. It will be small at its first appearance and gradually become larger and larger until every eye shall see it” (Kent P. Jackson, *Joseph Smith's Commentary on the*

Bible, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994], 110). All will know when he arrives; therefore, none should believe he has come to a desert or mountain place. “If we could remember that and put to flight all the foolish ideas about how the Savior will appear,” recounts President Harold B. Lee, “we would be ready when he comes” (*Stand Ye In Holy Places*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 86).

27 And now I show unto you a parable. Behold, wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth.

verse 27 “I show unto you a parable” Here the Savior refers to the latter day gathering to his earthly kingdom by way of a metaphor. Just as eagles are drawn to the life-giving meat (the carcass), and just as their hunger is not satisfied until they come to that meat, so will the Lord’s elect in all parts of the world find Christ, come unto his Church, and be satisfied. The reader should recall that one purpose of the gathering is for the protection of his saints from the destructions of the latter days.

28 And they shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars.

verse 28 See the commentary for verse 23.

29 Behold I speak for mine elect’s sake; for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

verse 29 “I speak for mine elect’s sake” Again, the Lord’s warnings are issued primarily for the benefit of the members of his earthly kingdom.

“famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” Natural disasters will also occur: famines, pestilences (epidemics), and earthquakes (and we might add floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, and fires). These catastrophes seem to be increasing as we approach the time of the end. “And they that believe not in him shall be destroyed, both by fires, and by tempest, and by earthquakes, and by bloodsheds, and by pestilence, and by famine. And they shall know that the Lord is God, the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 6:15; see also D&C 45:33).

30 And again, because iniquity shall abound, the love of men shall wax cold; but he that shall not be overcome, the same shall be saved.

verse 30 “And again” Three events will repeat themselves. First, as it was in the days of the apostles, so the last days will be marked by iniquity that will snuff our care, tenderness, sympathy, affection, and other attributes of love. Second, in spite of the lack of love, the Lord will try to reclaim the world through the preaching of the gospel. Finally, Jerusalem will again see the abomination of desolation (see the

commentary for verse 12), but this time, because the temple will not be defiled, it shall not fall.

31 And again, this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked;

verse 31 “this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world”

Yet, in spite of persecutions implied in verse 30, the “Gospel . . . shall be preached in all the world.” This suggests that in spite of persecution, the Church will continue to be strong and dynamic enough to pursue missionary work.

Of approximately 200 nations in the world, the Church is currently represented in more than 160, but a very large portion of the earth’s population is without any direct contact with the Lord’s representatives.

“then shall the end come” Only after the world has been warned will the Lord move against it. Thus, the gospel must be preached in all the world (D&C 58:64-65). However, the requirement does not mean that every person or even the majority of people must hear the gospel. Indeed, according to Doctrine and Covenants 45:50-54, the heathen nations will not be redeemed until the millennial era. The leaders of nations, however, must be forewarned. If they do not respond, they must take the responsibility for their people and suffer the consequences.

32 And again shall the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, be fulfilled.

verse 32 “And again shall the abomination of desolation . . . be fulfilled”

This verse refers to a second destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The reader will recall that the first destruction occurred in AD 70 by the hand of a Roman army led by Titus (see the commentary for verse 12). This second destruction will occur apparently in association with the latter-day battle at Jerusalem (the battle of Armageddon). In that day, Jerusalem will be attacked, during the battle of Armageddon, but the abomination of desolation will not be completed. Jerusalem and its temple will not be completely destroyed. Instead, the Savior will intervene to save the city and the temple. Three different phenomena will occur and serve to save Jerusalem. These are described in verses 33, 36, and 37. For a more complete discussion of this great final battle, see “The Great Final Battle at Jerusalem,” “The Battle at Jerusalem,” and “Armageddon” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3, chapter 26, *Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming—Those that Punish and Cleanse*.

33 And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

verse 33 “the sun shall be darkened” This sign will apparently come twice in the last days—once a few years before the Lord’s advent, and again associated with his coming (see Richard D. Draper, *The Prophecies of Jesus: From the Fall of Jerusalem to the Second Coming* [American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2001], 139-44).

Its first occurrence is described in D&C 29:14: “The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath.” This latter sign occurs during the sixth seal, well before the battle of Armageddon (see also D&C 34:9; 45:42; 88:87; Joel 2:31; Revelation 6:21).

The second occurrence will apparently occur during the seventh seal, when the Lord comes in glory during the battle of Armageddon to save Jerusalem and end the battle. “And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places” (D&C 133:49; see also Joel 2:10; 3:15).

It is not clear to which of these two occurrences of the sign this verse refers, though the initial occurrence seems most likely.

What is the cause of this strange behavior of all the heavenly luminaries? The answer is found in D&C 133:49: “So great shall be the glory of his [the Lord’s] presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places.”

Doctrine and Covenants 133 details several effects of the Savior’s coming in glory:

1. The sun, moon, and stars will hide or withhold their light, being insignificant compared to the brilliance of him who is literally the light of the world (D&C 88:7-13); recall that Joseph Smith described Jesus Christ and his Father as “above the brightness of the sun . . . and [their] brightness and glory defy all description” (JS-H 1:16-17; cf. verses 30-31);

2. Mountains will flow down at his presence (verses 40, 44);

3. Waters on the earth will boil (verse 4);

4. All nations will tremble at his presence (verse 42);

5. Wicked people and things will be burned and destroyed by the brightness of his glory (D&C 5:19; Malachi 4:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; JS-H 1:37; D&C 29:9, 12; 64:24; 101:23-25; see further on JS-M 1:36).

A frequently mentioned consequence of the catastrophes and commotions engulfing the earth will be men’s hearts failing them for fear (Luke 21:26; D&C 45:26; 88:91).

34 Verily, I say unto you, this generation, in which these things shall be shown forth, shall not pass away until all I have told you shall be fulfilled.

verse 34 This verse suggests that the signs which will occur at the time of the Savior's coming in glory will all occur in one generation or one lifetime.

35 Although, the days will come, that heaven and earth shall pass away; yet my words shall not pass away, but all shall be fulfilled.

verse 35 “heaven and earth shall pass away” The earth, as we know it, shall pass away. The telestial earth will become a terrestrial earth.

“all shall be fulfilled” The Lord makes an emphatic declaration that these prophecies are not to be taken lightly. All that he here reveals will happen.

36 And, as I said before, after the tribulation of those days, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;

verse 36 “the sign of the Son of Man” Next, we see the occurrence of the “sign of the Son of Man in heaven.” This sign also occurs at the time of the Lord's coming in glory. It indicates that his second coming is imminent. It is difficult to say exactly what this sign is. In commenting upon this passage, the prophet Joseph Smith said: “There will be wars and rumors of wars, signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. . . . Then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc. But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning coming out of the east” (*TPJS*, 286-87). Joseph went on to describe what he meant in some detail: “How are we to see it? As the lighting up of the morning or the dawning of the morning. . . . It will be small at its first appearance and gradually become larger until every eye shall see it” (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith* [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], 180-81). One wonders: Could such a dramatic occasion be the re-appearance of the City of Enoch? According to Wandle Mace, this was what Joseph Smith taught (see Sayings of Joseph Smith in “Joseph Smith Papers,” Church Historian's Library, Salt Lake City, Utah).

It is likely that the saints will recognize the signs of the coming of the Son of Man for what they are, but the wicked will not. Rather, they will attribute them to natural causes (Kent P. Jackson, *Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994], 110).

“with power and great glory” Jesus Christ will come with power and great glory, and with tens of thousands of his holy ones (saints) accompanying him. Who are they who accompany the Savior at his coming? They are the inheritors of his celestial kingdom: “These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven” (D&C 76:63).

The power and the glory of the Lord at his coming, when all the world will see and know that he has come, is variously described in superlative terms in the scriptures. His aura or dwelling cloud or Shekinah is depicted as “glory,” “fire,” “like lightning,” “light,” “exquisite whiteness,” “brightness,” “brilliance,” and “radiance.” The fire, or glory, of the Lord will burn, destroy, and remove all telestial people and things from this sphere. “What power, what source of energy, will ignite the world on the last day and burn away anything that cannot abide at least a terrestrial glory? It will be the glory of the Son of Man himself as he descends openly and in full view upon the world” (Robinson and Garrett, *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 2:224). Will a literal fire or burning sweep over the earth? Elder Spencer W. Kimball answered, “As it [the flood] was a real drowning, there will be a real burning at this next great event when the end of the world comes, and the wicked will be burned” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 441).

Though his second coming will be highly public for all to see, one specific place he will appear is to “his temple” (Malachi 3:1; 3 Nephi 24:1). But what temple? To the house of the Lord in the New Jerusalem and in the Old Jerusalem. Elder McConkie wrote: “This great prophecy [Isaiah 2:2-4], as is often the case, is subject to the law of multiple fulfillment: (1) In Salt Lake City and other mountain locations temples, in the full and true sense of the word, have been erected, and representatives of all nations are flowing unto them to learn of God and his ways. . . . (2) But the day is yet future when the Lord’s house is to be built on that ‘Mount Zion’ which is ‘the city of New Jerusalem’ in Jackson County, Missouri (D&C 84:2-4). Mount Zion, itself, will be the mountain of the Lord’s house in the day when that glorious temple is erected. (3) When the Jews flee unto Jerusalem, it will be ‘unto the mountains of the Lord’s house’ (D&C 133:13), for a holy temple is to be built there also as part of the work of the great era of restoration (Ezekiel 37:24-28)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 518).

verses 37-43 The Lord continues his warnings, but these are specifically to his elect—to the members of his earthly Church and kingdom in good standing.

37 And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived, for the Son of Man shall come, and he shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

verse 37 “**whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived**” Again, the Lord’s warnings in this section (verses 37-43) are particularly intended for the Lord’s elect.

This verse describes the final sign just before the Lord’s coming. About the time of the second coming there shall be a general gathering of the Lord’s elect both in heaven and on earth. This gathering will be announced with a trumpet blast. The

instrument mentioned here (Greek *salpinx*) is not so much for music as for communication. The salpinx had three primary roles: to sound command during battle, to announce the arrival of dignitaries, and to signal the beginning and ending of periods of celebration. All three applications, taken symbolically, seem apropos here. First, the Lord has called his saints to battle and given them their marching orders through his prophet. Second, the events of the last days announce that the coming of the Lord as King of kings. And, finally, the fall of Babylon and the triumph of God's kingdom, are causes for celebration. In this verse the trumpets seem to symbolize, first, missionary work—the Lord's telling his people, "Declare my gospel as with the voice of a trump" (D&C 24:12)—and, second, those events that finish his latter-day work and make preparation for the second coming (D&C 77:12).

The apostle Paul wrote of the time when "the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: And the dead in Christ shall rise first." He went on to say that those who "remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Thus are the righteous received by their Lord, to return with him to live upon the earth as it enters its millennial Sabbath.

38 Now learn a parable of the fig-tree—When its branches are yet tender, and it begins to put forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh at hand;

verse 38 We can and should become acquainted with the signs of the Lord's second coming and be prepared for all these events and phenomena. We can and should know the general timing of his coming. Jesus gave three simple illustrations to enable us to judge the proximity of his arrival: (1) the fig tree, (2) a thief in the night, and (3) a woman in travail.

"a parable of the fig-tree" The Holy Land where Jesus lived has only two seasons: the hot, dry season (summer) and the cold, wet season (winter). The New Testament mentions these two seasons only. During the late winter (usually in March) the fig tree issues its first tiny leaves, signaling the beginning of the warm season. One characteristic of a fig tree is that it does not put forth its leaves until relatively late in the season, long after most trees are in full leaf. The Savior used this feature in a parable concerning his second coming. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [the Savior's second coming] [is] nigh" (Matthew 24:32). Using the parable of the fig-tree, President Spencer W. Kimball made a prophetic pronouncement: "The leaves are commencing to show on the fig tree" (*Ensign*, May 1976, 74).

"you know that summer is nigh at hand" The Lord seldom gives time references. On the other hand, the Lord has promised to keep his saints informed. He promised them, "Unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man" (D&C 68:11), noting that, though the coming of the

Lord will overtake the world as a thief in the night, “that day shall not over take you as a thief” (D&C 106:4-5). The caveat, however, is that the saints must pay attention.

39 So likewise, mine elect, when they shall see all these things, they shall know that he is near, even at the doors;

40 But of that day, and hour, no one knoweth; no, not the angels of God in heaven, but my Father only.

verse 40 “of that day, and hour, no one knoweth” This statement seems to contradict the writing of the prophet Amos: “God will do nothing but what he will reveal unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). After quoting this scripture, the prophet Joseph said, “Consequently, if it is not made known to the prophet it will not come to pass” (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], 180-81). The message here for the saints is to listen to the modern prophet.

Some have noticed the words “neither the Son” in Mark 13:32, but that phrase was deleted in the JS-M. Of course the Son knows when he is returning to the earth. “He knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it” (2 Nephi 9:20; see also Mormon 8:17; Moroni 7:22; D&C 38:2; 130:7; Abraham 2:8).

41 But as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man;

verse 41 “as it was in the days of Noah” Usually this statement is taken to mean that the world will be as wicked as it was when the Lord sent forth the great Flood. Perhaps this is true, but the major point is that the people of Noah’s day were spiritually blind—they did not heed the warnings which were given. Thus they were caught unprepared. Thus, the Lord’s warning in verse 46.

Most of those living in the last days, though they could have known if they had listened, will feel the same surprised shock. Spiritual blindness is not a matter of the eye or of the mind, but rather a matter of the heart. The Lord told his ancient disciples, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). To put it in other words, the Lord’s concern seems to be less with what a man understands than with what he loves. Loving the wrong thing lends itself to deception. Though people may understand what is right, loving what is wrong makes them weak and vulnerable to alternative voices.

42 For it shall be with them, as it was in the days which were before the flood; for until the day that Noah entered into the ark they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage;

verse 42 “until the day that Noah entered into the ark they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” The point is, they were not listening to the Lord’s warnings given through his prophet.

The text of Luke adds another comparison to the time of the Lord’s second coming: “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:28-29; cf. Genesis 19:16). The comparisons to the people in Noah’s day and the people of Sodom in Lot’s day foreshadow a latter-day destruction that is sudden and cataclysmic.

43 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

verse 43 President Lorenzo Snow reported that on one occasion the prophet Joseph Smith was asked who he was. The Prophet smiled kindly and replied, “Noah came before the flood; I have come before the fire” (Cannon, *Journal*, 30).

verses 42-43 Luke adds another warning for the time of the second coming (parallel to JS-M 1:14-15, in the first century after Christ): “In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:31-32; see also D&C 133:14-15) Luke’s words plainly suggest that the fate of Lot’s wife was not merely the result of looking back, as Genesis 19:26 indicates, but returning her heart back and consequently being caught up in the total destruction of Sodom. Interestingly, the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam, also mentions this same detail. It speaks of delivering Lot “and his household, all save his wife, who is of those who stay behind” (Sura XXIX: 32; see also XXVII:171, from *Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, 286).

verses 44-55 These final verses in the chapter contain the Lord’s warning to all men, and not just to his elect.

44 Then shall be fulfilled that which is written, that in the last days, two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left;

45 Two shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left;

verses 44-45 At the Lord’s second coming, the honorable and righteous will be caught up to meet him. These are called “Christ’s at his coming” (see D&C 88:99). This term is usually used to refer to terrestrial souls, but here, of course, it refers to both the celestial and terrestrial individuals. For those telestial souls who are left behind, the moment will be catastrophic. As Moroni told Joseph Smith, “The day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble” (JS-H 1:37).

Among orthodox Christian groups this being caught up to meet the Savior at his second coming is called “the Rapture.” The Rapture describes the moment when those who are Christ’s at his coming will be caught up to meet him.

46 And what I say unto one, I say unto all men; watch, therefore, for you know not at what hour your Lord doth come.

verse 46 “I say unto all men” Up to this point, all the Lord’s comments about the last days have been directed to the elect. He now broadens his sweep and gives a sound warning to all those living in the last days.

“watch, therefore, for you know not at what hour your Lord doth come” The solution is to be constantly prepared. The foolish virgins learned too late the cost of not being prepared (see the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13).

47 But know this, if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to have been broken up, but would have been ready.

verse 47 “if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come” Jesus also made the curious parallel between his return to earth and the coming of thief in the night. If a homeowner knows exactly when a thief is going to attempt to break into his home, he will be up and ready. Likewise if Jesus told everyone exactly when he is coming, we would be up and ready. He does not want us to be prepared for a certain date and for a certain period of time. He wants us to be prepared always. Every generation needs to prepare for the Savior’s coming as if it will happen in their lifetime.

The Lord’s disciples knew the metaphor that at the Lord’s second coming, the Lord will come “as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Does that mean he is going to come to rob people, that he is going to come over the wall, that he is going to be sneaky, that he is going to be dishonest? Of course not. It means he will come in the manner that a thief comes and takes you by surprise when you are not expecting it. In that sense he will come, and in that sense only. The Lord postulates, in this verse, an impossibly improbable situation—that the good man of the house would know when a thief might come. Since this is not practically possible, he must remain ready constantly as is urged in the following verse.

This metaphor is especially poignant since it was the “good man,” not the wicked, slothful, or uncaring man, whose house was broken up. He did not deserve what came to him, but it came nonetheless because he was neither watchful nor prepared.

Jesus also drew a parallel between his return to earth and a woman in travail (1 Thessalonians 5:3; D&C 136:35). Even though doctors can give a fairly accurate forecast of when a baby is due, even marking a certain date on the calendar, there is no way to know exactly what day or hour the baby will come. When a woman is about to

deliver, the physical signs of the imminent arrival are evident. So a true disciple of Jesus will know and recognize the signs of his imminent coming.

48 Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

verse 48 The text of Luke 21:34-36 encourages us not to get carried away with the lusts, pleasures, and cares of this life, lest we be caught unawares. We are to watch and pray always and keep the commandments that we may be worthy to escape the calamities that will come and then to stand before the Son of Man “when he shall come clothed in the glory of his Father” (JST, Luke 21:36).

49 Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

verse 49 “a faithful and wise servant . . . to give them meat in due season” The Lord here explains how to be prepared. The wise servant works in God’s house, giving spiritual and temporal sustenance to those in the household at a time when they are in need. In other words, he stresses the need for his people to be engaged in good works. Though his second coming may be far off, the saints must not hold back in their exercise of charity toward others.

50 Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing; and verily I say unto you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

verse 50 “he shall make him ruler over all his goods” The Lord’s promise is most interesting. He does not say the righteous steward will be ruler over some goods but over all goods. The Lord has promised, “All thrones and dominions, principalities, and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 121:29). There are no second-class citizens among the Gods, but all become heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ over all things (see Romans 8:16-17).

51 But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My lord delayeth his coming,

verse 51 “My lord delayeth his coming” Only an evil saint or servant of the Lord can make this statement. It could not be made by an atheist or an agnostic, who either denies or doubts the existence of God. Only a believer could make it. Therefore, the attitude is most damning. It reveals a mind that thinks it can get away with sin, injustice, and wantonness. Thus, the Lord can rightly say here that only an “evil servant” would think such a thing.

Another idea here is that when the Lord doesn’t come at the beginning of the seventh thousand years of the earth’s existence (the beginning of the seventh seal), the evil or unwise servant will say, “I guess he’s not coming after all.” Matthew 25:5 notes

that “the bridegroom tarried,” and D&C 45:26 says “Christ delayeth his coming” (cf. 3 Nephi 29:2). These combined passages teach that the Savior will intentionally delay his glorious coming until some time into the seventh thousand-year period, “in an hour that [we are] not aware of” (verse 53). Thus, the beginning of the seven thousand-year period and the actual coming of the Lord are not the same occasion.

When the Savior does come, we might wonder whether his reign on the earth will endure for a full thousand years after that moment or just finish out the thousand-year period (millennium) already begun? Scripture gives us no specific answer.

52 And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,

53 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

verses 52-53 The Lord makes it clear that the hypocritical member of the Church will be caught unawares and unprepared at the Lord’s coming.

54 And shall cut him asunder, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

verse 54 “shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites” The Greek word from which “hypocrite” comes (*hypocrites*) denotes the Greek play actor or the mask he wore, and thus came to denote dissembling, that is, putting on a false appearance. The idea behind the word, however, goes beyond these meanings. At its root is godlessness and apostasy. The evil servant thinks he can get away with evil because at his heart he has become apostate, no longer believing that God is the Almighty.

“weeping and gnashing of teeth” Suffering in the form of remorse will be experienced by the hypocritical member of the Church.

55 And thus cometh the end of the wicked, according to the prophecy of Moses, saying: They shall be cut off from among the people; but the end of the earth is not yet, but by and by.

verse 55 This new verse added by the prophet Joseph Smith includes a prophecy of Moses.

“the prophecy of Moses” The Lord paraphrases Deuteronomy 18:16-19 where God states that the one who does not listen to the words of the prophet like unto Moses (that is, the Lord), “which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” Peter said that those who would not listen to “that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23). Moroni referred to the same prophecy when he appeared to Joseph Smith, saying that soon all who would not listen to Jesus “should be cut off from among the people” (JS-H 1:40).

“but the end of the earth is not yet, but by and by” The Lord’s second coming is often referred to as the “end of the world,” but not the “end of the earth.” At the Lord’s second coming what does end is wickedness. The celestial order will come to an end, suddenly and violently. A new order, a terrestrial, will begin suddenly and in peace. Paradise will sweep the earth to the point that the new era “shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). The “end of the earth” will occur at the end of the Millennium when the terrestrial elements will be removed from the earth and only the celestial will remain.

Following Jesus’s extraordinary instruction to his disciples about the near and distant future, Luke notes that “in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives [perhaps at Bethany, with his friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus?]. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him” (Luke 21:37-38).

Joseph Smith–History

Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet History of the Church, Vol. 1, Chapters 1-5

The Joseph Smith–History is an extract taken from a larger work, variously entitled *The History of the Church*, *Joseph Smith’s History of the Church*, or the *Documentary History of the Church*. For a history of the development of this larger work, see the supplemental article, *Joseph Smith’s History of the Church*. This is a supplemental article appended to *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*.

In 1842 the editor of the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo began to serialize the history of the Church for the paper’s subscribers. Joseph and his scribes had begun this historical account in 1838 (again, see the aforementioned supplemental article). Some of the missionaries carried copies of the *Times and Seasons* to England. In 1850, as Franklin D. Richards began to pull together those gems to make up the Pearl of Great Price, he decided to include a portion of the history published in the newspaper. He entitled it “Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith.” The material Richards used came from the 15 March 1842 through the 1 August 1842 issues of the *Times and Seasons*. These documented the history of Joseph Smith from his birth to the time of Joseph and Oliver’s baptism and their continued work translating the Book of Mormon. The entire history contained in the *Times and Seasons* was eventually published in a special edition of the *Millennial Star* in England late in 1852, the year after the Pearl of Great Price came off the press.

The name of this extracted segment of history remained the same until 1902, when James E. Talmage created a general heading entitled “Writings of Joseph Smith” that included what is now Joseph Smith–Matthew and the Joseph Smith–History. He designated the portion under discussion as “II Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith.” In 1921 he changed the Roman numerals to the Arabic “2.” For the 1927 edition, the apostle changed the title to “Joseph Smith 2.” This section retained that title until 1978, when the church’s Scripture Committee changed the name to the “Joseph Smith–History.”

Joseph’s Purpose in Writing the History (verses 1-2)

1 Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they have transpired, in

relation both to myself and the Church, so far as I have such facts in my possession.

verse 1 “many reports” The anti-Mormon publications during Joseph’s lifetime were not only “many,” but they began *early* as well. From the first year of the organization of the Church both oral and written reports began to circulate concerning Joseph Smith, his family, and the Church. By 1838 when Joseph was writing the early parts of this history, a large amount of written material was in circulation, all of it purporting to tell the “real” history of the Church.

“evil-disposed and designing persons” Several ill-disposed detractors of the Church wrote and spoke malicious accounts intending to denigrate Joseph, his family, the Church, and the saints. These were reproduced in books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles. Some of them have been mentioned in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*. The interested reader is invited to search that volume for the surnames of Eber D. Howe, Philastus Hurlbut, Symonds Ryder, and Ezra Booth, to learn about their efforts to damage the Church. In 1838 John Corrill, a disaffected former member of the Church, completed a mean-spirited book against the Church, *Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons)*, and he published it the following year. In Missouri, a Reverend Pixly printed a number of pamphlets against the Church that played a role in fueling mobocracy.

“I have been induced to write this history” Though Joseph had been trying to construct an accurate history of the Church from its inception in 1830, the volume of derogatory materials circulating by 1837-38 compelled him to begin again.

2 In this history I shall present the various events in relation to this Church, in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now [1838] the eighth year since the organization of the said Church.

verse 2 “in truth and righteousness” Joseph Smith assures his readers that his purpose in writing this history was to tell the unvarnished truth about the beginnings of the Church.

The Early History of the Smith Family (verse 3-4)

3 I was born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December, in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, State of Vermont . . . My father, Joseph Smith, Sen., left the State of Vermont, and moved to Palmyra, Ontario (now Wayne) county, in the State of New York, when I was in my tenth year, or thereabouts. In about four years after my father’s arrival in Palmyra, he moved with his family into Manchester in the same county of Ontario—

verse 3 “My father, Joseph Smith, Sen., left the State of Vermont” Poor farming conditions in Vermont, coupled with three years of crop failure, left the family

destitute. Further, sickness had plagued the Vermont area for a few years. Upstate New York was considered to have a milder climate and more fertile land. In 1816, Joseph Smith Sr. went on ahead of the family to find land and a home for his family. Upon finding a suitable place to rent in the village of Palmyra, he sent for his family. The trip proved arduous, most of the early portion through snow and under trying conditions. Joseph himself was still recovering from surgery, making walking difficult (see the Explanatory Introduction at the beginning of the commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants, under the date of 1812). Nevertheless, the family persevered and were united with their father.

“In about four years after my father’s arrival in Palmyra, he moved with his family into Manchester” The family’s next move was not, in fact, in “about four years,” but rather was two years following their move from Vermont to Palmyra Village. In 1818 they began purchasing a hundred-acre, heavily wooded tract of land in Farmington Township, two miles south of Palmyra Village. In 1821 or 1822 the village and township of Manchester were formed, and the Smith farm was then located in Manchester Township immediately adjacent to the line between Palmyra and Manchester Townships. Before moving from the village of Palmyra, the Smiths built a small four-room log cabin on this farm, and in 1818 all ten members of the Smith family—eight children and two parents—moved into this snug log house.

4 His family consisting of eleven souls, namely, my father, Joseph Smith; my mother, Lucy Smith (whose name, previous to her marriage, was Mack, daughter of Solomon Mack); my brothers, Alvin (who died November 19th, 1823, in the 26th year of his age), Hyrum, myself, Samuel Harrison, William, Don Carlos; and my sisters, Sophronia, Catherine, and Lucy.

verse 4 “His family consisting of eleven souls” Here Joseph mentions all nine of the children of Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. At the time the family first moved to their farm in Farmington Township (later Manchester Township), there were only eight children. Joseph’s youngest sibling, his sister Lucy, was not born until July 18, 1824.

Joseph’s Search for the True Church (verses 5-13)

5 Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, “Lo, here!” and others, “Lo, there!” Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

verse 5 “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion” Immigrants moving into northwestern New York during the 1770s brought very little religion with them. During the period of the Late 1700s, formal religion in America was at its lowest ebb, with only 7 percent registered as active in any church (Milton V. Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft 1971], 53-54). The percentage would reflect only adult white males. Just after the turn of the century, a number of sects began earnest missionary labors. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, a number of religious groups were flourishing in western New York. The Baptists found camp meetings a very effective way to evangelize an area. Before long the Presbyterians and Methodists were following suit. Some of these camp meetings drew large crowds, some estimated at as many as ten thousand souls (*Ibid.*, 73). Religious fervor swept back and forth across western New York to such an extent that later historians called it the “Burned-Over District” (*Ibid.*, 76). Many in Joseph Smith’s area came to feel an unusual excitement about religion.

“It commenced with the Methodists” During this era, Methodists were rapidly replacing the Baptists as the dominant religion in America. Between 1819 and 1821, the Methodists sponsored a number of ministers working in western New York (Milton V. Backman, “Awakenings in the Burned-Over District,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 [Spring 1969b], 76). One of the foremost was Rev. George Lane, an effective speaker whose “manner of communication was peculiarly calculated to awaken the intellect of the hearer, and arouse the sinner to look about him for safety” (*Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1 [October 1834–September 1835], 42). The success of the Methodists inspired other denominations to proselytize the area.

“some crying, ‘Lo here!’ and others, ‘lo there!’ The word *lo* means “behold,” “look,” or “see,” and is usually used as an expression of surprise.

6 For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.

verse 6 “it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real” The spirit of ecumenism (interdenominational unity) that played a large part in religious movements in the last

half of the twentieth century was absent a century before. Ecumenism can go forward only when churches are willing to give up key dogmas. The ministers on the early frontier clung to theirs. Though ministers initially cooperated in spreading the word of God, their good feelings quickly evaporated when it came to getting lambs into the fold. Not only was there strife between sects, but there was often strife within sects as well. A number of new converts, for example, not far from where Joseph lived, were dismissed from the Baptist society because of their insistence on a different understanding of certain doctrinal points. These people quickly formed their own nondenominational church, taking only the scriptures as their guide (Milton V. Backman, “Awakenings in the Burned-Over District,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 [Spring 1969b], 314).

7 I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father’s family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined that church, namely, my mother, Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia.

verse 7 “I was at this time in my fifteenth year” The time of these events was 1820.

8 During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them; but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

9 My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

10 In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

verse 10 “this war of words and tumult of opinions” The various sects argued about a whole range of doctrinal issues: when and how to baptize, whether or not infant baptism was necessary, and the nature of humankind. Two items proved particularly sticky.

1. The first was the place of grace in the salvation process. There were (and still are) two broad camps in terms of how they regard the concept of grace. Calvinists, following the legacy of sixteenth-century Reformer John Calvin, stress the grace and sovereignty of God. Calvinists are known for their famous theological acronym—T.U.L.I.P.—five fundamental affirmations: (1) Total depravity—Humans are sinful and are wholly unable to merit salvation on their own merits. (2) Unconditional election—God has already chosen (elected or predestined) those who will be saved. (3) Limited atonement—Christ died only for the elect. (4) Irresistible grace—Once God’s Spirit begins to draw an elect person, he or she will inevitably respond with saving faith. (5) And Perseverance of the saints—Those who have been truly saved can never lose that salvation. They will “persevere” to the end.

The second camp is typified by Jacob Arminius, a Dutch Reformer who came after Calvin. He rejected all five points of the T.U.L.I.P., stressing the need of *works* in addition to faith.

Calvinism has influenced Presbyterian thought, while Arminianism played a major role in the Methodist movement founded by John Wesley in the 1700s. Many Protestant denominations have aligned themselves with one or the other. Today, the intellectual wing of Evangelicalism is predominantly Calvinist—especially in its colleges and publishing houses. For this reason, Evangelicalism is often equated with Calvinism. But at the grassroots level, Arminianism is deeply entrenched in American Christianity. For a more complete discussion of the issue of grace versus works, see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 4, chapter 11, *Grace and Works*.

2. The second issue was the place of the Bible and personal revelation in gaining salvation. Some sects insisted on the need for ongoing and personal revelation, while other insisted that the Bible contained the full will of God and all authority. Therefore, further revelation was unnecessary. For further discussion of this issue see the section titled “Scripture” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 4. This material is considered in chapters 7, 8, and 9.

11 While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

verse 11 “I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse” According to William Smith, Joseph’s younger brother, Joseph attended a camp meeting in which the forceful and convincing Reverend George Lane, a Methodist, “preached a sermon on ‘What church should I join?’ And the burden of his discourse was to ask God, using as text, ‘If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who given to all men liberally.’ And of course when Joseph went home and was looking over the text he was impressed to do just what the preacher had said, and going out into the woods

with child like, simple trusting faith believing that God meant just what he said, kneeled down and prayed” (*Deseret News*, 1894, 11). William Smith’s recollection, coming in 1893, is very late. Joseph himself does not mention George Lane in any of his accounts. He does mention, however, that a certain Methodist minister was actively associated with revivals in the area. Because a number of Methodist preachers were working at the time, we cannot be certain Joseph had Reverend Lane in mind. Even so, the Reverend Lane did preach several times not too far from the Smith home (Larry C. Porter, “Reverend George Lane—‘Good Gifts,’ Much ‘Grace,’ and ‘Marked Usefulness,’” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 [Spring 1969], 321-40).

12 Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.

verse 12 “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine.” This statement is rather hyperbolic, but does indicate that the Spirit bore powerful witness of the pertinence, importance, and timeliness of this passage to the boy Joseph Smith.

13 At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to “ask of God,” concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

verse 13 “I at length came to the determination to ‘ask of God’” This expression indicates that Joseph was not quick to retire into the woods. Though the Spirit spoke to his soul, the message did not move him to act immediately. He “reflected on it again and again” (verse 12), and finally decided to put the scripture to the test.

At this point in the historical narrative, it is certainly pertinent to mention that Joseph, for his age, had an unusual, even precocious concern and interest in religious matters. His mother has written that, until he was fourteen, there was nothing really exceptional about Joseph’s childhood. He was a “remarkably quiet, well-disposed child” (Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* [Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1953], 67). She further wrote that Joseph “seemed much less inclined to perusal of books than any of the rest of the children, but far more given to meditation and deep study” (*Ibid.*, 82). The picture painted here is of a young man who had little interest in the superficial. His inclination

was depth, especially in religious matters. Milton V. Backman wrote that, starting at the age of about twelve, his “mind became seriously impressed with regard to the all important concerns of the welfare of my immortal Soul” (*Joseph Smith’s First Vision* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971], 156). For the next two or three years, he found himself pondering on the situation of humankind. From his youthful point of view, there were divisions, contentions, wickedness, and spiritual darkness everywhere. There came to be a dissonance between his own sober feelings and the confusion surrounding him. This caused him to reach to God for answers. He did not go to God immediately; rather his account reveals the accepting attitude of a child willing to listen to trusted adults for answers. During the period, he also looked at the Bible in an attempt to extract from its pages the answers he sought. It was not until the adults in his life failed him that he resolved to follow the Bible’s admonition and the Spirit’s confirmation.

“not upbraid” The reader should keep in mind that Joseph was a poorly educated, obscure boy, who was of poor financial means. When it came to approaching God directly, he may well have felt quite insecure and inadequate. The prospect of approaching God directly in vocal prayer would surely have been intimidating to him. Not only was he concerned about which church he should join, but the fiery sermons of the various preachers had caused the boy to fear that his soul might be in danger. It must have been of comfort to him that the passage in James reassured him that God would not upbraid him. To *upbraid* is to criticize, find fault, or express disapproval.

The First Vision (verses 14-20)

14 So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

verse 14 “I retired to the woods” Eight accounts of the First Vision were written before the Prophet’s death. See chapter 10 in volume 3 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine, Joseph Smith’s First Vision*.

The “woods” may have been an uncleared area not too far from the Smith home. In one account, Joseph said he went to an area the family had been clearing, and near a stump where he had been working, he knelt and prayed. Joseph never said why he decided to pray away from his home, but he likely knew that it was a practice of his mother when she was in particular need of spiritual communion (Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* [Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1951], 43, 144).

“It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day” Though admittedly it contains much speculation, a thoughtful article by John C. Lefgren is compelling and most interesting to consider. The article analyzes the possible dates on which the first vision may have occurred. Based upon an analysis of the available records of weather in the Palmyra/Manchester area in early 1820 (“the morning of a beautiful, clear day”) and based also upon the known work habits of those involved in the maple sugar business, Brother Lefgren suggests a probably date of Sunday, March 26, 1820 for the first vision (“Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning: Sun 26 Mar 1820?” *Meridian Magazine*, 2002).

“early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” Only in the 1838 account does Joseph give the year of his First Vision experience. In 1832, he spoke of his being troubled by all the religious confusion from the time he was twelve until he was fifteen. In his 1835 account and again in the Wentworth Letter (1842), he put his age as “about fourteen.” When he dictated the more full account in 1838, he gave the year showing that he was, indeed, fourteen or, as he says, in his “fifteenth year.” Some detractors have made a fuss over the statement in the printed version of the 1832 account where Joseph states that he was “in the 16th year of my age” when he called upon the Lord. In the manuscript the phrase is actually inserted above the line, and the six is not clearly written. It could easily be a five.

“I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally” The Smiths were a deeply religious family, and Lucy Mack’s history shows that they prayed often. As in many families, however, the parents said the prayers, usually Joseph Sr. The Prophet does not mention praying in any of his accounts before going into the grove. His wording, however, suggests that he did pray at times, but silently. It is hard to believe that a person so interested in and moved by religious matters would not have prayed. The admission that he had never prayed vocally suggests that doing so was no small matter to him. It may have been an impediment he had to overcome, and that he was willing to do so emphasizes just how much he wanted to know which church was true.

15 After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

verse 15 “having looked around me, and finding myself alone” The phrase may reveal Joseph’s determination to be completely alone as he attempted to pray vocally for the first time. There is, however, another possibility. In his 1835 account, the Prophet noted, “I heard a noise behind me like someone walking towards me. I

strove again to pray, but could 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.” Upon satisfying himself that he was alone, he again attempted to pray. It may have been this noise that caused him to look around.

“I could not speak” We may draw two conclusions from this phrase. First, the adversary had the power to affect Joseph physically. In his 1835 account, Joseph said, “My tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth.” In the 1838 account he notes that his tongue was bound so that he was mute. Second, the adversary tried to stop Joseph from praying aloud. Vocal prayer seems to have been the issue, although the text gives no hint as to why that was the case. It may have been Joseph’s determination to do it that made it an issue. Joseph may have felt that only vocal prayer would do, and, therefore Satan attacked him on that front. The devil, however, could not stop him from praying silently. Satan could bind Joseph’s tongue but not his mind.

The various historical accounts available to us suggest that the devil was working using means from the subtle and quiet to the overt and obvious in order to stop Joseph from inquiring of the Lord. On Joseph’s way to the grove, according to the Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt, the adversary threw at him doubt and discouragement; then came severe temptations and “improper pictures” (Milton V. Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision* [Salt Lake City Bookcraft, 1971], 174). When Joseph fought through these and was about to lift his voice to God, the devil tried to scare him away with footfalls. Finally, because nothing else worked, Satan, throwing off all subtlety, attacked the boy directly. He smothered the youth in blackness and, for a time, bound his tongue. It is interesting that the devil did all he could to frighten Joseph away before he finally had to reveal himself directly. There is little wonder. Is it not profoundly true that the reality of Satan is a backdoor testimony to the reality of God. Satan’s overt attack on Joseph did bear witness that Satan was real and evil, but it also revealed that the greater power of the God, for the light no sooner appeared than the enemy fled.

16 But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

verse 16 “the power of some actual being from the unseen world” Before Joseph came to personally know the Father and the Son, he came to know the power of Satan. The attack of Satan was reality in its most furious and terrifying form.

“such marvelous power as I had never before felt” The word *marvelous* here means surprising, incredible, exceeding natural power.

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head” In each of Joseph’s dictated accounts (1832, 1835, 1838, and 1842), Joseph uses the term pillar to describe the shape of the light. His words suggest that the light had the appearance of a shaft; in other words, the beam was confined and cylindrical. His word shows it to be neither a ray of light nor a sunbeam, which, though somewhat defined, are still rather diffuse. In attempting to describe the degree of brightness of the light he could only say that it was “above the brightness of the sun” and, in the Wentworth latter, that it “eclipsed the power of the sun at noon-day.” Clearly, Joseph was trying to describe the ineffable and even the unimaginable. He saw the light some distance away. It grew closer and brighter some moments before it enveloped him. At its first appearance, according to the 1835 account, his tongue was loosed and he was able to pray with fervency. One reason for the intensity of his prayer, according to Orson Pratt, was that Joseph feared he could not endure the rapidly approaching fire. As the light touched the tops of the trees, Joseph expected them to burst into flame. As it sifted down, however, he saw that the trees were unharmed, and he found courage. Joseph seems to have tried to accurately describe for his readers the character of the light but failed, perhaps because he could not fully comprehend it himself. Describing what he saw as fire and light that eclipsed the power of the sun, he appeals to our imagination to fill in the scene his words could not convey.

17 It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!

verse 17 “I saw two Personages” From what the Prophet said in three other accounts, it appears that God the Father appeared first and seems to have briefly addressed Joseph. Shortly thereafter, the Savior appeared. Joseph was greatly impressed that the two personages looked exactly alike.

“whose brightness and glory defy all description” Our God dwells in eternal fire. The apostle Paul wrote, “For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). The sense of these statements is that when the Father or the Son appear in their glory, flesh and blood cannot tolerate their presence, for all corruption is devoured by the fire.

“This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” Taking the accounts together, it would appear that the Father first addressed Joseph, telling him his sins were forgiven. Then the Savior appeared. God testified that Jesus was his Son and, at that point, had Joseph address all questions to the Savior.

18 My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get

possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

19 I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”

verse 19 “they were all wrong” With the exception of the 1835 account, all the versions agree that Joseph was forbidden to join any of the churches. In the Wentworth letter and Orson Pratt’s account, the reason is because “all religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines.” Perhaps for missionary purposes, the language in the other accounts is much less harsh than that in the 1838 edition.

“those professors were all corrupt” Here the title *professor* implies no academic rank. Rather the word simply refers to those who profess the doctrines of the apostate churches of Joseph’s day. Apparently the Lord’s concern was not so much with the members of the Protestant churches, but rather with the leaders—the preachers, the professors. Their preachings were successfully blinding the spiritual eyes of their congregations. While they were ostensibly characterized by pious speaking and behavior, they were actually seeking for vainglory.

“they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” Here the Lord paraphrases Isaiah 29:13. Again, the focus of the Lord’s rebuke, as he spoke to Joseph in the Grove, was not the Christian faithful but the “professors.” They were the ones who were guilty of seemingly pious preaching and behavior but were actually seeking for self aggrandizement.

As in Isaiah’s day, the Lord is again preparing to do “a marvelous work and a wonder” (Isaiah 29:14).

In the grove, Joseph had been blessed to bask in God’s presence—in his light. Not only did he receive verbal instruction from the Lord, but he learned from the Lord something more. In his 1832 account he states, “My soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me” (Backman, 1971, 157). He learned for himself the reality of John the Beloved’s dual testimony of God: first, that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5) and second, that “God is love,” and that “every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God (1 John 4:7-8, 16).

20 He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had

departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, “Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off.” I then said to my mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.” It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?

Reactions to Joseph Smith’s Testimony (verses 21-28)

21 Some few days after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement; and, conversing with him on the subject of religion, I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had had. I was greatly surprised at his behavior; he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them.

verse 21 “one of the Methodist preachers” It is possible that Joseph was referring to Reverend George Lane, mentioned above (see verses 5 and 11), who was very active during this time. If William Smith’s recollection is true that the reverend was the one who set Joseph on the track to the First Vision, it is not unreasonable to believe that Joseph would have sought him out to confirm the reality of James’s testimony in James 1:5-6.

The total rejection of Joseph’s testimony seems to have startled the young prophet. He likely expected praise for his successfully putting to the test James 1:5-6. Instead the rebuffs were unexpected and biting.

“it was all of the devil . . . there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days” In his naiveté, Joseph did not realize that his experience threatened a cherished belief shared by many Christian leaders. They insisted that the heavens were sealed, that God no longer spoke to people, and that all truth was found in the Bible alone. Centuries before Joseph’s time, some professing Christianity had carefully shut the door on revelation. In doing so, they put themselves forth permanently as the keepers of and final authorities of his word. Once trained for the ministry, they insisted, a preacher could speak for the dead prophets. It is ironic that they venerated the dead prophets and piously insisted that if they had lived in the days of the prophets, they would never have sought the blood of the prophets. “But to ask men to believe that that same God had spoken in their own day, and to a plain man who walked their streets—that was simply too much to take—more especially, if it was a poor boy” (Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book

Company, 1974], 7). There were those who did admit to the possibility of visions and revelations, but they would obviously have objected to an obscure boy's being privileged to see the Father and Son.

One of the implications of Joseph's story, if in fact at that early date he related seeing two separate anthropomorphic personages, is that his account flew in the face of the trinity doctrine held so firmly by most of the clergy. Second, of course, he testified that the Lord had told him that the creeds and those who promulgated them were abominable in God's sight.

22 I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me.

verse 22 “my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice” The consequences of Joseph's naive trust was an immediate conflagration of feelings. The news, like fire in dry grass, spread rapidly, generating a good deal of emotional heat. The attack against him came primarily from the “professors of religion” and “the great ones of the most popular sects of the day” (see verse 23), spreading from there to “men of high standing.” The result was “bitter persecution.”

“all united to persecute me” Attacks against Joseph and his vision did not come from only one sect or denomination. He had stepped on the sacred garment of all, and they all reacted in kind. Exactly to what extent the ministers were able to turn the community against Joseph and his family is not stated in any documents. They were likely not welcomed into some circles, but Joseph, as we will see below, did have friends and no lack of potential employers. From others' involvement with him, we gather that neither he nor his family was entirely ostracized from the local society.

23 It caused me serious reflection then, and often has since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy, of a little over fourteen years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling. But strange or not, so it was, and it was often the cause of great sorrow to myself.

verse 23 “an obscure boy” Though Joseph's family belonged to that class who were eking out a living and therefore could easily have been written off, it is notable

many people of influence did not ignore or dismiss Joseph and his story. Even though he eventually retreated from sharing his experience, there were those who kept the persecution alive.

A mature Joseph Smith would later come to recognize the role of the adversary in his early persecutions. The devil obviously had much to lose through the restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph.

“doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance” The Smith family worked hard on the farm to make a living and get enough money to keep the mortgage paid. They engaged in a number of other financial activities to bring in money. At local gatherings, even revivals, they sold Lucy’s hand painted tablecloths, food, and drinks. The boys were often employed by other farmers. Even so, the income came very slowly to the family.

24 However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

verse 24 “defense before King Agrippa” Joseph refers to the story in Acts 26 where Paul makes his defense before King Agrippa. It is likely that Joseph’s analogy reveals more about the conditions under which Joseph, not Paul, labored. The Bible nowhere suggests that any of the rulers accused Paul of being dishonest or mad. Joseph’s words suggest that his detractors used one of two primary accusations in their attempts to attack and discredit Joseph’s story. One was that Joseph was simply a liar of gigantic proportions. The other—that he was utterly insane.

25 So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it,

neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.

26 I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed. I had found the testimony of James to be true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided.

27 I continued to pursue my common vocations in life until the twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three, all the time suffering severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious, because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision.

28 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—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 foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. 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. But this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament.

verse 28 “mingling with all kind of society” Joseph was not without friends. Given his fun-loving nature, it is little wonder he attracted associates. Joseph’s statement that he “mingl[ed] with all kinds of society” suggests that some of his friends may have been of a more rough-and-tumble nature. Some of those who knew Joseph as a youth said he was “good natured, very rarely if ever indulging in any combative spirit toward anyone.” “He had a jovial, easy, don’t care way with him,” one said, that “made him a lot of friends” (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992], 26). He was involved in many of the activities enjoyed by the youth of his day, including participation in the young people’s debate club (*Ibid.*). Thus we see that persecution did not drive Joseph into seclusion.

“displayed the weakness of youth” There was a downside to Joseph’s native jovial nature. Some of his associates were inclined to light-mindedness and too much levity. In a letter to Oliver Cowdery some years later, Joseph explained that he had never been guilty of the “gross and outrageous violations of the peace and good order

of the community” that some of his enemies claimed. He told Oliver he had never been “guilty of wronging or injuring any man or society of men.” He readily admitted that he was not perfect, but he noted that his sins consisted of a “light, and too often, vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation” (William E. Berritt and Alma P. Burton, *Readings in L.D.S. Church History*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1953], 11).

The Vision of Moroni (verse 29-50)

verses 29-50 These verses contain Joseph’s account of his initial visits with the prophet Moroni on the night of September 21, 1823. During his lifetime, Joseph wrote or dictated four existing accounts of his visit from Moroni (Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984], 4-6, 74-79). Additional information was preserved by Oliver Cowdery, who wrote a history he published in the *Messenger and Advocate* in February, March, and April, 1835. Orson Pratt, while in Scotland in 1840, published his recollections in a thirty-one-page pamphlet.

Moroni’s appearance began the formal process of divinely-directed education that would last for years. From this point on, Joseph would be continually schooled in the things of the Spirit. It is of note that, though he prayed to find out his standing before God, he received not only forgiveness of sins, but also a marvelous introduction to his life’s work.

29 In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when, on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.

verse 29 “In consequence of these things” It was during a prayer for “forgiveness of . . . sins and follies” that the revelation came. Joseph was disarmingly honest in admitting that it was fear of condemnation that drove him to his knees the evening of September 21, 1823. He was genuinely concerned that he might have fallen from God’s grace. All accounts of this period suggest that Joseph was a good and wholesome boy, but a boy nonetheless. Also, the knowledge of his future obligations never left him. He must have felt a tremendous weight as he anticipated the future. His forthcoming duties may have made him acutely sensitive to his weaknesses and heightened his remorse over his sins. His inability to live up to his personal expectations motivated him to seek God for comfort and direction. It may well be that the Spirit of the Lord was working upon the young Prophet, bringing him to needed

humility and repentance. When Moroni appeared, he reassured Joseph that his sins had been forgiven.

“I had retired to my bed” Joseph, with his brothers, slept in the upper room of the Smith’s log cabin. The law garret (attic room) was divided into two compartments or rooms. Which one Joseph slept in is unknown, but he would not have been alone. He seems to have prayed from the comfort of his bed, not kneeling beside it, in order to be out of the way when his brothers retired.

“I betook myself to prayer” Apparently Joseph’s prayer was prolonged. He did not give up when an answer did not come immediately. He “had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation as [he] previously had one.” According to Oliver Cowdery’s account, Moroni came some time after the family retired. That would put the event around eleven o’clock (William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, *Readings in L.D.S. Church History*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1953], 24). If that was the case, Joseph had been praying for two or three hours prior to Moroni’s appearance.

30 While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.

verse 30 “I discovered a light” A light, like that which preceded the appearance of the Father and the Son, introduced the coming of the angel. There is a slight discrepancy between this account and those given in 1835 and 1842.

The 1835 account reports, “All at once the room was illuminated above the brightness of the sun [and] an angel appeared before me.”

In 1842 Joseph said, “On a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance, and brightness burst into the room, indeed the first appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body.” Though all accounts emphasize the brilliance of the light, the 1835 and 1842 accounts note that the light appeared suddenly. Taking all three accounts together, it would seem that the initial advent of the light was quite sudden and startling but not full. It gradually increased in intensity until the room was brighter than noonday. One may wonder why the light’s intensity and Moroni’s long instruction did not awaken the others in the room. It seems they did not see or hear anything. Joseph was caught up in a heavenly vision. It seems likely that the vision was intended for and visible only to Joseph.

“standing in the air” Room in the small garret was very tight. There was barely space for a person to stand. That Joseph saw the angel suspended above the floor suggests that the vision opened up a wider realm than the garret in which Joseph slept. What happened here seems similar to the appearance of the Savior at the Kirtland Temple, where he stood before Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on a breastwork of the pulpit on “a paved work of pure gold” (D&C 110:1-2). In both instances, the

Prophet's eyes were enabled to see the celestial realm as it intersected the telestial earth.

31 He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

32 Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.

verse 32 “fear soon left me” The sudden appearance of the light seems to have done more than merely startle the young prophet. As he reported in 1842, the shock affected his whole body. Oliver Cowdery reported that the shock was, however, “followed with a calmness and serenity of mind and an overwhelming rapture of joy that surpassed understanding” (*Messenger and Advocate* [February 1835], 79-80).

33 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 Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

verse 33 “my name should be had for good and evil” Moroni left no doubt in the Prophet's mind that there would be a price to pay as Joseph labored on the Lord's errand. According to Oliver Cowdery's extended version, Moroni said the pure in heart would rejoice over the message, but those who drew near to God only with their mouths would seek to overthrow the work. It was these people who would make Joseph's name a “hiss and a byword” (*Ibid.*).

34 He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants;

verse 34 “fulness of the everlasting Gospel” In this commentary we have discussed previously the issue of the Book of Mormon's containing the fulness of the gospel. Please see the discussion of this question in the introductory commentary for 2 Nephi 31 (*In Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*).

35 Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

verse 35 “constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim” For a detailed discussion of the process of translation of the Book of Mormon plates, and for a thorough discussion of the Urim and Thummim, see *The Process of Translating the Book of Mormon* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, Appendix A.

36 After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi; and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

verse 36 “He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi” The likely verses in Malachi 3 were 1-3:

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

This verse teaches us that Moroni quoted these verses just as they read in the King James Version of the Bible in accordance with the Lord’s pattern of speaking to people in their own language (see D&C 1:24). The verses quoted by Moroni speak of a latter-day appearance of the Lord at his temple. This prophecy did not have reference to the Lord’s appearance to Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836 (see D&C 11), but rather to an appearance near the time of the Lord’s second coming when the people will be living together as a Zion people (see D&C 42:36; 133:2).

“he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy” This statement suggests that Moroni recited all six verses of Malachi 4. Actually he did not quote all six verses in the chapter. Rather, he quoted verses 1, 5, and 6. Verse 1 is quoted in verse 37 below, and verses 5 and 6 are quoted in verses 38 and 39 below. These three verses are quoted with some differences when compared with the KJV.

37 For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

verse 37 “they that come shall burn them” This phrase is worded differently than the corresponding phrase in the KJV (Malachi 4:1) which renders it, “the day that cometh shall burn them up.” It is not entirely clear that Joseph authorized this change. Let’s look at the evidence. The wording used in the KJV is also found in 3 Nephi 25:1 and also in the James Muholland manuscript, the earliest source for Joseph’s dictated *History of the Church*. James Muholland was Joseph’s scribe when he dictated this portion of the history. This manuscript was later revised, some of it after the Prophet’s death, and became the source for *Joseph Smith’s History of the Church* and the material in the Pearl of Great Price. It is in this later material that we find the phrase “they that come shall burn them.” It is not possible to know if Joseph Smith or a later editor made the change.

We do learn in D&C 38:12 and 63:54 that angels will participate in the burning of the wicked, so perhaps the wording here in the JS-H is appropriate.

38 And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

verse 38 “I will reveal unto you the Priesthood” This prophecy was fulfilled on April 3, 1836, when Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple and restored the keys of the sealing power (D&C 110:13-16). For a discussion of what the sealing power really is, see the commentary on D&C 110:14-15. See also *The Sealing Power* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 11.

An interesting and rather surprising contrary opinion is expressed by Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes in their book, *The Pearl of Great Price, A Verse-by-Verse Commentary*, (354-55). These brethren maintain that Elijah did not actually return the keys of sealing as indicated by the section heading for D&C 110 and by D&C 110:114-16. They comment: “Note Malachi’s wording, that Elijah will reveal the priesthood, not restore any keys. Peter, James, and John restored the sealing keys in 1829. Joseph Smith understood this and taught as early as 1831 that the order of the High Priesthood was ‘that they have power given to them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life’ (*Journal History*, October 25, 1831). After he organized the Church, Joseph began sealing Saints into heaven. He did this in accordance with the Savior’s instructions that ‘of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life’ (D&C 68:12).” These same authors then continue on to explain Elijah’s role in 1836: “Elijah expanded the Prophet’s understanding, revealing how families both on earth and in heaven could be sealed together in preparation for

eternal glory. If this work did not get done, according to Malachi, the whole purpose of the earth would be wasted.”

39 He also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

40 In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that prophet was Christ; but the day had not yet come when “they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people,” but soon would come.

verse 40 “he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled” For a discussion of Isaiah 11, see the introductory commentary and verse commentary for 2 Nephi 21 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

“He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses” As this verse teaches, Moroni quoted these two verses just as they are found in the KJV. These verses contain the apostle Peter’s account of a prophecy made by the prophet Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Peter wrote, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” Peter applied this prophecy to his own time period implying that it referred to Jesus Christ. Moroni indicates that the prophecy also applies to the Lord’s second coming in this final dispensation.

41 He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here.

verse 41 “He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last” Moroni quoted Joel 2: 28-32: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that

whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” These verses describe Joel’s prophecies of the signs and wonders which will occur prior to the Lord’s second coming.

“he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in” For an explanation of “the fulness of the Gentiles” see the commentary for 1 Nephi 15:13 in *Learning to Love the Book of Mormon*.

“He quoted many other passages of scripture” Joseph does not say what other scriptures Moroni quoted, but Oliver Cowdery in his *Messenger and Advocate* account (February and April 1835) Lists quite a number of scriptures that the angel presumably either quoted or paraphrased. Introducing the material, Oliver states, “I have thought best to give a farther detail of the heavenly message, and if I do not give it in precise words, [but] shall strictly confine myself to the facts in substance (*Messenger and Advocate*, [April 1835], 109). Oliver also admits, “I may have missed an arrangement in some instances, but the principle is preserved.” So what he states must be taken with caution, especially with the April issue, because, though it is the longest and most detailed, he did not use quotation marks. As a result, it is impossible to determine which references belong to Oliver Cowdery and which to Moroni. Even so, thirty-five scriptures can be identified as having been used by Moroni, and they all pertain to the last days. It is also of note that all of them come from the Old Testament (except Acts 3:22-23 which is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 18:15-19).

42 Again, he told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it.

verse 42 “I should not show them to any person” The record does not explain why the Lord forbade Joseph from showing the records to anyone except those whom he would later identify. History, however, suggests a partial answer. Rumor alone was enough to set mobs searching for the plates. Had their existence actually been verified, it might have been impossible for Joseph to withstand the mobs that would have arisen to take them from him.

“I could see the place where the plates were deposited” A major purpose of Moroni’s coming was to reveal to Joseph where the plates of the Book of Mormon were hidden. Though it is not a huge hill, the Hill Cumorah is sufficiently large that it would present a challenge to anyone trying to find one small spot without specific directions.

Moroni, however, was able to show the Prophet exactly where it was so that Joseph could go right to it.

43 After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.

verse 43 “I saw . . . a conduit open right up into heaven” The “conduit” referred to here is reminiscent of the “pillar of light” which Joseph described in his account of the First Vision.

44 I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when, in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside.

45 He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation; which having done, he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before

verse 45 “He . . . related the very same things which he had done at his first visit” In all, Joseph would have a similar experience with Moroni four different times. By this repetition, Joseph learned the content of Morni’s visit so well that he could recall the important points of the message years later.

“**he informed me of great judgments**” The second time the angel appeared to Joseph, he did more than repeat the previous material. Moroni expanded on his first message, adding prophetic insight into the judgments that were to “come on the earth in this generation.” The intent seems to have been twofold: to show Joseph the importance of the work he was doing in the context of the last days, and to motivate him to quickly move the Lord’s cause forward.

46 By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try

to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them.

verse 46 “Satan would try to tempt me” During the third appearance, in addition to repeating what he had said before, Moroni left the Prophet with a warning. Satan knew the Prophet's sympathies for the financial circumstances of his indigent family. Through these, Satan would tempt Joseph to use the plates for material advantage and thus frustrate God's purposes.

47 After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me for the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night.

verse 47 “day was approaching” The three instruction periods took the entire night, suggesting that each lasted up to two hours. That being the case, Joseph's account gives us only the highlights of the angel's message.

48 I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, went to the necessary labors of the day; but, in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything.

verse 48 “I found my strength so exhausted” There were factors operative here other than merely the loss of a night's sleep. Apparently visionary experiences are enervating, that is they cause weakness and destroy vigor. This vision experience left him with the same state of weakness he had experienced after seeing the Father and the Son three years earlier. It is interesting to note that Joseph likely overcame this tendency to become enervated following his visionary experiences. One delightful anecdote is attributed to Philo Dibble, a close friend and boyhood pal of the Prophet (*Juvenile Instructor*, May 15, 1892). It occurred while Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were receiving section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, known as “The Vision”:

During the time that Joseph and Sidney were in the Spirit and saw the heavens open, there were other men in the room, perhaps twelve. Among whom I was one [the names of the others are not recorded]. During a part of the time—probably two-thirds of the time—I saw the glory and felt the power but did not see the vision. The events and

conversation, while they were seeing what is written (and many things were seen and related that are not written), I will relate as minutely as necessary. Joseph would at intervals say "What do I see?" as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, "I see the same." Presently Sidney would say, "What do I see?" and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, "I see the same." This manner of conversation was repeated at short intervals to the end of the vision, and during the whole time not a word was spoken by any other person, not a sound or motion made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision. Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which Joseph remarked, smilingly, "Sidney is not used to it as I am."

49 The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received.

50 I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there.

verse 50 "He replied to me that it was of God" According to the account in the *History of the Church*, Joseph was initially afraid to tell his father. Very likely, the abuse he had received from outside the family made him overly cautious about sharing sacred experiences. Nonetheless, Moroni insisted that the youth tell Joseph Sr. what had happened. By relating the events to his faith-filled father, Joseph Smith secured an important ally.

When Moroni was through instructing the Prophet, Joseph knew there would be a restoration of the gospel; a temple built; the gathering of the elect, including the lost children of Abraham; a general destruction of the wicked; the purification of the righteous, and a new and important book of scripture, the Book of Mormon. He also knew that Zion would be established as the place of refuge from the wrath of God that was soon to be poured out upon the earth, that Christ would soon come again, and that the Lord would move the earth into the millennial period. The scriptures used by Oliver Cowdery (with one exception that deals with the scattering of Israel) all fit into one or

more of these headings. Thus, Moroni gave to Joseph Smith a panoramic view of the last days and the foundation that the Prophet would be expected to lay.

The Developmental Years (verses 51-68)

51 Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth.

verse 51 “a hill of considerable size” Moroni gave no name to the hill, but over time it became known as Cumorah. The hill was about two miles south of the Smith farm. It is, as one commentator pointed out, “the most conspicuous land mark in that section of New York” (B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Century 1, 6 vols. [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965], 1:75). Viewed from the north, it rises abruptly from the level of the surrounding country. The slope of both the east and west faces being about equal, one might think when viewed in that way, the hill would be conical. However, once one gets to the top or views the hill from either the east or west sides, it is easy to see that the narrow northern ridge gradually widens and lowers toward the south until, about half a mile away, it melds into the undulating country. At the time Joseph climbed it, the hill was under heavy timber.

“a stone box” In vision Moroni had shown Joseph precisely where on the hill to look, so the Prophet was able to quickly locate the stone that marked the hiding place. After clearing the grass and dirt from the sides of the stone and using a lever, he was successful in sliding the covering back enough to see inside the stone box and view its contents. The box itself had been put together with cement, thus sealing the interior from the weather. The box was large enough to hold not only the plates but also a breastplate with the Urim and Thummim.

52 Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.

verse 52 “two stones crossways” The contents of the box did not lie on its floor. Probably out of caution against water damage, Moroni had placed two stones across the bottom of the box and laid the divine objects on top of these.

53 I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger, and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would it, until four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates.

verse 53 “I made an attempt to take them out” When Joseph attempted to take the records out of the box, he received a substantial shock, not an electrical jolt but a divine rap. Though the 1838 account does not explain why, Oliver Cowdery’s does. Oliver reported that Joseph’s mind became sidetracked on his way to the hill. He began to consider using the gold to buy his family out of their poverty. The thoughts, though charitable, Cowdery informs us, were satanically inspired. They so crowded the seventeen-year-old’s mind that he completely forgot the real importance of the records (William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, *Readings in L.D.S. Church History*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1953], 24-25). Thus, a shock forbade him access to the holy records. Not to be thwarted, Joseph tried two more times to get the plates, receiving a more severe shock with each attempt. Finally he exclaimed, “Why can I not obtain this book?” It was then that Moroni appeared and rebuked him for his thoughts. Moroni had warned Joseph not only the night before but also as recently as that morning that Satan would try to tempt him away from his duty. Joseph had succumbed. According to his mother: “While Joseph remained here, the angel showed him, by contrast, the difference between good and evil, and of both obedience and disobedience to the commandments of God, in such a striking manner, that the impression was always vivid in his memory until the very end of his days; and in giving a relation of this circumstance, not long prior to his death, he remarked, that ever afterwards he was willing to keep the commandments of God” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* [Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1945], 81). Oliver Cowdery stated that Moroni opened to Joseph a vision of the adversary and his terrible hosts so that Joseph would never again be overcome by the powers of evil.

“the time . . . had not yet arrived” Moroni did not explain to Joseph why a delay was necessary, but sources do indicate that the angel informed the young Prophet that he would not get the plates for another four years. History does not give us insight into the reasons for the delay, but we do see the Prophet maturing and learning both by divine and earthly means during the interval.

54 Accordingly, as I had been commanded, I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.

verse 54 **“I . . . received instruction and intelligence”** Each year on September 22nd, Joseph returned to the hill. There he was tutored by Moroni. John Taylor wrote that Moroni was not the only one involved: “When Joseph Smith was raised up as Prophet of God, Mormon, Moroni, Nephi, and others of the ancient Prophets who formerly lived on this continent . . . came to him and communicated to him certain principles pertaining to the Gospel and of the Son of God” (*JD*, 17:374). Joseph’s mother stated that her son had a solid knowledge of Lehite civilization. “He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent,” she informs us, “their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* [Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1945], 82-83). Clearly the Lord was preparing Joseph for the translation process.

55 As my father’s worldly circumstances were very limited, we were under the necessity of laboring with our hands, hiring out by day’s work and otherwise, as we could get opportunity. Sometimes we were at home, and sometimes abroad, and by continuous labor were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance.

verse 55 **“worldly circumstances were very limited”** The basic income for the Smith family was the annual wheat crop, supplemented by additional work, and selling homemade goods. Even so, the family knew little of luxury or ease.

“hiring out by day’s work” The family’s meager financial circumstances forced the male members to seek employment where they could. There was often a need in the area for day laborers, which the family was happy to fill. However, when employment failed near home, the boys were forced to travel many miles to find work.

56 In the year 1823 my father’s family met with a great affliction by the death of my eldest brother, Alvin. In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stoyal, who lived in Chenango county, State of New York. He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards in Harmony, Susquehanna county, State of Pennsylvania; and had, previous to my hiring to him, been digging, in order, if possible, to discover the mine. After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger.

verse 56 **“the death of my eldest brother, Alvin”** The death of the eldest Smith son on November 15, 1823, was a major blow not only emotionally but financially

as well. Alvin had been the primary mover in building a nice frame house for the family so that, as he said, “his father and mother [could be] once more comfortable and happy” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* [Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1945], 85).

“Josiah Stoyal” This well-respected and financially well-off farmer visited the Smith family during the fall of 1825 desiring to have Joseph work for him. Mr. Stowell (spelled *Stoyal* in Joseph’s account) lived in South Bainbridge (now Afton), New York. He had heard that Joseph possessed the ability to “discern things invisible to the natural eye” and, believing that Spanish treasure was hidden in some of the caves around Harmony, Pennsylvania, he wanted to use Joseph’s power. The Prophet agreed to work for him for a while. The two got along well, and he visited the Smiths a couple of times thereafter. In fact, he was staying with the Smiths the night Joseph brought home the gold plates. He later converted to the Church and though he never came to Kirtland or Nauvoo, he died full in the faith on May 12, 1844.

“Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger.” Mr. Stowell hired Joseph and others to dig in some old mines for the Spanish treasure from early to mid-November 1825. After several failed attempts, Joseph persuaded the elderly gentleman that the whole idea was fruitless, and they retired to his farm in Pennsylvania. It is likely that Joseph had misgivings about this project from the beginning. From this experience, Joseph gained the reputation as a “money-digger.” That this reputation followed him to his death is interesting, given the fact that, with the exception of the gold plates, Joseph was never credited with finding any kind of earthly treasure.

57 During the time that I was thus employed, I was put to board with a Mr. Isaac Hale, of that place; it was there I first saw my wife (his daughter), Emma Hale. On the 18th of January, 1827, we were married, while I was yet employed in the service of Mr. Stoyal.

verse 57 “Mr. Isaac Hale” It was with the Hale family that Joseph and Josiah Stowell boarded while seeking the Spanish gold. Isaac was a successful farmer in Harmony, Pennsylvania, and had the room to put up lodgers. He was a devout Methodist and therefore did not accept Joseph’s prophetic calling.

He would later allow the Prophet and Emma to stay on his property while Joseph finished translating the plates, but in 1830, because of heavy persecution, he invited the two to leave. Isaac Hale and the prophet Joseph were never reconciled before the death of Mr. Hale in 1842.

“Emma Hale” The seventh daughter of Isaac Hale, she met Joseph while he was staying with her family. The two fell in love, and though her father opposed the marriage, she was willing to elope with Joseph. The newlyweds moved in with Joseph’s family. On September 21, 1827, she drove Joseph to the Hill Cumorah and waited for

him to bring down the plates. Because of pressures in New York, they returned to her parents' home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, where she acted for a while as Joseph's scribe—initially and then only intermittently—as he began to translate the book of Lehi. Later the couple moved to Kirtland, Ohio, where she compiled the first hymnal of the Church. In Nauvoo, she became the first president of the Relief Society. Having lost three children shortly after their births, she was comforted by the patriarchal blessing given by her father-in-law, Joseph Smith Sr., in which he assured her that she would have a family. She later bore six children, of whom four lived to adulthood. After Joseph's death, she remained in Nauvoo to take care of the Prophet's aging mother. Later, she married Lewis A. Bidamon, and they lived together for thirty years. Bidamon was unfaithful to her, and her love remained with Joseph. Her last words were "Joseph!, Yes, yes, I'm coming."

58 Owing to my continuing to assert that I had seen a vision, persecution still followed me, and my wife's father's family were very much opposed to our being married. I was, therefore, under the necessity of taking her elsewhere; so we went and were married at the house of Squire Tarbill, in South Bainbridge, Chenango county, New York. Immediately after my marriage, I left Mr. Stool's, and went to my father's, and farmed with him that season.

verse 58 "my wife's father's family were very much opposed to our being married" The Prophet's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, was delighted when Joseph told her of his desire to marry Emma Hale. Though the two had never met, Lucy was sure the match would be good and even invited Joseph to bring his bride into their home. The same feelings did not exist on the Hale side. As noted above, Isaac Hale did not believe in Joseph's divine calling. For that reason, he refused to consent to the marriage, thus forcing Emma to elope. To escape the bitterness, Emma accepted Lucy's warm invitation and moved with Joseph to Palmyra. Isaac Hale's feelings did ameliorate after a while, and he allowed Joseph and Emma to stay with him on his property in Harmony while Joseph worked on the translation of the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately, the stay did not mend the rift, so Joseph and Emma moved.

Joseph Takes Possession of the Plates (verses 59-65)

59 At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, having gone as usual at the end of another year to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge: that I should be responsible for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected.

verse 59 “the time arrived for obtaining the plates” During the four years between the first appearance of Moroni and September 1827, Joseph had matured not only physically but spiritually as well. No longer a seventeen-year-old whom Satan could tempt through the lust for gold, Joseph was ready to begin the divine work. A number of helpful events came together just at this time. For example, Josiah Stowell and Joseph Knight visited the Smiths that very day, staying overnight. This enabled Joseph to borrow Knight’s horse and wagon for the purpose of retrieving the plates. That made it easier for Joseph to take Emma with him to the hill and successfully obtain the plates.

60 I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them. For no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible. But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

verse 60 “the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me” Joseph’s fifth annual visit to Cumorah was on September 22, 1827. Instead of going during the day as had become his annual custom, he arrived there just after midnight of September 21, in the first hours of September 22. This was done to throw off meddlers who knew of the date. On this visit he was given possession of the plates, the breastplate, and the Urim and Thummim. Rather than taking the plates home immediately, he concealed them in the woods in a hollow birch log. When he finally did pick them up the following day, he quickly learned that it was necessary to maintain a constant vigil in order to keep the plates safe, since many evil and conspiring men sought almost continually to wrest the plates from him. Joseph’s sister Catherine, who was at home when Joseph arrived carrying the plates, provides us with a colorful reminiscence: “He came in running and burst through the door carrying the plates. His hand was injured from striking one of the villains [who had chased him]. He told her that he had jumped over a rail fence. When one of the villains grabbed for the plates, he knocked him down with his right fist while carrying the plates under his left arm clasped to his body. Then he ran the gauntlet with several more, and when he came in the house she said he was completely out of breath. She took the plates from him and laid them on the table temporarily, and helped revive him until he got breathing properly and also examined his hand, and treated it for the bruises on his knuckles, where he had

struck the villain and thus defended himself and the plates” (Interview by I.B. Ball of H. S. Salisbury, grandson of Catherine Smith Salisbury, August 31, 1954, 2).

Even though the Smiths had been careful not to tell anyone the exact time the plates were to be retrieved, it was apparent that several people suspected that Joseph did have them in his possession. Among these was Willard Chase, a Methodist class leader. He was able to organize a group of interested men who were willing to do whatever was necessary to get the gold. Chase employed two clairvoyants, one coming from sixty miles away and the other his sister, to help locate the plates. Both used peepstones and got close on a couple of occasions. Their exertions forced the Prophet to re-hide the plates from time to time in order to keep them safe.

“by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands” Joseph was well acquainted with Willard Chase. In 1822, before Moroni’s first visit, Chase hired Joseph to dig a well for him. In the process Joseph found a smooth, dark-colored stone about the size of a hen’s egg. This became Joseph’s seerstone which he often kept with him. In 1827 he showed it to his mother, telling her it was the means “by the use of which he could in a moment tell whether the plates were in any danger” (Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* [Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1953], 107). She stated that through this means, “he could also ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the record” (*Ibid.*, 110).

“I delivered them up to him” Once the translation was completed, Joseph returned the plates to Moroni. Apparently Joseph did not rebury the plates but gave them to the angel. We assume that Moroni is in charge of them to this day.

61 The excitement, however, still continued, and rumor with her thousand tongues was all the time employed in circulating falsehoods about my father’s family, and about myself. If I were to relate a thousandth part of them, it would fill up volumes. The persecution, however, became so intolerable that I was under the necessity of leaving Manchester, and going with my wife to Susquehanna county, in the State of Pennsylvania. While preparing to start—being very poor, and the persecution so heavy upon us that there was no probability that we would ever be otherwise—in the midst of our afflictions we found a friend in a gentleman by the name of Martin Harris, who came to us and gave me fifty dollars to assist us on our journey. Mr. Harris was a resident of Palmyra township, Wayne county, in the State of New York, and a farmer of respectability.

verse 61 “The persecution . . . became so intolerable that I was under the necessity of leaving Manchester” Because of unrelenting mob pressure, Emma made arrangements for the family to stay with her parents in Harmony.

“a friend . . . by the name of Martin Harris” A true friend to the Prophet, Harris was born May 18, 1783 in New York and was thus more than twenty-two years older

than Joseph. He was a respected farmer known to be upright, honest, sincere, and generous. He was religiously devout but had never joined any church prior to this time. The reason, he said, was that he “was inspired by the Lord and taught of the Spirit that [he] should not join any church” (interview by Edward Stevenson, 1870). He befriended the Smith family and became a close confidant, learning as early as 1824 about Moroni’s visit to Joseph. In 1827, he gave the Prophet fifty dollars, which helped Joseph and Emma relocate to Harmony. He acted as scribe from April 12, to May 14, 1828, assisting Joseph in completing the book of Lehi, comprising 116 pages of manuscript. He took the 116 pages with him on a three-week trip home. In the process, they became lost. Lucy Harris, his spiteful and unbelieving wife, claimed that she burned the manuscript, but section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants suggests otherwise.

In 1829 Martin, along with Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, became the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. They were shown the plates by an angel and received divine confirmation of the truth of the Book of Mormon. Martin willingly mortgaged his house and farm for \$3,000 to act as security for the printing of the book. He remained ever faithful to his testimony of the sacred nature of the book. He died in Clarkston, Utah in 1875.

62 By this timely aid was I enabled to reach the place of my destination in Pennsylvania; and immediately after my arrival there I commenced copying the characters off the plates. I copied a considerable number of them, and by means of the Urim and Thummim I translated some of them, which I did between the time I arrived at the house of my wife’s father, in the month of December, and the February following.

verse 62 “the place of my destination in Pennsylvania” Isaac Hale’s attitude toward Joseph seems to have softened a bit by this time. Joseph and Emma had visited her parents in August 1827 for the purpose of obtaining her dowry. At that time the Hales invited them to stay with them. Joseph deferred the invitation for the time being. By December, however, it became obvious that attempts to get the plates and general persecution were not going to let up in Manchester. Therefore, the couple accepted the invitation and prepared to move. Hale sent one of his sons, Alva, to assist Joseph and Emma. Since the move was more than a hundred fifty miles under wintry conditions, the journey required considerable preparation and some financial support.

“I commenced copying the characters off the plates” Lucy Smith reports that before Joseph left Manchester, he received instructions to make copies of some of the characters with a translation and have them taken to some of the most learned men in New York for verification. She does not say who gave Joseph the instructions, but it seems likely it was Moroni. Before he left the Palmyra/Manchester area, Joseph made arrangements with Martin Harris to take the characters to the East. That winter, Harris

made the trip to Harmony and then to New York, where he visited with some of the most renowned linguists of the day, among them Samuel L. Mitchill and Charles Anthon.

63 Sometime in this month of February, the aforementioned Mr. Martin Harris came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn off the plates, and started with them to the city of New York. For what took place relative to him and the characters, I refer to his own account of the circumstances, as he related them to me after his return, which was as follows:

64 “I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

verse 64 “Professor Charles Anthon” A professor of Greek and Latin studies at Columbia College (now Columbia University), Anthon was considered one of the leading scholars of the day. He is known to have written one book a year for thirty years, through which he greatly influenced classical studies in the United States. His interests ranged widely, and when Martin Harris approached him with copies of ancient writings and a translation, Anthon agreed to make an evaluation. After Harris’s visit, he continued his work at Columbia for many years, dying in 1867.

“Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct” Just how much Professor Anthon would have known about ancient Egyptian writing is unknown. He was skilled in classical languages, but not in Egyptian. It is therefore a bit puzzling that he could provide Martin Harris with an authoritative confirmation of the reformed Egyptian characters or their translation. Perhaps he attested more to the plausibility of the characters’ authenticity rather than to the actuality of their authenticity. Nevertheless, it is certain that Anthon left Harris with the idea that the characters were authentic. Though he had no official certificate in hand, Harris returned to Harmony convinced that Joseph’s work was genuine and that he could translate the record.

65 “He then said to me, ‘Let me see that certificate.’ I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the

plates to him he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, 'I cannot read a sealed book.' I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation."

verse 65 "no such thing now as ministering of angels" It is notable that what Anthon found troubling was not the characters or translation Harris showed him but the ministering of angels. He, like so many of the day, had determined that the heavens were closed. It is of interest that Harris visited Professor Anthon again some years later with a copy of the Book of Mormon, requesting that he read it. Anthon refused even to look at the book.

"I cannot read a sealed book" During this event, Anthon unwittingly fulfilled two prophecies. The first is found in Isaiah 29:11-12: "The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned." The second prophecy is found in 2 Nephi 27:15-20: "God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book: Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them unto the learned, saying: Read this, I pray thee. And the learned shall say: Bring hither the book, and I will read them. And now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God. And the man shall say: I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed. Then shall the learned say: I cannot read it. . . . Then shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee."

Baptism and the Restoration of the Priesthood (verses 66-75)

66 On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until which time I had never seen him. He stated to me that having been teaching school in the neighborhood where my father resided, and my father being one of those who sent to the school, he went to board for a season at his house, and while there the family related to him the circumstances of my having received the plates, and accordingly he had come to make inquiries of me.

verse 66 "Oliver Cowdery" Oliver was born October 3, 1806 in Wells, Vermont, and was therefore nearly a year younger than the prophet Joseph. See the introductory commentary for D&C 6 in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*. He was born into a well educated family. His brother, Lyman, contracted to teach school in the Palmyra area, but business called him away. Before leaving, Lyman petitioned the trustees of the school, of which Hyrum Smith was one, to consider allowing Oliver to take his place. The board agreed. Since the Smiths had a number of children attending the school, Oliver was invited to room with them. Having already

heard rumors, he was curious about Joseph and readily accepted the invitation to stay with the Smiths. Oliver inquired about Joseph, and the Smiths shared their experiences with him. Oliver listened and believed. He prayed about what he had heard and received a confirmation from the Holy Ghost. Some time later, after traveling to Harmony to meet Joseph Smith, the Lord, in a revelation to the prophet Joseph, reminded Oliver of his prayer experience, even though Oliver had not shared that experience with Joseph (see D&C 6:22-23).

Oliver traveled from Palmyra to Harmony in the company of Samuel Smith and arrived there on April 5, 1829. In this he was following divine promptings, for the Lord had promised Joseph that he would provide the means for Joseph to continue the translation work (see D&C 5:34). Oliver assisted the Prophet from April 7 to June 1829 in completing the Book of Mormon manuscript and readying it for publication.

Oliver was blessed to be allowed to be one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, along with Martin Harris and David Whitmer. He was also one of the six charter members of the Church at the time it was organized on April 6, 1830, and in 1834 he became assistant president of the Church. He presided for some time over the Church in Missouri. In 1837 he had a falling out with the Prophet over aspects of Church government. Cowdery refused to be reconciled to Joseph and was excommunicated in 1838. For the next ten years, he practiced law in Ohio and Wisconsin. During that time he acted as editor of a newspaper and was active in politics.

He married Elizabeth Ann Whitmer in 1832, and she remained loyal to her husband. Of the six children born to them, all died in early childhood except their first daughter. Though she married, she had no children, so Oliver has no descendants.

In 1848 he felt the need to associate once more with the Church. He traveled to Winter Quarters, Nebraska, where he was reinstated into the Church and once more became an active member. Though he desired to come to Utah, ill health forced him to settle for a time with his in-laws in Missouri. He never recovered, dying of the illness (probably pulmonary tuberculosis) in 1850. On his deathbed, with friends and relatives around him, he bore witness to the truth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the priesthood.

67 Two days after the arrival of Mr. Cowdery (being the 7th of April) I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, and he began to write for me.

68 We still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May, 1829), we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

verse 68 “we went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism” By the middle of May, the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery had translated well into 3 Nephi (they had commenced the translation with the book of Mosiah). Very likely they had read what is now chapter 11. If that is the case, it was the Savior’s instructions to the Nephites that touched the two and motivated them to ask the Lord about this crucial ordinance. Joseph, according to divine mandate, had never been baptized, so the issue was personally important. The two men retired to the quiet banks of the Susquehanna River, less than a hundred yards behind the Prophet’s home, and prayed. There, they were enveloped in a divine light. Within that splendor, an angel sent from God instructed them. Of the experience Oliver wrote, “I shall not attempt to paint to you the feelings of this heart, nor the majestic beauty and glory which surrounded us on this occasion; but you will believe me when I say, that earth, nor men, with the eloquence of time, cannot begin to clothe language in as interesting and sublime a manner as this holy personage. No; nor has this earth power to give the joy, to bestow the peace, or comprehend the wisdom which was contained in each sentence as they were delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit!” (*Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 15-16).

69 Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

verse 69 “I confer the Priesthood of Aaron” The Lord instituted the Aaronic order of the priesthood through Moses, naming it after Moses’s brother Aaron, who became the first high priest of that order (see D&C 13 and its commentary in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*). The children of Israel, having covenanted that they would be obedient to God, broke their promise while Moses was with God on the summit of Sinai (see Exodus 20-24; these chapters establish Israel’s acceptance of the covenant before Moses went up onto the mount). The purpose of the original law was to prepare Israel to see the face of God. Their hardheartedness brought upon them God’s wrath, and he took the higher priesthood from them and instituted the lesser. God established Aaron and his house as presiding priests over this order. Through the righteous use of this priesthood, the people still had access to angelic administration, repentance, baptism, and the “law of carnal commandments,” all of which constitute the “preparatory gospel.” This order continued to function within the early Christian church, albeit with broadened scope, until the apostasy swept all priesthood away.

“until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” For a discussion of this interesting phrase, see the commentary for D&C 13:1 in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*.

70 He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

71 Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.

verse 71 “for so we were commanded” Joseph notes that the messenger explained the order in which the ordinances were to be performed. Having been commissioned by the angel, Joseph first baptized Oliver, and then Oliver baptized Joseph. Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

They came back [to shore] and [Joseph] said: “After we baptized each other the angel said, ‘Joseph, you lay your hands upon Oliver and reconfirm the ordination that I have given you, and Oliver, put your hands upon the head of Joseph Smith and reconfirm the ordination that I have given you’” . . . And they did that. Why? Because of this very thing I am telling you. It was out of order to ordain men and then baptize them. We never think today of doing that. We do not take a man and confer upon him the Aaronic Priesthood and then baptize him, or send him to be baptized. Why? Because we have a church organization (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965], 1:71 note).

72 The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second. It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.

verse 72 “John the Baptist” Joseph did not identify the angel until he got to this point. Only now do we find out it was John the Baptist, the last prophet to hold the Levitical priesthood during that dispensation. The Savior’s second cousin, John, was referred to as the greatest prophet born of women (Matthew 11:11). Being a descendant of Levi on both his maternal and paternal sides and honoring the priesthood throughout his life, he became its embodiment. Though the major focus of his ministry was preparing the way of the Lord, his work did not stop there.

The spirit of Elias, which John personified, is, as Joseph Smith taught, to prepare the way for the greater revelation of God (*TPJS*, 335). It is not surprising, then, that he was sent to introduce the priesthood back on the earth again.

“he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John” The three chief apostles were endowed with a greater power than that of John the Baptist. They formed the de facto First Presidency in the ancient church and continued thereafter as guardians of the higher or Melchizedek order of the priesthood and supervisors of the lesser. John the Baptist’s work was under their direction. By so informing Joseph, John began schooling the Prophet in the nature, order, and relationships among the various priesthood orders.

“which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us” The restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, unlike the Aaronic, cannot be dated. We know, according to D&C 27:12, that Peter, James and John had conferred the priesthood before August 30, 1830, because the revelation given on that day mentions it. Section 18, in stating that Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer had been called with the same calling as Paul the Apostle, suggests they had it in June 1829. Therefore, it was only a few weeks after John appeared that the ancient apostles came and bestowed the higher priesthood.

73 Immediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.

verse 73 “the Holy Ghost fell upon him” This was not the gift of the Holy Ghost, which comes only after baptism and confirmation. It was, rather, the influence of this member of the Godhead bearing witness and bestowing insight upon these two faithful men. The power and influence of the Holy Ghost is not as restricted as that of the gift of the Holy Ghost. It can influence and inspire people of goodwill wherever and whoever they might be. This power worked upon Peter during the Lord’s mortal ministry, and helped him know the Lord was the Messiah. It influenced Cornelius, the Roman centurion to whom Peter preached the gospel, and assisted in that conversion of his household. Throughout time, many have been touched and the world blessed by this power.

“he stood up and prophesied” Under the power of the Holy Ghost, these brethren were inspired to see not only the immediate future of the kingdom but also that which should come in the distant future. In this way, they knew the direction they needed to push the kingdom even before the Church was organized.

74 Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. In the meantime we were forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood.

verse 74 “their more mysterious passages” The influence of the Holy Ghost remained with them while they waited for the coming of the gift. During that time, it allowed them to understand scriptures that before had seemed vague or confusing. This inspiration laid down the insights by which, only a few months later, Joseph would begin utilizing as the foundation for his inspired revision of the Bible.

“forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the Priesthood” already, enmity against the Prophet ran high. Had he announced that he had restored the priesthood, those who professed that they held God’s authority would have been insulted and threatened. Since they had already shown a willingness to incite mob action, it is little wonder Joseph and Oliver decided that, even though the news was glorious, they had best not share it except with trusted friends.

75 We had been threatened with being mobbed, from time to time, and this, too, by professors of religion. And their intentions of mobbing us were only counteracted by the influence of my wife’s father’s family (under Divine providence), who had become very friendly to me, and who were opposed to mobs, and were willing that I should be allowed to continue the work of translation without interruption; and therefore offered and promised us protection from all unlawful proceedings, as far as in them lay.

verse 75 “wife’s father’s family (under Divine providence), who had become very friendly to me” Though Isaac Hale would never be convinced that his son-in-law was a prophet of God, he was nonetheless a good man and was willing to give Joseph a chance. It was during this time when Joseph and Emma were neighbors and the two men were the closest they would ever be in mortality.

“who were opposed to mobs” The respect in which the community held Mr. Hale kept mobbers at bay. The lull in persecution gave Joseph and Oliver time to make good progress with the translation.

Oliver Cowdery describes the events of these days:

These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, “Interpreters,” the history or record called “The Book of Mormon” . . .

After writing the account given of the Savior's ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent, it was easy to be seen, as the prophet said it would be, that darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the minds of the people. On reflecting further it was as easy to be seen that amid the great strife and noise concerning religion, none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel. For the question might be asked, have men authority to administer in the name of Christ, who deny revelations, when His testimony is no less than the spirit of prophecy, and His religion based, built, and sustained by immediate revelations, in all ages of the world when He has had a people on earth? If these facts were buried, and carefully concealed by men whose craft would have been in danger if once permitted to shine in the faces of men, they were no longer to us; and we only waited for the commandment to be given "Arise and be baptized." This was not long desired before it was realized. The Lord, who is rich in mercy, and ever willing to answer the consistent prayer of the humble, after we had called upon Him in a fervent manner, aside from the abodes of men, condescended to manifest to us His will. On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world was racked and distracted—while millions were groping as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld, our ears heard, as in the 'blaze of day'; yes, more—above the glitter of the May sunbeam, which then shed its brilliancy over the face of nature! Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, "I am thy fellow-servant," dispelled every fear. We listened, we gazed, we admired! 'Twas the voice of an angel from glory, 'twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty! Where was room for doubt? Nowhere; uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk no more to rise, while fiction and deception had fled forever! But, dear brother, think, further think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts, and with what surprise we must have bowed, (for who would not have bowed the knee for such a blessing?) when we received under his hand the Holy Priesthood as he said, "Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!" I shall not attempt to paint to you the feelings of this heart, nor the majestic beauty and glory which surrounded us on this occasion; but you will believe me when I say, that earth, nor men, with the eloquence of time, cannot begin to clothe language in as interesting and sublime a manner as this holy personage. No; nor has this earth power to give the joy, to bestow the peace, or comprehend the wisdom which was contained in each sentence as they were delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit! Man may deceive his fellow-men, deception may follow deception, and the children of

the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught, till naught but fiction feeds the many, and the fruit of falsehood carries in its current the giddy to the grave; but one touch with the finger of his love, yes, one ray of glory from the upper world, or one word from the mouth of the Savior, from the bosom of eternity, strikes it all into insignificance, and blots it forever from the mind. The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving while I am permitted to tarry; and in those mansions where perfection dwells and sin never comes, I hope to adore in that day which shall never cease (*Messenger and Advocate*, volume 1 [October 1834], 14-16).

The reader may take a moment to reflect on the Lord's obvious orchestration of the events in this period of the church's history. Note particularly the timely and indispensable help of Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and even Isaac Hale.

The Joseph Smith—History ends abruptly with the restoration of the priesthood. The reason seems to be that Franklin D. Richards's source ended here. Though the record stops before the founding of the Church, it does detail important aspects of the work and reveals that all was in place for the restoration of Christ's church on the earth.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

History of the Church, Vol. 4, 535-541

Background for the Publishing and Eventual Canonization of the Articles of Faith

The original Pearl of Great Price contained no section entitled “The Articles of Faith.” Though Joseph Smith first published his thirteen statements of belief for the saints in the March 1, 1842, edition of the *Times and Seasons*, they did not become known as “The Articles of Faith” until 1888. Initially, they were simply a set of statements with which Joseph concluded a brief history of the Church he wrote by special request.

The Prophet gave the saints a brief explanation of why he produced them. He wrote that John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, had been asked by an acquaintance, George Barstow, for information about the saints. The name Barstow was erroneously spelled *Bastow* in the *Times and Seasons* and *History of the Church*. Mr. Barstow was writing a history of New Hampshire and wanted to include information about the Mormons, some of whom were living in the area. In response, the Prophet sent to Mr. Wentworth a brief history that concluded with his thirteen succinct statements touching on important LDS beliefs. This history is likely similar or identical to that later printed by the Church as the Joseph Smith–History. That same history was printed serially in the *Times and Seasons* beginning March 15, 1842, just two weeks after the thirteen statements of belief appeared in that same newspaper.

Because of the wide notoriety of the Church and the fact that Nauvoo was becoming a well-known, thriving metropolis, Mr. Barstow would have been well aware of the Church and its founder. Since Joseph Smith was born in New England, it was natural for Barstow to be curious about him and to want to investigate him and the Mormons.

It was also logical that Barstow approached Wentworth for information about the Mormons for three additional reasons:

1. New Englanders were helping to colonize the West and kept those back home informed about what was happening there. Various restrictions limited expansion within the colonies like those that had created the Dutch settlements in the Hudson Valley, or English charters like the one that created New York. Colonists viewed areas to the west, called the “reserves,” as their rightful possessions. They felt it was natural for their “sons” to expand into these areas. Prominent and well-informed people in many states were well aware of former citizens who were settling the frontier and the contribution they were making in the western reserves. As a result, no history of any New England colony would be complete without including developments in the West.

2. Second, missionaries had set up a number of branches in New Hampshire, and the Church was making progress in the area. Various rumors circulated about the saints, ranging from sympathetic to ridiculous, but all serving to advertise the church's presence. The state was dominated by Calvinists, a group very protective of their spiritual turf and, therefore, very cautious about any new faith. While many were curious about the saints and what they believed, they sought to satisfy their curiosity from the safe distance of a book or newspaper.

3. Finally, being unable to travel at the time, Barstow needed some help getting some accurate information about the Mormons. Because Wentworth lived in Chicago, relatively close to Nauvoo, Barstow may have thought that Wentworth would have material on hand or could easily supply him with such. Wentworth, however, had nothing he considered reliable. He certainly did not possess the detailed information that Barstow needed. Being a fair and considerate man, he decided to contact Joseph Smith directly.

Up to that time, no one had attempted to make a summary history of the Church. Joseph Smith had engaged people to work on a more comprehensive account. Oliver Cowdery and others had prepared brief statements on what the saints believed, but Joseph Smith himself had never worked on any. Wentworth's request proved a real boon for the saints living then and now because it generated both the brief history of the rise of the Church and what would become the Articles of Faith.

The thirteen statements in the original newspaper article were without title. They simply constituted the last thirteen paragraphs in what historian B. H. Roberts would later call, "The Wentworth Letter." Roberts edited *Joseph Smith's History of the Church*. He entitled chapter 31 "The Wentworth letter" and, in a note on the first page of the chapter, referred to the work as the "Wentworth Letter," which he put in quotation marks, showing that it was a derived title (see Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1932-1951], 4:535). Technically, none of this material constitutes a letter. Rather, it is a brief history of the Church that the Prophet sent to Wentworth. It was most likely accompanied by a cover letter, but that has not survived.

This history, with its statements of belief, shows once again the power of inspiration resting upon the Prophet. He knew both his audience and the task at hand. He was writing to a reading public composed exclusively of nonmembers who, by and large, knew the Church only through secondary or tertiary accounts, many of them less than sympathetic. The Prophet, therefore, chose his topics carefully so that each addressed a major religious issue pertinent in the spiritual climate at the time. Thus, these thirteen paragraphs are short, decisive, and positive statements based on the issues of the day. He did not design the paragraphs as comprehensive treatises but as concise, clear statements. Anything more may have muddied the issues and confused readers, leaving them with a less favorable impression of what the Latter-day Saints

believed. The articles, as they stand, communicate clearly the position of the Church and continue to serve us well.

We do not know whether the information ever reached Barstow or whether the history was ever published by Wentworth. Barstow did publish his history in 1844, but it mentions neither Joseph Smith nor the Mormons. His study ends, however, in 1819, well before the saints influenced the area. The history may have been published by Wentworth, but that is doubtful. The 1871 Chicago fire destroyed all but scattered issues of the *Chicago Democrat*. None of those that remain contains Joseph Smith's history. There is evidence, however, that Wentworth did receive the information he requested of Joseph. A brief article did appear in the *Democrat* that was copied into the April 15, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, shortly after the history would have been sent. In it, Wentworth gave a brief recap of Joseph Smith's early life that seems to have been heavily based on the Prophet's written history. It is fortunate that the history was published in the *Times and Seasons*, for that preserved this treasure for future generations.

In the paragraph just preceding the articles of belief, Joseph Smith identified the ground on which they stood. He declared that the saints believe "the Bible to say what it means and mean what it says," and that the Church is "guided by revelation according to the ancient order of the fathers." That statement made it clear to the Prophet's audience that the faith of the saints was anchored both in ancient scripture and modern revelation.

Joseph Smith's material, had it been printed by Barstow, would have met an urgent need. Many in New England were confused about the church's beliefs, some insisting the saints were not even Christians. The church's detractors branded its members as "Mormons." This led to a general confusion of the Church with the Mohammedans (Muslims). Making matters worse, the Latter-day Saints referred to Joseph Smith as "the Prophet," a title the Muslims applied to Muhammad. Joseph Smith's simple yet clear statements of belief would have set the record straight.

The Publication of the Articles of Faith

Because they were not directly tied to the brief history, the articles lent themselves to separate publication. As mentioned, the first time they appeared alone was in 1842, the same year Joseph Smith sent them to Wentworth. John Hayward, a nonmember religious historian, privately published a book titled *The Book of Religions*. He included a three-page piece dealing with the "Mormonites." His information, he told his readers, came directly from various Latter-day Saint publications. He included Joseph Smith's statements of belief, which he copied directly from the *Times and Seasons*.

Some of the church's missionaries saw value in the articles as a contacting or "tracting" tool. I. R. Foster and John E. Page, serving missions in New York, published

them with the history in 1844 in a piece they titled “Correspondence between Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and Colonel John Wentworth.” The whole was lifted from the March 1, 1842, and January 1, 1844, issues of the *Times and Seasons*.

The year 1844 saw another printing of the articles, once again outside the Church. On September 7, 1843, Joseph Smith noted in his journal that he had been contacted by I. Daniel Rupp, who was composing a work on religions in America and wanted something on the Latter-day Saints. Since the Wentworth material had already been prepared and printed and since it fit nicely into the criteria Rupp had specified, it was natural for Joseph Smith to send him a copy. The Prophet rewrote the first paragraph and added a few items to meet the needs of the new audience. Rupp’s book, *He Pasa Ekklesia* [The Whole Church]: *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States*, was published the next year, and Joseph Smith’s material appeared as entry 23 under the heading “Latter Day Saints” running from pages 404 to 410. Rupp reprinted his book in 1854, including Joseph Smith’s history and also a letter from the Prophet dated June 5, 1844, thanking Rupp for a copy of his book and noting that Joseph would “be pleased to furnish further information, at the proper time, and render you such service as the work, and vast extension of our church may demand, for the benefit of truth, virtue, and holiness” (Rupp, 348).

The British Mission, headquartered in Liverpool, England, was the next to publish the statements of belief. The mission president, Orson Pratt, slightly modified some of the statements and added an additional statement of belief as follows: “We believe in the literal resurrection of the body, and the dead in Christ will raise first, and that the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are expired.” This was printed in a broadside (a single page notice printed only one side) entitled, “The Latter-day Saints’ Belief.” These fourteen statements were later published by J. H. Flannigan in a tract called *Mormonism Triumphant*. He titled them “Latter Day Saint’s Faith.” This version, popularly called “The Fourteen Articles of Faith,” found its way to the states. On February 20, 1850, Orson Hyde published it in the church’s newspaper, *The Frontier Guardian*, in Kanessville, Iowa.

When Franklin D. Richards was preparing material for the Pearl of Great Price, he chose to use the thirteen articles as written by the Prophet. This seems natural, since his intent was to publish items generated by Joseph Smith. The list appeared as the second-to-last entry and without a title, the heading over the section reading simply “‘Times and Seasons,’ Vol. III, page 709.”

It was Orson Pratt’s version that was published next. The editors of the *Millennial Star*, from their office in Liverpool, printed a broadside in 1852 titled “The Latter-day Saints’ Belief.” The chief editor had expanded the information to include scriptural citations and other references showing readers the biblical basis for each one. The piece ended with a question: “Reader, is there any principle in this above that is

dangerous to the peace and happiness of society? If not, why cast our names out with reproach for the Son of Man's sake – Luke vi, 23.”

By 1854, Elder Pratt's fourteen statements had made their way halfway around the world. That year, the Australian mission, headquartered in Sidney, published the articles in its paper, *Zion's Watchman*. The editors titled their version “Faith and Doctrine of the Latter-day Saints with Scriptural Proofs.” It was not the same as the 1852 English broadside, but it did include, as the title suggests, scriptural annotations supplied by the editors for additional study by the saints. This Australian version found its way back to England that same year. The English mission produced a pamphlet entitled, *He that Readeth, Let Him Understand* that included the Australian version verbatim as its closing section.

As popular as Elder Pratt's version was, Joseph Smith's original would remain the standard. In Utah, church historian George A. Smith prepared *Joseph Smith's History of the Church* for republication. The church newspaper, *Deseret News Weekly*, carried the republication in a series. On September 5, 1854, Elder Smith prepared an article for the newspaper titled “For the Faith of the Church” that contained the Wentworth history, including the Articles of Faith. By writing a separate article, Elder Smith called special attention to the Wentworth material. He had a number of reasons for doing so. Joseph Smith's summary contained important materials that Elder Smith did not want the saints to miss. Further, like Orson Pratt, Elder Smith took occasion to make an addition. After acknowledging Joseph Smith as the author of the thirteen statements, Elder Smith appended one of his own dealing with plural marriage. The statement seemed necessary since the Church was openly practicing polygamy.

The editors of the *Millennial Star*, believing that the British saints would also benefit from reading the Prophet's history, reprinted the *Deseret News* series. On February 21, 1857, they too published the Wentworth history with the accompanying articles of belief, including Elder Smith's addition.

That was the last time the statements would appear in print for the next twenty years. Then, in 1877, as noted earlier, Orson Pratt recommended printing an American edition of the Pearl of Great Price. After receiving permission from acting church president John Taylor, Pratt went to work. Even though he had made his own version of the articles in 1849, he used those Richards had published in the original Pearl of Great Price. He did, however, add a title, calling the section “Articles of Our Faith.” This title was modified in the 1888 edition to read “Articles of Faith.”

The final title, as we know it today, appeared first in the 1902 edition of the Pearl of Great Price compiled by James E. Talmage under the direction of the First Presidency. It was Elder Talmage who gave the section the name “The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Since 1902, the Articles of Faith have been reprinted separately many times. Millions have been printed on small cards used for memorization and missionary purposes. Through them, the Articles have seen a very wide international distribution.

It should be noted that nowhere in Joseph Smith's recorded sermons do we ever find him using or referring to the Articles of Faith. Given the popularity of the Articles today, that may seem surprising, but it really should not be. The Prophet never intended them for church use. They were neither a list of nor a comprehensive treatment of church doctrine that the saints needed. They were addressed to a non-Mormon audience to teach the curious and interested where the Church stood on certain important issues. Since most members of the Church already knew the issues and the Church's stand, the Prophet seems to have felt no need to bring them to anyone's attention.

Issues Addressed by the Articles of Faith

As noted above, the Articles of Faith addressed critical issues that had been aflame among American Christians for decades. After the Revolutionary War, as churches began to lose direct political authority, they began to reorganize on the basis of persuasion rather than coercion. Many were concerned with the spreading rationalism often referred to as "natural religion" growing out of the Enlightenment. This "religion" rejected, among other things, miracles and the divine sonship of the Savior. More conservative Christians found such views shocking and branded them as "infidel." They launched a vigorous and widespread crusade against it. The result was a storm of words, a deluge of published materials, and a flood of fervent missionary efforts resulting in what historians call "the Second Great Awakening," the first having taken place a half-century earlier in 1740. Religious revivals and fervent proselytizing marked an era lasting more than three decades.

Following the Revolutionary War, many religious Americans continued to cling to the belief that the welfare of the state (and especially the United States) depended on general righteousness and commonly shared religious beliefs of its citizens. That belief forced many religionists to soften their claim to exclusive rights to the truth. Some yielded to the idea of "a brooding higher unity" over-mastering all that was going on. The forces of sectarianism and exclusivism, some insisted, was a great "hindrance" to the cause and a "quencher" of the spirit of unity needed if God were to protect the nation and, more especially, establish his kingdom upon the earth. As a result, many tried not to dwell upon sectarian differences or be "sticklish" about certain points of doctrine.

Growing out of this tendency, in the early 1800s, was a push among a broad spectrum of enthusiasts to unite all into one single Christian community devoid of any sects. These appealed to the Bible alone as the basis of pure religion and the ground of all faith. Their detractors called them "Primitivists" because scholars referred to the

biblical period of church history as the “primitive era.” The title, less pejorative than it sounds to more modern ears, provided a good epithet, or characterizing word used in place of the actual name, describing those in the unification movement, and so it stuck.

Many among the old established religions—especially Congregationalists, Catholics, and Anglicans—resisted the movement toward unity and primitivism. Their response was a firm refusal to yield any of their theological territory or soften any point of doctrine. The push and shove of the various religious bodies resulted in anything but the unity in Christ that the Primitivists sought. In some areas this fervor even developed into intense intolerance that fueled rancor, hatred, bigotry, and mob action.

Disregarding the ill effects of divided religion, good souls kept pushing their cause. The result was a proliferation of reformation societies—Bible societies, missionary societies, abolition of slavery societies, and temperance societies—all of whom wanted to make the nation more God-fearing and righteous. Their energy and membership grew out of the belief held by many that the Lord’s second coming and the great millennial era were close at hand. Their task, then, was to prepare the world for the coming of the Lord. An excitement took hold in many areas, and religious revivals and missionary work moved forward with almost frenetic pace.

The result, however, was not all that some hoped for. A large number of people reacted against this excitement, which seemed to them fanatical and even menacing. They developed an “anti-mission” stance that resulted in a nationwide backlash against sectarianism and reformation societies. These people looked for answers outside the established churches and their revivals. Most stayed aloof from any formal religion, while others moved into “the primitive gospel” movement, which readily accepted them. The “Primitivists” dismissed all historical developments within Christianity. Some even insisted that these had corrupted the pure church and made it apostate. Only a restoration of New Testament authority and its organization could solve the problem. The result of the religious fervor and subsequent backlash was a spiritual insecurity among many. People were highly motivated to find answers that would assuage their fears. Joseph Smith’s direct and simple statements of belief were designed to provide those answers.

1 We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

article 1 In order to place this Article of Faith in its proper context, it is important for the reader to understand the “Trinitarian—Unitarian controversy” which was disturbing the religious community of much of the eastern seaboard and more especially the New England states at the time of Joseph Smith.

Those who held to the *Trinitarian* view basically believed in one of the variants of the “trinity” doctrine. This doctrine stated that God consisted of three separate divine individuals (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost) that existed in some type of union.

Most believed that the three beings were consubstantial or of one substance. Others believed that there were three divine beings united in one Godhead.

The trinitarian view was considered the conservative view and characterized the Catholics and most protestants including the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians.

According to the *Unitarian* view, God consisted of one eternal power without division of substance or person. Hence, Jesus was not really divine; not a member of the Godhead; and not the literal Son of God. Rather he was a great Rabbi or thinker whose ethical and moral models should be followed simply because he had come to understand God's character, doctrine, and ethics with greater clarity than any other person. Also the Holy Ghost is God's power or influence, but not a separate entity. This view was considered the liberal view, and its adherents were referred to as "modernists." This religious philosophy is also referred to as Arianism, as it is based on the teachings of Arius, a religionist of the third and fourth centuries, AD. In Joseph's day, this view would have been espoused by Calvinists and some Congregationalists. This modernist view has continued to evolve and may be identified today as not too dissimilar from humanists and even Muslims.

Article 1 does not teach all of the particulars of the doctrine of the Godhead as we know it. Rather, it simply announces that we do not accept the "modernist" or Unitarian point of view, and that we are firmly in the camp of the conservative Trinitarians. It underscores our biblical view of Jesus as the only begotten Son of God and establishes the Church as fully Christian. It also implies that our doctrine of the Godhead derives not from philosophical debate but from a purely biblical understanding.

2 We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

article 2 Both Catholics and Calvinist Protestants believed that the greatest calamity that ever happened to humankind was Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. In consequence, all humankind became "depraved" from the taint of this "original sin." This meant that by their very nature, all men were enemies to God and enemies of all righteousness. Each person was, at best, a "lost soul" and at worst "a child of wrath." As a result, all deserved to be damned, and it was only through the grace of God that any would ever be saved.

Growing out of this false doctrine was the belief that infants were born damned and, unless they were baptized, they would suffer in hell forever. Baptism (sprinkling in some sects), however, offset the effects of the Fall and removed the inherited "taint."

This doctrine bothered many who wondered why baptism was available to some but not to most. Calvinists side-stepped this question by allowing that baptism was not entirely necessary. They preached the doctrine of predestination or predeterminism, which insisted that God predetermined who would go to heaven and who would go to hell. Humans, therefore, had no agency. Good came only through the irresistible grace

of God acting upon his favorites, enabling them to throw off the curse of the fall and follow him to heaven.

The doctrine of the basic depravity of the human soul, though widely spread, was not without its detractors. Preachers, particularly Baptists, making their way through the New England states, attacked the idea of predeterminism, insisting that it was out of harmony with the character of God. These ministers proclaimed infant baptism a damnable practice and decried sprinkling as an apostate form of baptism. The real ordinance, they insisted, had to be done for adults by full immersion. Methodist ministers also taught against this doctrine, insisting that God had given humankind “free will” or agency. This agency, they proclaimed, meant that people could seek for salvation on their own and, through accepting the grace of God, actually find it.

Joseph Smith composed the second article to show readers exactly where the Church stood on this highly debated issue. Those reading this Article of Faith knew that the saints came down on the side of free will or agency and that they opposed any form of predeterminism. Therefore by inference, they understood that the Church rejected infant baptism and sprinkling. With just a few words, the Prophet taught his readers that the Church held the very positive view that all were responsible for their salvation in compliance with biblical teachings.

3 We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

article 3 Article of Faith Three counters two major false doctrines being taught at the time of Joseph Smith.

1. The idea of predeterminism led many Christians into the false idea that only those whom God predestined would come under the Lord’s redemptive power. All others would remain under the curse of damnation caused by Adam’s “disgraceful fall.” Many of the Christian communities accepted the false doctrine of a “limited atonement” without questions. Others, particularly the Methodists and Baptists rejected this view. They found it to be incongruous with the clear declarations of the Bible and, more especially, the life and ministry of the Lord. They insisted that the idea of a limited atonement acted as a stumbling block to people’s faith in the Savior. They further questioned how a just God could limit salvation to the chosen few. They insisted that humankind was innocent because people neither participate in nor had any control over what Adam did. Blanket condemnation was unjust, and unjust was something God could not be. In this article, Joseph announces that the Church does not accept the idea of predeterminism and “limited atonement” with the statement “through the Atonement of Christ, *all* mankind may be saved” (italics mine).

2. Most of those Christians who rejected the idea of a “limited atonement” were ensnared in another false doctrine. This doctrine was that salvation was available to all men, and that it came from little more than verbally accepting the Lord as one’s Savior.

In this article Joseph avows that salvation is available to all, but that in order to merit salvation, one must be obedient to the “laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” In other words, a man’s works are vital in addition to the grace of God (2 Nephi 25:23).

4 We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

article 4 In article 3, Joseph Smith mentioned saving ordinances. Notice that he ties article 4 to article 3 by saying, “We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are.” He then lists them—two principles and then two ordinances. The words of this article show that the Latter-day Saints of Joseph’s day believed in and held the keys to these important ordinances in the salvation process.

Joseph Smith’s full intent in this article can best be understood in light of another controversy agitating New England and other regions. A prominent Scottish-Irish minister, Alexander Campbell, brought certain theological ideas with him when he immigrated to the United States. Among these was the rejection of both infant baptism and limited atonement. He found, however, that Presbyterian congregations did not appreciate his very liberal views. He soon split with them and joined the Baptists. Here, too, he ran afoul of the mainstream because he began to preach that the fulness of the gospel was not on the earth and that the true church no longer existed. His “primitivist” views led him to teach that all Christians must return to the pure religion of the Bible. All creeds, catechisms, and prayer books, he insisted, needed to be abandoned because they stood in the way of truth.

He boldly requested that all Christian churches join with him in importuning God to restore, once more, the pure and primitive Christianity of the Bible with all its ancient powers and authority. He assured his readers and congregations that, through revelation, God would restore the ancient order if the Christian community prepared itself. He insisted that the biblical church was grounded in four principles that had to be universally accepted by all: faith, repentance, immersion baptism, and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. For the first three, he taught, Christians already had authority. The last, however, demanded power that was no longer on the earth. Only a restoration would bring the needed authority by which the higher spiritual gifts of God could be had once more. He felt confident that if all Christians would unitedly accept the first three principles and then petition God as a body, the Lord would restore, through revelation, his church with its power.

Campbell’s ideas resonated with some, but most Baptists found them unsettling and refused to associate with him or his congregations. In response, he and his followers began calling themselves “Reformed Baptists.” This move, however, did not sit well with the Baptists at large, and they soon forced Campbell and his followers completely out of the Baptist Association. Campbell’s people began to call themselves,

among other titles, “Disciples of Christ” or “the Church of the Disciples of Christ.” Their detractors, however, loath to give them any Christian legitimacy, nicknamed them the “Campbellites.”

The movement found adherents in the thousands and spread over much of the northeast. A number of strong and capable individuals were drawn to Campbell and became preachers in his church. Among them were Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and Orson Hyde.

When Barstow sought information for his book (see the introductory commentary for the Articles of Faith), the ideas of Campbell were being discussed, debated, damned, and blessed. The movement had become well organized and widespread, and it was forcefully working its way into Calvinist New England. As a result, many were well aware of it and also curious. Because Mormonism was tied to the restoration idea, some saw the Church as an offshoot of the “Campbellite” movement.

Though Article 4 stood as printed in the *Times and Seasons* for sixty years with only slight modification, 1902 saw a substantial change through the careful work of James E. Talmage. In 1893, he was teaching a religion class at the LDS College in Salt Lake City. In the course, he began to question the wording of the fourth article. It stated, “We believe the first ordinances of the gospel are” and then listed the four. Talmage felt that listing faith and repentance as ordinances was incorrect and made an appointment with the First Presidency and three members of the Quorum of the Twelve. At a meeting on November 29, 1893, in the Salt Lake Temple, Talmage presented his concerns, insisting that faith and repentance were principles, that baptism and the laying on of hands were ordinances, and that the article should reflect those ideas. He wrote in his journal:

I brought before the Presidency, asking for a ruling, the following subjects: . . . The changing of article 4 of the Articles of Faith from the old form: “4. We believe that these ordinances are: First, Faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” so as to designate faith and repentance in some other way than as ordinances which they are not. The following form was adopted. “4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: (1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Repentance; (3) Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; (4) Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Hand-written journal 1893, 105, found in special collections at BYU).

In 1902, Brother Talmage was called to edit the Pearl of Great Price and introduced the approved changes in article 4.

In Joseph Smith’s day, all four items were probably seen as both principles and ordinances. The Prophet himself placed them in both camps. In the History of the Church (6:57) he calls all four “principles,” while in the *Times and Seasons* (3 March 1842, 709) he calls all four “ordinances.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary, in

1842 they could have been considered both (s.v. “ordinances,” definition 5b). It would seem that, by 1893, definitions had solidified to the point that Brother Talmage’s interpretation and recommendations were accepted.

Joseph Smith used article 4, with others, to distinguish the saints from the Campbellites. Though he showed that the Church agreed with Campbell in accepting faith, repentance, and baptism, he taught the careful reader that the Church possessed the authority to bestow the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. That declaration clearly separated the Church from the Disciples of Christ. Further, through this declaration, the attentive reader would see that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints saw itself as the restored church about which Campbell and his people had been preaching.

5 We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

article 5 “a man must be called of God” From the time of the Reformation on, Protestants came to believe that God called individuals to the ministry through personal inspiration. Thus, there was no official setting apart or granting of powers. How then, their detractors asked, was authority bestowed? In response, certain sects began to preach the idea of a “priesthood for all believers,” an authority they felt God bestowed at the time of the call. As a result, a number of sects preached that anyone who sincerely believed he was called to the ministry automatically received the necessary authority. In other words, the call itself guaranteed that the person had blessing and priesthood. Others said simply that God accepted good intentions in lieu of ordination.

The Catholics and Calvinists, among others, insisted that ordination was essential. Unless a person received the laying on of hands, he did not hold authority. The debates that ensued caused many to ask searching questions. Some could not see how a “call” bestowed any kind of power. Others insisted that the sincerity of the minister was evidence that he held the keys of salvation for his followers.

Campbellite ministers sat on the fence. As shown above, they frankly admitted that God’s authority was not fully on the earth, yet they believed that God would recognize the efficacy of their baptisms. Though they did not yet possess additional authority, they believed that, in time, God would grand power to bestow the Holy Ghost.

By and large, the Christian communities felt that some kind of formal training and religious apprenticeship was necessary, and a number of theological schools and seminaries turned out men well trained for the ministry.

With article 5, Joseph Smith showed readers where the Latter-day Saints stood on yet another important and debated issue. According to this article, a call to service did not come to one simply on the basis of personal desire. A call had to be extended by an officer of the Church. Further, God recognized as binding only those gospel

ordinances performed through the authority of the priesthood. This short but very positive statement set the Church apart from practically every other Christian denomination. It showed that God's authority comes through the channels he dictates and that the priesthood is necessary for any ordinance to be accepted by him.

Calls, however, were not devoid of revelation. Men and women were called "by prophecy," that is, by the will of God. His will, however came not to the individual but to the leader, who then extended the call to serve. Further, once called, the person had to be set apart by church leaders. These actions ensured that proper authority was given and order maintained.

When Joseph Smith wrote the article, he placed quotation marks around the phrase "prophecy, and by the laying on of hands," thus emphasizing the importance of inspiration so necessary for those who made divine appointments in the Lord's kingdom.

This article saw two editorial changes. First, in some editions (1849, 1850, 1852, 1854) the words "called of God" are replaced by "duly commissioned of God," emphasizing the need for proper ordination in order to act. Second, Joseph Smith did not put a comma after the word "authority." As it originally read, the article stated that one is commissioned by those who are in authority to preach and administer the gospel. Orson Pratt inserted a comma, thus causing it to read that, once a person is commissioned, he or she could preach and administer the gospel. This version stood until 1921, when Elder Talmage removed the comma to make the article conform with the original printing. Beginning in 1973, the church translators, among others, felt a need for clarification of the article's intent. The Church Scripture Committee resolved the problem by authorizing the reinsertion of the comma.

6 We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

article 6 "the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church" We have mentioned those in Joseph Smith's day called Primitivists. They were often charismatic preachers who had what may be termed an "anti-clerical" (anti-clergy) bias. This means that they sought to abolish the difference between clergy and laity. They believed that the organization which existed in the Savior's primitive church included a hierarchy of church officers in which the laity of the church participated. These included apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and deacons. They also believed that those churches with professional clergy were corrupt and apostate. These believed that there had to be a restoration not only of New Testament authority but also of church organization to curb the problem.

Among these preachers were the Campbellites. Their voices rang clear that there had to be a restoration of all things, and that included the ancient church organization. They, however, made no move in that direction, believing that divine

direction had not yet been given. Other sects did. For example, the Catholic Apostolic Church, better known as the Irvingites, established their quorum of twelve apostles in 1834 and also called officers as pastors, evangelists, and deacons to conform to the New Testament pattern.

The LDS Church Scripture Committee authorized only two changes to this article, replacing the more archaic “viz” with “namely,” and the “&c” with “and so forth.”

The Prophet reached back to the Bible and, in this direct and simply statement, echoed Ephesians 4:11-14. The primitive church was founded on apostles and prophets. Therefore, the restored Church of Christ would follow that model. Joseph made no attempt to define the duties or rank of the offices, nor did he include such things as the quorum of First Presidency. It would have taken many pages to contrast the Latter-day Saint organization with those of the other churches, and Joseph felt no need to do so. His purpose was to show the reader that the church’s organization was anchored in the Bible. It would not be a church of presbyters (individuals who combine preaching, priestly, and administrative functions), but one that was patterned after God’s order. The “&c” (and so forth) at the end of the original printing showed that the church organization in some aspects would continue to expand and change according to revelation but not leave its biblical roots.

7 We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

article 7 For many Christians, the heavens were sealed. God had spoken in the Bible for the last time, and revelations had ceased. Visions and prophecy were a thing of the past. It was true, some believed, that God communicated through quiet manifestations of his Spirit, but angels no longer visited people, nor did the heavens open.

Others, however, believed that God still worked with people through strong manifestations of his Spirit. For example, the rise of “spiritual *rapping*” in the early eighteenth century caused quite a stir among many religionists. The verb *rap* is an archaic one which means to transport with rapture. A number of sects, related to the Pentecostals of today, delighted in and capitalized on these rappings as evidence that the Spirit of God operated with them. These and other sects found delight in “ecstatic babbling” and “speaking in tongues.” Some, such as the “Shakers,” believed that the power of God manifested itself through movements, gyrations, and even contortions of the body.

Some religionists, like the Campbellites, felt that these sects were “crude” and that more direct means of revelation were possible. Though God had not yet restored his church to the earth, the Campbellites preached, once the Christian communities were sufficiently prepared and united, God’s voice would be heard and the full authority would come.

Other sects, particularly the Methodists, viewed revelation as a gradual unfolding of often hidden biblical truths. Insights and understandings came subtly and quietly to the soul as one reads and pondered the scriptures. Nearly all agreed, however, that a theophany, an open vision of God, was out of the question.

Joseph Smith found the extremes of the Shakers and others disgusting, and he insisted that the Lord did not manifest his Spirit through babblings, gyrations, and confusion. Even so, he knew and acknowledged that the Holy Spirit did work upon God's people and that the biblical gifts were once again restored to the earth. These were "signs of faith" that accompanied the true believer. Nothing in article 7 discounts revelation or prophecy from being a gradual unfolding of understanding. The Prophet's words, however, show that there are times when God reveals his will suddenly, fully, and directly.

The Prophet showed his good judgment in not elaborating on or defining the various gifts but simply in confirming that the Latter-day Saints accepted and used them. By adding visions, revelations, and prophecy to the list, Joseph Smith told his readers that the Church knew that the heavens were open and that God spoke to his people.

8 We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

article 8 "as far as it is translated correctly" From the days of the Renaissance, a growing number of people came to question the Bible and its authority. By the eighteenth century, certain vocal individuals even questioned its divinity and authenticity. The more extreme went so far as to assert that, because of improper transmission and translation, the Bible had little truth remaining in it.

In general, however, most Christians held to a cautious biblical authoritarianism, meaning that they accepted the Bible in large part as their standard of belief. That did not mean, however, that improvements could not be made. In an attempt to overcome deficiencies, some ministers and academics produced their own versions, feeling free to either excise materials they found objectionable or to add textual clarifications.

Some felt that they could improve on the archaic King James English to help people better understand the scriptures. Among these was Alexander Campbell, who went so far as to make an American colloquial edition. The more conservative Christians were scandalized by it, but Campbell's followers found it helpful and readable. Most were less cavalier in their approach, trying to keep their translations as close as they could to the preserved sources.

There were others, however, who took a very different view of the Bible. These felt that God's hand had been in it from the beginning. They insisted that the Bible was virtually error free. The preserved texts, even in translation, remained unsullied. As a result, the old book reflected the full and complete word of God with nothing deleted or lacking. Because it was, therefore, inerrant, it was fully authoritative in all matters.

Many who had heard about the Church knew of Joseph Smith's "gold bible." Rumors circulated about what it contained, but few had actually read it. Because Joseph Smith was regularly compared to Muhammad, many assumed that the Book of Mormon, like the Koran, replaced the Bible.

In article 8, Joseph Smith declared that the saints had not rejected the Bible. However, they did not hold it inerrant, either. The old book manifested problems because of improper transmission and translation. Nevertheless, it was a canonical standard for the saints. Joseph went on to boldly proclaim that the Church did accept another standard. His wording revealed to the careful reader that the saints accepted the Book of Mormon as properly translated and transmitted. The Bible, therefore, did not stand alone. What weaknesses it had were overcome in the new volume of God's word.

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.

article 9 Joseph had already declared that the saints believed in revelation, visions, and prophecy (see Article of Faith 7 and its commentary). In this article, he underscores that belief. A number of religious leaders professed divine revelation in starting their religions. Among these were John of Lyden (leader of Anabaptist cult in Muenster, Germany in 1533-34 who practiced polygamy), Mother Ann Lee (Shakers), George Rapp (leader of a group of religious separatists from Germany in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in 1805; followers known as "Harmonists" or "Rappists), and Father William Miller. The latter was an articulate and charismatic minister. He brought thousands under his banner. Using his interpretation of the scriptures, he calculated that the second coming of the Lord, followed by the Millennium, would begin in March 1843. Some estimate that a million people were influenced by the prophecies of Miller and anxiously awaited the coming of the Lord. None of these self-professed "prophets," however, claimed to receive revelation that was ongoing.

Joseph Smith wrote this article not many months before the "rapture" predicted by William Miller. This article proclaims that the saints believe in ongoing revelation. God's revelations, however, did not confirm Miller's expected advent. In fact, Joseph Smith and the saints would have nothing to do with the Millennialists. Joseph declared to all the world that the saints were not left to speculate and grope through the Bible for answers as Miller had to do. The Lord revealed his will directly, unmistakably, and continually to his Church.

10 We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent;

that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

article 10 “the earth will be renewed” That the Latter-day Saints had nothing to do with the Millennialists did not mean they rejected the idea of the Millennium or believed that it would not take place in the future. They shared with many a decidedly millennialist perspective toward events of the day, believing the Second Advent was not too distant.

By 1835, a number of ministers were pushing the idea that the United States would play an important role in bringing to pass the millennial glory. The Lord’s kingdom would begin here and spread to the rest of the earth. The despotism and wickedness so common in the world precluded it from such an honor. America, however, the champion of religious liberty, democratic government, and free institutions, was the ideal place from which God could move his cause.

In a related vein, various groups debated about the aftermath of the second coming. Some, not accepting the idea of a temporal, thousand-year reign of the Lord, felt that his advent signaled the end of the earth. It would pass fully away, and the righteous would inherit a heavenly glory. Others maintained that the earth itself would become transformed as a celestial sphere.

The widespread furor caused by the Millerite movement in the early 1840s (see the commentary for Article of Faith 9) created an even more intense interest in the second coming and the Millennial reign of the Lord. Though Miller boasted thousands of followers, other Christians rejected his prophecies. Even among these, however, his work created great curiosity and discussion. Because of the Church’s international growth, Article of Faith 10 has received a number of editorial changes. As originally published, the article did not define the term Zion. The Church Scripture Committee seems to have felt that clarification was necessary since the Bible refers to the New Jerusalem but gives little information. Joseph Smith taught that the city of Zion will eventually be built in Jackson County, Missouri.

In addition, the first printing of the article did not specify on which continent Zion would be built. The reference to “this continent” would have been clear to anyone reading the statement in North America but not the rest of the world. For that reason, the words “the American” were added. Later, the word “this” was removed, further globalizing the language used.

Given the excitement on the subject, it is not surprising that Joseph Smith addressed it. In his brief but clear statement, he made a number of points. First, the Church believed in the Lord’s second coming. Further, the saints believed that the earth itself would be preserved and return to a paradisiacal state following the Lord’s coming. Joseph clarified, however, that several important events must come first. Among these were the gathering of Israel and the building up of the New Jerusalem on the American continent. Therefore, in contrast to Miller, the saints were not expecting

the second coming in the near future. The Prophet did not include the fact that the earth would undergo an additional transformation at the end of the millennial thousand years that would make it a celestial sphere, but he may have felt that he had addressed the issue at hand and any more information would frustrate his purposes.

11 We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

article 11 Throughout the early United States, idealists tended to view the nation as a place of religious tolerance and freedom. Though it was true that America on the whole was much more tolerant than many places in the world, the idealists' myopic view was far from the reality. Some areas in the colonies were as tradition-bound and intolerant as anyplace in Europe. Even the far less devout frontier was not free from bigotry and intolerance.

Exacerbating the problem, religion and politics were not far separated during this era. As a result, even people without strong religious views saw religionists whose political opinions did not coincide with theirs as threats. These non-religious people could, therefore, be just as rough—or even rougher—than the sectarians. Misplaced political and religious fervor led to mobbings and lynchings of Quakers, Shakers, Mormons, and other devout people.

Latter-day Saints, having felt the evils of bigotry, gathered to Nauvoo, where they carefully controlled all that went on. Nauvoo was becoming a city of note, and many were curious about how the saints felt about religious tolerance within their city, given all that had happened to them.

Article 11 addressed religious tolerance directly. A reader would have understood that the Church supported the idea that the state had no right to impose a belief system on its citizens. The powers of the state were, in the Mormon's view, therefore, limited to assuring religious freedom and not imposing a religious system. The reader also learned that, in spite of all the saints had been through, they yet honored the principle of tolerance as vital to religious worship. No sect that would honor the law and be respectful of the saints would be barred from Nauvoo.

12 We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

article 12 A large number of Americans saw the hand of God in the colonists' success in the Revolutionary War. As a result, they viewed the nation itself as having a divine aura, a pervasive holiness that separated it from other countries of the world. The belief that a divine hand was over civil matters blurred, in the eyes of many, the relationship between, and therefore loyalty to, church and state. As a result, a large number of Christians struggled to know where to place their highest allegiance. The

state, they felt, was important, but how much loyalty did one give to it? Many of these people were descendants of those who had fled the Old World seeking religious freedom from tyrannical governments. They owed much to the state that guarded their religious freedoms and, as a result, some made political service almost their religion.

Others held to a very different view. The Savior had expressly stated, these other Christians believed, that his kingdom was not of this world. As a result, they felt, true Christians should have nothing to do with civil governments. They feared that service to the state was the same as trusting in the “arm of flesh” and, therefore, an affront to God. The most firm ranged from the Mennonites, who would not so much as vote or hold civil office, to the Quakers, who would cooperate with and support civil authorities except in military matters. They were strict conscientious objectors.

Many wondered about the Mormons. They were, according to popular view, a fringe religion. Some viewed their troubles with state authorities as a mark that they did not respect civil government.

Joseph Smith, in article 12, set the record straight, making it clear that the saints felt no tension between their religion and the state so long as the state protected their religious freedoms. Careful readers would see that Joseph Smith tied the church’s attitude to Romans 12, where Paul admonished Christians to be subject to constituted authority. The Prophet’s audience would understand that the saints would not shrink from civil responsibilities, including that of military service.

13 We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

article 13 Joseph ended his articles with this very broad statement that touched on less-articulated issues of the day. He seems to have designed it to show his readers that the other twelve had not addressed all that the saints believed. This article also highlighted the saints’ belief that true religion was more than a belief in an institution or dogma. In other words, devotion was more than mental ascent to a certain religious viewpoint. The Prophet showed that, at its heart, religion must be transformed into action and caring. Improved conduct, increased knowledge, and greater spirituality were the goals of the saints. Acquiring of these virtues had to be active, not passive—the saints were to “seek after” these things.

As one looks back in retrospect at the Articles of Faith, it is clear that God’s hand acted upon his prophet. Hidden within the simplicity of these straightforward statements are eternal and invariable fundamentals. Joseph Smith designed each to explain to his audience where the newly-restored Church stood in regard to the most vital religious issues of the day. The Prophet did not limit or hedge them about with restrictions, but

he also let readers know that the latter-day kingdom was growing, expanding, and adjusting to the times and mission God had set for it. Revelation would continue to be its guide. Eventually it would triumph, spreading to the world all that was of Christian goodness.

JOSEPH SMITH.

Brief Biblical History of Abraham (Genesis 12-25)

Abram was born in Ur of the Chaldees (Chaldea) in Mesopotamia. His father was Terah. He had two brothers, Nahor and Haran. All three boys married. Abram married Sarai who was actually his half sister (the daughter of his father). She was a woman “most fair.” Sarai was barren. Nahor married Milcah. The name of Haran’s wife is not mentioned. Haran died while still in Chaldea. Abram’s father Terah left Chaldea with his family to travel toward Canaan. On the way they resided in Haran. Those in the group included Abram, Sarai, and Lot, the son of Haran and therefore Abram’s nephew. Abram’s father Terah died in Haran at age 205.

The Lord spoke to Abram and commanded him to leave Haran and move to a place he would be shown by the Lord. Abram was 75 years of age when he left. He took with him his family and his nephew Lot and traveled south toward Canaan. He stopped in Bethel which means “house of God.” There he built an altar and called upon God. Because of a grievous famine in Canaan, Abram and his family (including his nephew Lot) passed right on through Canaan and traveled on to Egypt. As they approached Egypt, Abram feared the Egyptians would kill him in order to take his particularly lovely wife Sarai. He therefore had Sarai claim the half truth that she was Abram’s sister. In Egypt, the Pharaoh took Sarai into his house and treated Abram especially well because Abram didn’t protest. Pharaoh gave Abram sheep, oxen, asses, camels, menservants, and maidservants. Lot was also given much by Pharaoh. The Lord sent plagues upon the house of Pharaoh because of his relationship with Sarai. The Pharaoh learned that Sarai was Abram’s wife and surmised that the plagues were related to his relationship with her. The Pharaoh sent Abram and his family away.

Abram and his family returned to Canaan and to Bethel. Abram was now a rich man because of all he had been given by the Pharaoh. The area in which they lived turned out to be too small for both Abram and Lot and all of their cattle and possessions. Strife occurred between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. Abram wished to avoid further strife between the two of them, so Lot traveled to the east to the plain of Jordan and settled at a place near the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram remained in Canaan but moved to Hebron.

Lot was caught up in a war between the kings of the area, and he and all his possessions were taken captive by an outside king after the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled. Abram learned of Lot’s capture and took 318 of his own trained men, rescued Lot and his family, and took back all of Lot’s possessions. Abram was honored for his rescue by the king of Sodom. He was also honored and blessed by Melchizedek, the king of Salem and the priest of God. The king of Sodom offered the spoils of war to Abram, but he refused them. Abram paid tithing to Melchizedek.

Abram became concerned that he had no legitimate heir, and he prayed and made sacrifices to the Lord. The Lord promised Abram, by covenant, numerous offspring. In a dream, Abram was shown that eventually his offspring would languish in captivity in a foreign land for 400 years. The Lord's covenants with Abram included Abram's receiving the land of Canaan for his offspring.

Because Sarai was barren, she urged Abram to "go in unto" her handmaid Hagar, and he did so. Hagar conceived and apparently resented becoming pregnant. Hence, she came to despise Sarai who was ultimately responsible for her condition. Accordingly, Sarai dealt with her most sternly, and Hagar ran away because of the harsh treatment. The Lord spoke to Hagar through an angel who found Hagar by a well in the wilderness. The Lord instructed her to return to Sarai. He further told her that she would bear a son whom she should call Ishmael. He would be an aggressive, "wild man" who would contend with all those around him. Hagar did return and gave birth to Ishmael when Abram was 86 years old.

When Abram was 99 years old the Lord appeared to him, reiterated to him the covenants the two had entered into, and changed his name to Abraham which means "the father of many nations." Abraham's covenants with the Lord were to apply to all of Abraham's progeny. The Lord instructed that circumcision become the sign of the covenant in all the offspring of Abraham. Specifically, the Lord commanded that all male offspring of Abraham be circumcised at age eight days. The Lord also changed Sarai's name to Sarah and promised Abraham that Sarah would become the "mother of nations." Abraham laughed and reminded the Lord that Sarah was 99 years old. The Lord then specifically promised Abraham that Sarah would bear a son and that his name should be Isaac. Isaac would become Abraham's heir and all of Isaac's descendants would fall under the covenant between God and Abraham. God then departed, and Abraham had himself and all the men in his household circumcised.

Shortly thereafter, three holy men came to Abraham's tent door. Abraham perceived they were messengers from God, and he received them graciously. They reiterated the Lord's promise that Sarah would bear a son. Sarah overheard the promise and was skeptical. As the three men departed, they "looked toward Sodom." Abraham discerned that the Lord had sent the three men to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. He was concerned about Lot and the other few righteous that lived in Sodom, and he bargained with the Lord. Initially he asked if the Lord might spare Sodom if fifty righteous people there could be identified. When the Lord agreed, Abraham continued to bargain and eventually the Lord agreed to spare the city if only ten righteous could be found there. It could not be demonstrated there were even ten.

Meanwhile two of the holy men came to Lot at the gates of Sodom. Lot urged them to stay in his house that night and go on their way in the morning. Initially they refused but finally accepted his hospitable offer. The wicked men of the city had discovered the third holy man and learned of the two in Lot's house. They wished to

sexually abuse the three strangers and forcibly implored Lot to send them out. Lot refused and even offered his two virgin daughters to the Sodomites if they would spare the men the abuse. Those aggressively banging at Lot's door were stricken by the Lord with blindness. The holy men then warned Lot to take all of his family out of the city to avoid being killed in the destruction that would follow. Lot's sons in law, who lived with him, refused to believe that the threat was real. The next morning, the two angels urgently demanded that Lot take his wife and two daughters and flee the city. They further warned all of them not to look back at the destruction that would be occurring. Lot did flee to the neighboring town of Zoar. The Lord then rained fire and brimstone upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot's wife disobeyed the angels' warning and looked back upon the city. She "became a pillar of salt."

The next day, Lot fled the city of Zoar and lived with his two daughters in a cave. While there, the daughters feared that they would never marry and have seed. Therefore on two successive nights they conceived the plan to ply their father with wine and get him drunk. They would then lay with him, each in turn. The two thus conceived and the elder daughter gave birth to a son Moab, the father of the Moabites. The younger gave birth to a son Benammi, the father of the children of Ammon.

Some time later Abraham journeyed south to Gerar where Abimelech was king. Abimelech desired Sarah. Abraham again denied that Sarah was his wife and claimed she was his sister. Abimelech took Sarah. Abimelech then was warned by the Lord in a dream that Sarah was another man's wife and that Abimelech and all his people would be destroyed if he touched her. The Lord also had rendered Abimelech's wife and maidservants barren as the result of Abimelech's taking Sarah. Abimelech appealed to the Lord by saying he had not touched Sarah and had been deceived by Abraham. Abimelech reproved Abraham for deceiving him. Abraham told Abimelech that he had feared for his life and that Sarah was actually his half sister as well as his wife. Abimelech then returned Sarah to Abraham and also gave to Abraham silver, sheep, oxen, menservants and maidservants. Abimelech's wife and maidservants were healed of their barrenness.

Sarah did conceive and bore Isaac who was circumcised at eight days of age. Abraham gave a great feast to celebrate the weaning of Isaac. Sarah noticed Ishmael mocking Isaac during the feast and urged Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son. She did not want Ishmael to share in Abraham's inheritance. Not wanting to part with his son Ishmael, Abraham was grieved. The Lord reassured Abraham that a great nation would come out of Ishmael. Abraham supplied Hagar with food and water and then did cast her out. In the wilderness, Hagar and Ishmael were about to die of thirst when an angel of the Lord appeared to her and showed her a well. Ishmael did eventually grow up and became a capable archer. He, his Egyptian wife, and his mother lived in Beer-Sheba, the land of King Abimelech. Initially Abimelech's men had refused to allow Hagar and Ishmael to reside in their land. Abraham gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech

and made a covenant of brotherhood with him. Thereafter Hagar and Ishmael were allowed to live in Beer-Sheba.

Abraham was then commanded by the Lord to take his son Isaac into the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. Abraham obediently rose up early in the morning, saddled his ass, loaded the wood to make the fire, and took Isaac as instructed. Isaac became aware they were going to make a burnt offering and asked Abraham, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God will provide." They arrived at the mountain, and Abraham built a fire on an altar that was there. As Abraham stretched forth his hand to slay Isaac with a knife, an angel stopped him by calling his name. When Abraham responded, the angel said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Genesis 22:12). Abraham then spotted a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. He offered up the ram. Shortly thereafter the Lord covenanted, yet again, with Abraham to multiply his seed "as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17). He also promised Abraham that his seed would be a blessing to all nations of the earth.

Sarah died at age 127 and was buried in a cave at Hebron. Abraham purchased the cave and the field as a burying place for his family. Abraham, by now, was very old. He asked his servant to swear that the servant would not allow Isaac to take a wife from among the Canaanites, but that the servant would obtain a wife for Isaac from Abraham's "own country." The servant traveled to Mesopotamia and stood by a well. He prayed that the Lord might show him the girl Isaac should marry by having her come to the well to fetch water. And when the servant asked her for water for himself and his camels, the girl would provide it. Rebecca came forth. She was the granddaughter of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. When she readily acquiesced to the servant's request for water, the servant gave her a gift of an earring and bracelets. The servant then asked if the girl's father would provide him lodging. The girl replied that he would, and she ran to her house and reported the request to her family. Rebecca's brother Laban returned to the well to accompany the servant back to his house. The servant then returned to the house with Laban where he was offered a meal. He replied that he would not eat until he had reported the nature of his mission in full to Rebecca and her family. The servant did so, and Rebecca's father Bethuel and brother Laban perceived that the servant was, indeed, on the Lord's errand. They granted permission for Rebecca to return with the servant. After granting more precious gifts to Rebecca and her family, the servant and Rebecca returned to the house of Abraham and Isaac. As they approached, they saw Isaac who had gone out into the field to meditate. Rebecca covered her face, dismounted the camel, and greeted Isaac. The servant reported to Isaac all that he had done and all that had happened. Rebecca and Isaac married, and Rebecca was a great comfort to Isaac who had just lost his mother.

Abraham took yet another wife, Keturah who bore him sons. Abraham gave, as an inheritance, all that he had unto Isaac. Abraham also gave gifts to Keturah and her sons and sent them away from Isaac. Abraham died at age 175 and was buried on the plot of land he had purchased in Hebron.

Abrahamic Lore that Supports the Book of Abraham

In 1970 Hugh Nibley published an article in the *Improvement Era*, “A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price,” (volume 73, pages 79-95) in which he wrote of various ancient traditions about Abraham which support the story found in the Book of Abraham but are not found in the Bible. More recently, John A Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee have published a collection of ancient documents—Jewish, Christian, Samaritan, Muslim, Mandaean, and Falasha—dating from the first century BC to AD 1300 that contain elements in the Book of Abraham that are not in the Genesis account of Abraham (*Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham*, published by FARMS and Brigham Young University). The Mandeans claim to be descendants of the disciples of John the Baptist and live in Iraq and Iran. The Falasha are the so-called “black Jews” of Ethiopia in Africa, whose Israelite origins go back so early that they don’t even have the rabbinic traditions that came later on.

This article will summarize those elements in the Book of Abraham that are not found in the Bible. All are supported by a collection of extrabiblical texts.

Idolatry in Abraham’s Day (Abraham 1:5-6)

According to the Book of Abraham, Abraham’s fathers, or ancestors, worshiped idols. Six of the Jewish texts, eleven Christian documents, seven Muslim documents, and one Mandaean document all support the idea that Abraham’s fathers worshiped idols.

Abraham’s father, Terah, worshiped idols (Abraham 1:16-17, 27). This is supported by eleven Jewish texts , four Christian, one Falasha, and nine Muslim texts support the idea that Terah was an idolater.

Terah, after repenting of his idolatry, then returned again to his idols (Abraham 2:5). This is supported by five Jewish documents and six Muslim documents.

Egyptian Idols in the Environment of Abraham (Abraham 1:6-7, 13, 17, 20, 29). Though the Book of Abraham speaks of Egyptian idols, there is no mention of Egyptian idols in the book of Genesis. Egyptian idols are mentioned in two Christian documents, though many texts speak of Abraham dealing with other idols, and destroying the idols his father manufactured.

Human Sacrifice

Children were sacrificed (Abraham 1:7-8, 10-11). Five Jewish documents, six Christian documents, eight Muslim documents, and one Falasha document all mention that children were being sacrificed in Abraham’s day. The Christian documents are *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, *The Cave of Treasures*, *The Book of the Rolls*,

Kebrä Nagast, the so-called *Anonymous Christian Chronicle*, *The Conflict of Adam and Eve*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. All these indicate that in the days of Abraham's father, men began worshiping idols and offering their children in sacrifice. The third book of the *Conflict of Adam and Eve* says, "The men in the hundredth year of Nahor [who was Abraham's grandfather], God looked down upon the children of men and saw that they sacrificed their children to idols." *Apocalypse of Abraham* 25:1-2 has Abraham saying, "I saw there the likeness of the idol of jealousy, like a carpenter's figure, such as my father used to make. And his body was of glittering copper, and before it the man, and he was worshiping it, and there was an altar opposite it. And boys were being slaughtered on it, before the face of the idol."

Those who would not worship idols were sacrificed (Abraham 1:11). This is supported by a single Jewish document, two Muslim, one Christian, one Samaritan, and one Falasha document.

An Arabic writer, al-Kisa'i, writes as follows: "The old woman [who had come to listen to Abraham's message] took the bundle, broke the idol with a stone and believed in Abraham's God. After this, she went about the city of Kutarab saying, 'Oh, people, worship God who created you, and has given you substance.' When news of the old woman reached Nimrod, he ordered her hands and feet to be cut off."

Abraham himself was brought to be sacrificed because he would not worship idols (Abraham 1:5-7, 11-12, 15, 30; Facsimile 1, figure 3). We find this supported in thirteen Jewish documents, two Christian, eleven Muslim, one Samaritan, one Falasha, and one Mandaean document.

In most of the stories, Abraham was brought to be killed for the very reason that he would not worship the idols, in some cases because he destroyed the idols. Many of the stories say he specifically destroyed them. For example, the second-century-AD *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, commenting on Genesis 11:28, says, "And it came to pass when Nimrod cast Abraham into the furnace of fire, because he would not worship his idol, the fire had no power to burn him."

The Anonymous Christian Chronicle, which is a Latin text, says: "And Nimrod threw Abraham into a fiery furnace because he did not approve the worship of idols. But the flame of the furnace was changed into pleasant dew." In some texts, the fire becomes roses or even flowering vines.

An Arabic writer, al-Mas'udi, wrote a text called *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*. It says, "Abraham blamed his people for their idolatry. When they were annoyed by the disdain by which Abraham scorned their gods, and which had attracted public notice, Nimrod threw him into the fire. But God converted the fire into coolness, and he was preserved."

A Falasha document from Ethiopia has the following story of Abraham: "Nimrod said, 'Oh, Abraham, let us worship this idol. Perhaps thou dost not want to?' Abraham was obstinate and refused. Nimrod said to him, 'I shall surely cast thee into the oven

and burn thee in the flames.’ Abraham heeded it not, and would not change his mind and worship the idol. He threw him into the flames.

Abraham’s own father Terah was behind the attempt to sacrifice Abraham (Abraham 1:7, 30). This is found in two Jewish documents, one Muslim document, and one Falasha document.

The Muslim document is from the seventh century AD and is the Qur’an, written by Muhammad. Qur’an 19:46 has Terah saying, “Do you detest my gods, Abraham? If you do not cease, I shall stone you!” The book of Jasher, the *Falasha Story of Abraham*, and several other texts indicate that it was Terah who delivered Abraham to Nimrod.

Abraham was fastened to the altar (Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2). This is substantiated in five Jewish texts and two Muslim texts.

When Abraham’s life was in danger as he was about to be sacrificed, he prayed (Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2). This is found in one Jewish document and four Muslim documents.

The Lord sent an angel to rescue Abraham (Abraham 1:15; 2:13; Facsimile 1, figure 1). This is found in five Jewish documents, seven Muslim documents, and one Falasha.

The Book of Abraham also says that God rescued Abraham from death (Abraham 1:16; 3:20). This is found in eleven Jewish texts, one Christian, four Muslim, and one Samaritan text.

The altar of sacrifice was destroyed and the priest who officiated at the altar was killed at the same time (Abraham 1:20, 29). These documents say that the person bringing Abraham to be sacrificed is actually killed, and sometimes the instrument, which is not always an altar (is it usually a furnace), is destroyed. This is found in nine Jewish texts, eight Christian, nine Muslim, one Samaritan, and one Falasha text.

The fact that the priest or leader was himself smitten and died, as the Book of Abraham says, is supported in three Jewish documents, three Christian, six Muslim, and one Samaritan text.

Abraham Held the Priesthood (Abraham 1:2; 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1)

This is found in four Jewish documents and one Christian document.

Abraham was an heir to the priesthood of his fathers (Abraham 1:2-3, 18). This is supported in two Jewish texts.

Abraham Made Converts while He Was Living in the City of Haran (Abraham 2:15)

This is not really found in the Genesis account, though it has been read into the Genesis account by many. The Genesis account simply talks about the “souls that he had gotten,” which many have understood to be slaves that he had purchased while he

was in Haran. The Book of Abraham makes it clear that these are not souls that he had purchased, but rather, these are people he had converted. This is found in many early texts including twelve Jewish texts and seven Muslim texts.

Abraham Was Knowledgeable about Astronomy (Abraham 1:31; 3:1-18; Facsimiles 2, 3)

We have eleven Jewish texts that confirm this. This earliest of these is from the first century AD, and is in Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*. This, by the way, is the only text that Joseph Smith might have had at the time of the translation of the Book of Abraham. There are also six Christian, seven Muslim, one Falash, and one Mandaean text that say the same thing—that Abraham was knowledgeable about astronomy.

An early Jewish text, a rabbinic work, *Pirqa de Rabbi Eliezer* 8, says that the calendric calculations of the forefathers were given by Shem to his descendant Abraham. These calculations were to enable them to know when to throw in an extra month in the year, because they followed a lunar system. If you follow a lunar calendar, the year ends up being 354 days instead of 365. So every once in a while, to keep the seasons consistent with the calendar, you have to adjust it, and there was a calculation that they used, and still do use, to do this. The methods they used had been written down, and they were calculating by means of astronomy, of course.

Abraham taught astronomy to the Egyptians (Facsimile 3). It is one thing to know astronomy, but it is quite another thing to teach it to the Egyptians. After all, weren't the Egyptians a knowledgeable people? Why should Abraham be teaching astronomy to them? This story is supported in two Jewish texts, and two Christian texts.

The *Genesis Apocryphon*, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, talks about Abraham's reading to the Egyptians from the Book of Enoch. This is particularly significant because the books attributed to Enoch that have come down to us and which, by the way, had not been published in English in the time of Joseph Smith, all talk about astronomy. So we have here mention that Abraham is reading to the Egyptians from the Book of Enoch—reading astronomy to the Egyptians which is exactly what is depicted in Facsimile 3 of the Book of Abraham.

Abraham Knew about the Creation (Abraham 1:31; 4-5)

Abraham tells us he obtained this knowledge from the records that had been passed down from the fathers, but he also had a vision by night. The Lord showed him the stars and planets. Three Jewish texts, one Christian, and two Muslim texts support the idea that Abraham learned from God about the creation of the world.

The Book of Abraham's version of the creation speaks as though the seven days or periods of creation were planning sessions as opposed to actual working sessions.

At the end of each one, the gods are saying in the Book of Abraham “we will do this,” “we will do that,” “they will obey,” and so on (Abraham 4:31-5:5). It sounds like they are just doing some planning. We do have one Jewish text from the first century AD that states that in light of Abraham’s knowledge of the creation, these were planning sessions.

Abraham says the premortal spirits gathered in council (Abraham 3:21-24). Abraham was told that some of these would be God’s leaders on the earth. This concept—that Abraham saw premortal spirits—is not found in the Bible. It is found in five Jewish texts, one Christian text, and one Muslim text.

The Lord tells Abraham to pass Sarah off to the Egyptians as his sister (Abraham 2:22-25). This is a different spin than is contained in the Bible. According to the book of Genesis, he just does it. It doesn’t say where he got the idea. We have two Jewish texts and one Christian text that support the idea that it came from God. The most well-known of these texts is probably the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In this text, Abraham had a dream the night before going into Egypt in which he was shown what would happen to him unless his wife said she was his sister. Based on that, she told the Egyptian officials that she was, in fact, his sister.

Abraham Possessed and Wrote Records (Abraham 1:28, 31)

The Bible nowhere indicates that. The general view of scholars who even believe that Abraham existed is that he was just a nomad who traveled around with a tent and spent time with his herds. It is felt that he couldn’t have known anything about writing and wasn’t a very sophisticated individual. But in the Book of Abraham, we are told he possessed records that had been passed on from his fathers, some of them going back to the time of Adam, in fact. This is supported in a number early texts. These include seven Jewish texts, one Christian document, and four Muslim documents.

Let us look at Abraham 1:28, 31:

But I shall endeavor, hereafter, to delineate the chronology running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold unto this present time. But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore 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, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.

Abraham knew how to read and write. The above scriptural passage makes that abundantly clear. Several documents talk about Abraham’s being able to read and write. Jubilees 12:25-27 states that God himself taught Abraham the language of creation and that Abraham then copied the books of his father and studied them. A very

old tradition, found in the same book, indicates that he learned writing, not from God, but from his father. Jubilees 11:8 reads: “His father taught him the researches of the Chaldeans in order to practice divination and astrology, according to the signs in heaven.”

Abraham wrote a record of his own (Abraham 1:31). While there are many extrabiblical texts that are attributed to him, only three texts speak of Abraham’s actually writing, “the Book of Abraham” or “the record of Abraham.” These are two Jewish texts and one Muslim text.

Jubilees 39:6 reads: “Jacob used to read the words of Abraham, taken from the heavenly books.” The Qur’an, the sacred book of the Muslims, Surah 87, verses 19-20, speaks of what is recorded on “the first leaves [the earliest books], the leaves of Abraham and Moses.”

The *Babylonian Talmud*, which is one of the corpus of documents that serves as an explanation to the law of Moses which is found in the first five books of the Bible. It speaks of “a tradition that the [book] of our father Abraham consisted of four hundred chapters; we have only learnt five [referring to the first five books of the Bible].” The suggestion here is that Abraham wrote the original from which these five chapters were extracted and that the rest of it had been lost to them, but they knew that they had existed. The Babylonian Talmud also mentions the book of Jasher that is spoken of in Joshua 10:13, and says of that book, “It is the Book of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Abraham possessed records from before his time. There is a clear tradition that Abraham kept records, but did he have records from before his time? Did he have records going back to the time of Adam? From Jubilees 21:12, when blessing his son Isaac, Abraham referred to the sacrificial ordinances that he had “found written in the books of [his] forefathers and in the words of Enoch, and in the words of Noah.” Enoch, of course, goes back to the time of Adam. Adam blessed Enoch before dying. Thus, they were contemporaries whose lives overlapped.

Hugh Nibley cited a Mandaean text that reads as follows, “The writings of Seth and Idrisi [Arabic for Enoch] were handed down to the time of Noah and Abraham.” The Book of Noah and the *Sepher ha-Razim* (Book of the Mysteries), both of which are medieval Jewish documents, say that there was a heavenly book given to Adam, which was passed down by the patriarchs, and ended up in the hands of Noah. Then, “Noah gave the book to his son, Shem, whence it was passed to Abraham.”

The Zohar, which is a thirteenth-century Jewish text based on earlier traditions, speaking of the heavenly book delivered to Adam by the angel Raziel, says, “Adam left it to his son, Seth, who transmitted it in turn to his posterity, and so on until it came to Abraham, who learnt from it how to discuss the glory of his master as has been said. Similarly, Enoch possessed a book from which he learned to discern the divine glory.”

The Book of Abraham States that the Egyptian Pharaoh Was a Descendant of Ham and also of Canaan (Abraham 1:21-22, 24-25, 27)

Egyptians are considered to be descendants of Ham. Ham had four sons: Misraim (father of the Egyptians), Cush (Ethiopians), Phut (Libyans), and Canaan (father of Canaanites). Thus, Egyptians are not considered to be sons of Canaan. They are descendants of Ham through Misraim (Ham's son, whose name means Egypt). So how is it that Pharaoh is descended from both Ham and Canaan? It is unclear just how, but there are early documents that support the idea. There are three Jewish texts, one Christian, one Muslim, and one Falasha text that say the same thing.

The First Pharaoh Was a Good Man and Was Blessed by Noah (Abraham 1:26)

Two Muslim documents teach this same idea.

Abraham Was Allowed to Sit on the Pharaoh's Throne (Facsimile 3)

Two Jewish documents and two Muslim texts speak of Abraham's being able to sit on the king's throne.

Famine in Abraham's Homeland of Chaldea (Abraham 1:29-30; 2:1, 5)

This is confirmed in three Jewish documents, two Christian documents, and three Muslim documents. According to most of those records, the famine was caused by either crows or ravens that came in and ate up the seeds when the farmers planted them. One of the texts, however, attributes this to locusts. Locusts used to be a common source of famine throughout the Middle East and Eastern Africa.

Abraham prayed to the Lord to lift the famine (Abraham 2:17). Abraham's father had remained behind and Abraham didn't want his father's family to suffer the effects of this famine. We have a Jewish text of the first century BC that says that Abraham prayed to God to lift the famine. Two Muslim texts say the same thing.

Haran, the brother of Abraham, died in the famine (Abraham 2:1). A single Muslim text does confirm this. Most of the early texts about Abraham indicate that his brother, Haran, died in the furnace where Abraham was going to be tossed in and burned. According to these stories, Haran either got too close to the fire or they tossed him in and he didn't have enough faith, so he died and Abraham survived.

Some Unique Doctrinal Contributions of the Pearl of Great Price

It is instructive to consider a number of principles or doctrines that are taught in a unique manner in the Pearl of Great Price.

Additional Understanding of the Nature of God

Moses was allowed to enter the realm of divine experience, and after being transfigured was permitted to see God face to face and later to look upon the vastness of his creations (Moses 1).

Enoch learned firsthand that the Almighty was not only a being of passion, but also a tender Lord with compassion, one who weeps over the waywardness of his children—the workmanship of his own hands. Enoch further observed and testified that God’s omnipotence and greatness do not establish a personal chasm between him and his children: He who is omniscient and omnipresent is equally omni-loving. In the words of Enoch: “And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever” (Moses 7:30; see also Moses 7:28-32).

Additional Insight into the Nature of Man

The Pearl of Great Price contains the most complete presentation of all the standard works on the matter of man’s eternal existence. It affirms that man did not suddenly spring into existence at birth, but that he has always lived (Abraham 3:18).

Abraham wrote of his own vision of men as spirits—“organized intelligences”—and thus provided doctrinal insights concerning the premortal experience (Abraham 3:22). Moses made passing reference to the fact that all things—man included—were created spiritually before they were naturally upon the earth (Moses 3:5). Both Moses and Abraham provide extra-biblical information regarding the Grand Council of spirits, the pre-mortal occasion where Jehovah was appointed as the Advocate and chief proponent of the plan of the Eternal Father.

Further, this small book of scripture testifies of the timeless nature of the Atonement of Christ, and thus of the innocence of man at birth. Adam’s progeny would not be yoked with the stain of a parent, for the Son of God had “atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children” (Moses 6:54). Men would become carnal, sensual, and devilish only as they refused the offerings of the plan of salvation and chose to love Satan more than God (Moses 5:13).

The Pearl of Great Price provides remarkable details concerning the lives or teachings of seven major heads of gospel dispensations. In a very few (but pregnant and poignant) pages we learn not only the how, but the why of the creation of the earth and the subsequent fall of our first parents from their Edenic and paradisiacal glory; of the perfect obedience of Adam and Eve to the commandments of the Lord; of the sorrows and woes associated with the transgression of large groups of Adam's children and grandchildren; and of the sweet and sublime joys associated with understanding the plan of salvation and applying the atoning blood of Christ (Moses 2-6).

In Enoch we are introduced to a young man—a sensitive young man brimming with eternal possibilities—who develops slowly but surely from a stammering and uncertain youth to a noble and confident priesthood leader, one whose name and works have become associated with transcendent righteousness.

And so it is through the entirety of the Pearl of Great Price. We are taken through history and given singular insights into such prophetic personalities as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph Smith, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Each of these was called of God to minister to a generation which had been traveling for a time in darkness. Each stood as a restorer of truth and a legal administrator for the introduction of a new and everlasting covenant. Moses and Abraham teach us of premortality. Enoch shares with us his vision of the great millennial day, the time wherein the Zion of God will have been established on earth, and “for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest” (Moses 7:64). From organized intelligence to mortal probation and from earthly challenges to millennial splendor and Godhood—the Pearl of Great Price takes us through the journey of life and provides the content and context necessary to answer cosmic questions. Its scope, like man himself, is from everlasting to everlasting.

The Reality of Satan

Moses became an eyewitness of Lucifer's childish and tantrum-like behavior when spurned, and Enoch described a chilling vision of Satan's devilish delight in his work: “And [Enoch] beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced” (Moses 7:26: see also 1:12-22; 4:1-4).

The Nature of the Cosmos

The Pearl of Great Price is a significant witness to the fact that “worlds without number” have been created by Elohim through Jehovah, the “word of his power” (Moses 1:33; 7:30; Abraham 3:12). Furthermore, this scripture attests to the order and systematization of him who holds all things in the palm of his hand. Abraham was shown through the Urim and Thummim the structure and hierarchy of the cosmos, and given to understand that the reckoning and government of stars and planets is ultimately in keeping with the structure laid down by him who is Eternal (Abraham 3:1-

17). There is no end to creation, and there is no end to redemption. In the words of the Lord: “As one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words” (Moses 1:38).

The Preparation of Prophets

Prophets may be foreordained to their high and holy stations, but they are seldom born prophets. Much preparation and molding and experience—generally planned and programmed by the Lord himself—are needed before they become the “polished shafts” in the quiver of the Almighty. After the pattern of that Master whom they serve and represent, prophets frequently are recipients of experiences which take them from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, or vice versa. Enoch knew the discouragement associated with scorn and rejection. He also learned of the power involved in having the Lord justify all his (Enoch’s) words (see Moses 6:31-36). Enoch felt the pangs of sorrow as he saw in vision the destruction of a wicked generation by water. He also came to experience the sublime totality of walking and talking with the Lord, and ultimately being taken into the bosom of heaven (see Moses 7:35-44, 67-69).

So also did Abraham know the apprehension of death at the hands of unbelievers, as well as the mind-stretching and soul-expanding experience of witnessing “those things which [God’s] hands had made, which were many” (Abraham 1:12-15; 3:12). Moses was taken into the presence of the Lord and given a glimpse of the earth and all of its inhabitants. Soon thereafter he encountered Lucifer, who in some cases almost seems to demand “equal time” with the prophets. After what proved to be a harrowing experience with Satan, Moses was again caught up in vision: Moses “beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God. And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not” (Moses 1).

The Eternal Mission of Jesus Christ

One of the powerful contributions of the Pearl of Great Price is an insight into the nature of Christ’s Eternal Gospel, the revelation to the Church and the world that Christian doctrine and Christian ordinances have been taught by Christian prophets since the days of Adam. Much of what has been delivered through Joseph Smith and his successors is a restoration—not alone of the first century Christian Church—but of those matters which pertain to the ancient of days and have their origins in the earth’s primeval period of temporal existence. Adam was told by an angel that he was to do all that he did in the name of the Son, and that he and his posterity were to repent and call upon the Father in the name of the Son forevermore (Moses 5:8). Adam was further instructed—at least four thousand years before the time of the Master—that Jesus Christ is “the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men” (Moses 6:52). In like fashion, Enoch, looking down

through the stream of time, “saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced, saying: The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world” (Moses 7:47).

In an era of gross wickedness, Noah was called to prepare that generation for the coming deluge, and, more specifically, to bring as many as would come into the true church. The Pearl of Great Price is a valuable witness to the fact that Noah’s warning voice and testimony were not simply vague challenges to change, but rather an invitation to participate in those saving principles and ordinances that anchor one to truth in the times of storm and stress. “And it came to pass,” the account records, “that Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed to my words; Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not” (Moses 8:23-24). The same could be demonstrated with regard to Moses and Abraham: these ancient prophets held communion with Jehovah, knew of his centrality in the plan of salvation as the mortal Messiah, and were indefatigable witnesses of his name and works (see Moses 1; Abraham 1:16; 2:8; 3:19). In short, the brief collection known as the Pearl of Great Price is a confirming evidence that to Christ “give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43), and that “none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11). The Pearl of Great Price is another witness for Jesus Christ.

Some Unique Doctrinal Contributions of the Book of Moses

The Book of Moses contributes much to our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In an article written by Robert J. Matthews in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 2: The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985, 40) we find the following summary of the most important of these:

1. The gospel of Jesus Christ, including baptism and other ordinances, was had from the beginning. The early patriarchs, beginning with Adam, worshipped Jesus and taught his gospel to their children and to the rest of mankind (see Moses 6:22-23, 48-68). This fact is almost entirely lacking in all other translations of the Bible available today.

2. The Holy Ghost was operative among men from the beginning. Some persons have thought that the declaration in the New Testament (in John 7:39) that the Holy Ghost had not yet come is supposed to mean that the Holy Ghost had never been enjoyed by mankind on this earth until the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. However, the Book of Moses makes it very clear that the Holy Ghost was operative among people who had the gospel from the very beginning of man on this earth (see Moses 6:52-68; 8:23-24). What then is the meaning of the statement in John 7:39 that the Holy Ghost had not yet come? Simply that the gift of the Holy Ghost had not yet been manifest in the New Testament dispensation.

3. There was a symbolic purpose to animal sacrifice. The symbolic nature of animal sacrifice is clearly portrayed in the Book of Moses, wherein it is specified that the sacrifice must be a firstling of the flock and that it was a similitude of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This was revealed to Adam (Moses 5:4-9), and he was the first man on this earth to offer animal sacrifice in this manner and for this purpose. Although blood sacrifices are repeatedly spoken of in the Old Testament, there is in the Old Testament no explanation as to their specific purpose. Nor is there anything about Adam offering a sacrifice. The Book of Moses offers great clarity and explanatory information on this important subject.

4. Moses 1 has special significance. The doctrinal importance of Moses 1 is known to almost all of us, and I will emphasize just two very significant aspects of it. We learn from this "vision" that the events recorded therein were originally experienced by Moses after the time of the "burning bush" but before he had parted the waters of the Red Sea (Moses 1:17, 25-26), and also before he had written the book of Genesis (Moses 1:40-41). Many students of the Bible recognize that the book of Genesis is a sort of introduction or preface to the Old Testament. Genesis means "the beginning," and in the book of Genesis we have an account of several beginnings. For instance, we find an account of the beginning or creation of the physical earth, the beginning of man and animals on the earth, the beginning of sin upon the earth, the beginning of races

and nations of men, the beginning of a covenant people, and the beginning of the house of Israel on the earth. All of these beginnings are introduced in the book of Genesis in order to establish a foundation and perspective for the remainder of the Old Testament. Thus, we may take the liberty to categorize Genesis as an introduction or preface to the Old Testament. In a similar manner it is apparent that even as Genesis is an introduction to the Old Testament, so likewise is the “visions of Moses” (Moses 1) an introduction or preface to the book of Genesis. It was experienced by Moses prior to his writing of Genesis and seems to have been given to prepare him for writing Genesis. For example, we read in the account of the “vision” that it was made known to Moses that God had created worlds without number, and that there were many inhabitants thereof. Furthermore, Moses was told that this creation was done by the deliberate action of the Almighty. After Moses had viewed with great precision the lands and the inhabitants of this earth, he was greatly moved—almost overwhelmed. Impressed with the magnitude of the creation, and with a somewhat philosophical turn of mind, Moses asked the Lord two searching questions: (1) “Why did you do it?” and (2) “How did you do it?” In our current Pearl of Great Price, the passage reads as follows: “Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?” (Moses 1:30). Those are two of the most fundamental questions of existence, and we must be impressed with the depth of Moses’s perception and presence of mind even to think to ask such things.

In answer to Moses’s first question as to the why of things, the Lord replied that he had made all these things because “this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). In other words, building worlds and populating them with people is the kind of work that God does. And why does he do it? For the salvation and exaltation of his children. In answer to the second question as to the “how” of things, Moses was informed that all things were done by the power of the Only Begotten, but that only an account of the creation of this world would be given to Moses. In the subsequent explanation he was told of the six creative periods of the formation of the earth. Thus, the information in the early chapters of Genesis actually seems to have been given to Moses in answer to these two specific questions: “Why?” and “How?” Answers are always more meaningful to us if we know what the questions are. These two basic questions are not to be found today in our current text of Genesis, but fortunately they have been made available to us through the visions of Moses as revealed to Joseph Smith. We cannot overestimate the value of Moses 1 as an introduction to the book of Genesis. Nor should we forget that it was received by Joseph Smith as part of his translation of the Bible.

Other parallels between Genesis and the first chapter of Moses may also be drawn. Just as the vision of these things was first given to Moses in preparation for his writing of Genesis, so it seems that in the last days an account of the same vision was revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith in preparation for his translation and revision of

Genesis. Another striking topic in Moses 1 is the interesting record of a face-to-face encounter that Moses had with Satan. Satan challenged Moses. The record states that Moses feared, and trembled, and saw the bitterness of hell. Satan advanced, rent (ranted) upon the ground, and cried with a loud voice! Moses was able to overcome Satan only by the strength he received through his faith in Jesus Christ. This is a dramatic episode that is entirely lost to the Bible text.

Moses 1:41 reads: “And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe.” We are fortunate that the Lord has given to us—“to as many as believe”—a knowledge of these things that happened so long ago. These and many other items are of great interest and worth to us and bear a solemn witness that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God, and they earmark the translation of the Bible as one of the greatest tangible evidences of the divine calling of Joseph Smith.

Some Unique Contributions of the Book of Abraham

The Book of Abraham, given by the gift and power of God through the prophet Joseph Smith, is a priceless treasure. The Abrahamic materials in the Bible (Genesis 11-25) are far more extensive than are found in the Book of Abraham. The Bible relates the story of Abraham from his early life in Ur of the Chaldees to his death. The period of Abraham's life related by the Book of Abraham is confined to his early life—from his dwelling in Ur of the Chaldees to the point of his entering Egypt with Sarah his wife (Genesis 11:27 through 12:13). Yet, the Book of Abraham makes some unique and precious contributions to our understanding of the doctrine.

This article will briefly summarize those unique contributions of the Book of Abraham found in no other scripture.

1. The Book of Abraham provides us with new insight into the nature of the Abrahamic covenant, that two-way promise between God and Abraham and his descendants (Abraham 2:9-11, 19). The Abrahamic covenant is in reality the gospel covenant. The Lord's part of the covenant agreement—that which Jehovah promised to Abraham—is largely recounted in chapter 2 of Abraham. There are promises of property (Abraham 2:6), posterity (Abraham 2:9; 3:14), priesthood (Abraham 1:18; 2:11), salvation (Abraham 2:10), and preservation of records (Abraham 1:31).

2. We learn of Abraham's active seeking for the priesthood (Abraham 1:2).

3. We learn also of Abraham's remarkable faithfulness in the face of apostasy around him, even as evil priests tried to take his life upon a pagan altar (Abraham 1:5-15). He was eventually rescued by an angel of the Lord. Through this episode, we gain a better understanding of the significance of the later episode in which Abraham was commanded by the Lord to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:1-19). We can better understand what Abraham must have been thinking and feeling when he went up to sacrifice Isaac. Both great Abrahamic tests threatened innocent life, both were contradictory in the extreme, both involved a dramatic rescue by the premortal Jesus Christ or his angelic agent, and both teach something about the doctrine of mercy. Surely these two tests conveyed to Abraham what few others could understand so well: the meaning of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior and what it took for God the Father to give his Only Begotten Son as an offering. How grateful we ought to be for Abraham 1 alone, a chapter that helps us appreciate the nature of Abrahamic tests and teaches us that while the righteous will face many contradictions and trials, each of these brings its own special instructions, rewards, and blessings.

The Book of Mormon declares that Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac was "a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5). The experience with Isaac undoubtedly helped Abraham to see the crucifixion from the Father's perspective. (Perhaps that is

why Hebrews 11:17 refers to Isaac as Abraham's "only begotten son" even though Abraham had already fathered Ishmael.)

4. As part of the right of priesthood, Abraham was also given special patriarchal records to preserve. These records contained "a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the starts, as they were made known unto the fathers" (Abraham 1:31). We learn of the greatest of the governing spheres of the endless universe, Kolob by name (see Abraham 3:3-4). It was revealed to the patriarch Abraham—a unique contribution in all of scripture. As fascinating as this knowledge of astronomy is, the far more important issue here may be why the information was given. The revelation helped teach Abraham (and thus all who would read his record) the greatness of Jesus Christ—the awesome and premier position of the Only Begotten Son relative to all other beings and objects in the Father's vast kingdom. By explaining to Abraham the truly divine grandeur of something that might engage the mind of any mortal on a clear night—the stars of creation—God could go on to teach the even greater significance of something that one pondering the heavens might consider—the role of the Lord of creation.

Abraham learned that just as one planet or star is greater than another until one comes to Kolob—the great governing one (Abraham 3:9)—so, too, one spirit is greater than another until one comes to Jesus Christ—the great governing one (Abraham 3:19, 24). A careful comparison of the characteristics of Kolob with the characteristics of Jesus Christ demonstrates that Kolob was, and is, a profound symbol of the Savior. We offer a few examples. Just as Kolob is "the great one" (Abraham 3:3), so Jesus Christ is "the Great I AM" (D&C 29:1). Just as Kolob is "the first creation" (Facsimile 2, figure 1), so Jesus Christ is the first creation—"the firstborn" (D&C 93:21) of our Father's most important creations, his children. Just as Kolob is the source of light for other stars and planets (see Facsimile 2, figure 1), so Jesus Christ is source of light for the immensity of space, including the sun, moon, stars, and earth (D&C 88:5-13). Truly, the Book of Abraham is a remarkable text, preserving a unique testimony of Jesus Christ written in the design of the physical universe and emphasizing again that all things do indeed testify of the Savior (see Moses 6:63).

5. We learn of our premortal existence and of the role of the Savior in that phase of our existence. We learn that the Savior was, indeed, "a God before he was born into this world." Abraham wrote of the leadership role that the Lord Jesus Christ took in the Creation: "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell" (Abraham 3:24). In a very real sense, the book of Abraham is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

6. Abraham was shown the eternal nature of the plan of salvation and was taught that the earth was purposely created as a schooling and testing ground in "all things" (Abraham 3:25). He learned that rich and everlasting rewards ("glory added upon their

heads forever and ever”) are reserved for those who remain faithful to the plan of the Father (Abraham 3:26). It is on this point that Abraham’s record makes another singular contribution to our understanding of premortality, clarifying what otherwise would be an obscure phrase found elsewhere in one verse of the New Testament. Only Abraham and Jude speak of our premortal condition as the “first estate” (Jude 1:6; Abraham 3:26). In that one verse, Jude speaks of certain angels not keeping their “first estate” and thus leaving “their own habitation.” But only from Abraham do we learn that these angels were in fact spirit children in the presence of God, that the habitation they left was God’s presence, that they departed because they chose to follow Satan rather than God and Jesus Christ, and that in this “first estate” God’s children lived as independent identities, exercising moral agency in the Father’s presence. Were it not for the book of Abraham, much of our basic understanding of the structure, sociality, and history of our premortal existence would be missing. Only Abraham’s remarkable record speaks of mortality’s probationary period as the “second estate,” given as an endowment to all those who kept their first estate (Abraham 3:26).

7. The keystone of the Father’s plan of salvation is the atonement, and the keystone of the atonement was the selection of the Son in premortality to be the executor, the one who put into operation all of the terms and conditions of the plan—the one who would be our Savior. According to the Book of Abraham, the selection of the Savior was the first major event in bringing to pass the Father’s plan: “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first” (Abraham 3:27). The prophet Joseph Smith taught that “at the first organization in heaven we were all present, and saw the Savior chosen and appointed and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it.” Abraham’s record is the earliest scriptural account we possess of this essential truth.

8. In the Book of Abraham we have clear expression of the creative efforts of the Gods in organizing and forming the earth and heavens (see Abraham 4:1). Such language assumes the existence of material before the creation of this earth began, and it corroborates the earlier statement in Abraham 3:24: “We will take of these materials, and we will make an earth.” The doctrine of creation thus taught in Abraham opposes the notion of a creation *ex nihilo* (literally “out of nothing”). It also fits perfectly with the original Hebrew verb *bara’*, used in the Hebrew Bible account of the creation. This Hebrew term and its Semitic cognates literally mean to form, to shape out, to fashion by cutting already existing material. In this connection the prophet Joseph taught:

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, “Doesn’t the Bible say he created the world?” And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word create came from the [Hebrew] word *baurau* which does not mean to create out of nothing; it

means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship (*HC, 6:308-9*).

9. The Book of Abraham makes another unique contribution to our understanding by explaining the physical location of the earth in the universe at the time this sphere was created, before the actions of Adam and Eve brought on the fall. Note the references to time in the following verse: “But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord’s time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning” (*Abraham 5:13*). President Joseph Fielding Smith stated that in this verse the Lord “revealed to Abraham that Adam was subject to Kolob’s time before his transgression.” According to President Brigham Young, *Abraham 5:13* also means that before the fall of Adam, the earth was near the very throne of God. But when the fall occurred, the earth literally fell or moved from the physical presence of God to its present position in our solar system. When all the effects of the fall of Adam are finally overcome, the earth will literally move back into the presence of God. Here are President Young’s words:

When the earth was framed and brought into existence and man was placed upon it, it was near the throne of our Father in heaven. . . . But when man fell, the earth fell into space, and took up its abode in this planetary system. . . . This is the glory the earth came from, and when it is glorified it will return again unto the presence of the Father, and it will dwell there, and these intelligent beings that I am looking at, if they live worthy of it, will dwell upon this earth (*JD, 17:143*).

The power by which the effects of Adam’s fall are overcome for all created things, including the earth, is the atonement of Jesus Christ (see *D&C 76:40-43; Moses 7:48-62*).

10. There are other contributions to our understanding made by the book of Abraham including a treatment of the premortal existence with the councils in heaven in which we all participated, and wherein Christ was chosen to be our Savior; an affirmation of the eternal nature of man’s intelligence; an account of the founding of Egypt by Ham’s daughter Egyptus; and a remarkable account of the Creation.

The Book of Abraham Facsimiles

The Facsimiles of the book of Abraham and their interpretations by Joseph Smith are accepted as part of the canonical text of the book of Abraham. They are scripture. The originals of the three facsimiles of the book of Abraham were part of the papyri Joseph Smith purchased from Michael Chandler in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835. As you read this article, please have the facsimiles from the book of Abraham available for your perusal.

An important part of the Joseph Smith papyri consisted of what is now called the “Book of Sensen” (also called the “Book of the Dead” or the “Book of Breathings”). The word *Sensen* (Egyptian *snsn*), which is often translated “breathing,” is a technical religious term that refers not merely to breathing but to a state of glorified existence to which the righteous deceased could look forward in the hereafter. To refer to the Book of Sensen as a “Breathing Permit” or “Breathing Text” does not really reflect the quality of life it was intended to secure for the deceased. This life included association with the gods and an anticipation of a future resurrection. A more appropriate interpretation for the word *Sensen* might be “breath of eternal life.” Facsimiles 1 and 3 were, respectively, the opening and closing vignettes (illustrations) of the Sensen text found on the Joseph Smith Papyri.

The Sensen text was intended to serve two purposes. First, prior to the death of an Egyptian it was an initiation guide, used to prepare him for entrance into the realm of the gods after death. Second, it was buried with the Egyptian who had died for his use on that final journey into the hereafter. The Sensen text was thought to protect, preserve, and enliven the body of the deceased, enabling the body to continue its relationship with the *ba* (spirit) and *ka* (the intelligence, essential nature, or life-force of the deceased). If the *ba* and the *ka* could not find expression through the mummy (continue their relationship with the body) or through statuary or portraits placed in the tomb or coffin—all in the likeness of the deceased—then the *ba* and the *ka* would cease to exist. Also, if the name of the deceased was not written and spoken by a descendant or priest in a temple, the *ba* and *ka* could not survive.

Let us consider the history of Egyptian funerary rituals which resulted in the practice of placing a copy of the Book of Sensen in the coffins of deceased Egyptians. Prior to considering this history, however, let us keep two dates in mind. First, the prophet Abraham is thought to have lived at a time in Old Testament history centering on approximately 2,000 BC. The second date to keep in mind is that on which the Joseph Smith papyri were actually written and buried in the coffin in Egypt in which they were later found by the Italian explorer Antonio Lebolo in 1831. The text of the papyrus indicated that its owner was Osiris Hor (Greek “Horus”), the son of Remni-qai and Qaikhebyt. It has been dated with reasonable assurance to AD 60 or a little later. The

name of the deceased owner of the papyrus (Horus) is found on the Sensen text (PJS X and PJS XI) and on Facsimile 3. It is the same name that appears in the line of hieroglyphs at the bottom of Facsimile 3 and above the left-hand of figure 5. The name Osiris Hor appears a total of six times in the Sensen text and twice in the Facsimile illustration. The context in which the name appears on the vignette provides an appropriate setting for an individual intent upon entering the presence of the gods (as the conventional interpretation of the illustration would suggest). The Sensen text reads “Osiris Hor declared to be justified.”

Egyptian funerary practices evolved throughout three thousand years of history in response to an increasing concern with the afterlife by an ever increasing number of Egyptians. In the fifth dynasty of the Old Kingdom (2467-2345 BC), lavish Pyramid Texts—inscriptions on the walls of burial chambers within pyramids—assured the happy afterlife of the deceased. These were later supplemented and replaced by coffin texts—afterworld texts written directly on coffins—during the First Intermediate period (2160-2040 BC). Later on, in the late kingdom period (747-343 BC), these coffin texts were supplemented and to some extent replaced by papyrus rolls containing texts from the Book of Sensen, buried inside the coffin with the mummy of the deceased.

The original of Facsimile 1 is part of the papyri fragments the Church acquired from the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. Actually only about two thirds of the Facsimile was recovered, as there is an irregular horizontal tear in the facsimile, and the upper third is missing. There are two incidental differences between our present Facsimile 1 in the book of Abraham and this original version from the Joseph Smith papyrus. For one thing, the original papyrus has hieroglyphic text on both sides of the facsimile and near the center, just above the arm of the priest. Our book of Abraham Facsimile 1 does not include this hieroglyphic text. Another change is that the book of Abraham version shows the priest standing behind both the legs of the individual on the altar and behind the lion couch. The original version on the papyrus show him standing (rather illogically) behind the legs of the victim but in front of the lion couch.

Even though Facsimile 3 was not found in those materials purchased by the Church from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it is believed it was a part of the Sensen scroll because other Sensen papyri contain vignettes similar to the scene shown in Facsimile 3.

Facsimile 2 was created from a disk-shaped amulet that was placed under the head of the deceased, and hence is known as a hypocephalus (literally meaning “under the head”). The originals of Facsimiles 2 and 3 were not part of the recovered fragments and are lost.

There have arisen four theories as to the nature and origin of the facsimiles and their interpretation as provided by the book of Abraham:

1. The non-Mormon theory is that the facsimiles belong to Egyptian funerary texts and have nothing whatsoever to do with Abraham. Though it may seem ironic, we in the Church would tend to agree with this “non-Mormon” theory (see the discussion below).

2. Another theory is that the facsimiles originated with Abraham and were drawn by him on the papyrus which also contained his original manuscript. This requires that the manuscripts date to the time of Abraham which is most unlikely.

3. The facsimiles originated with Abraham but what we have today is a copy, along with a copy of the original book of Abraham manuscript.

4. The most plausible theory is that the facsimiles are illustrations only loosely dependent on the text. They were book decorations or “illuminations” characteristic of the day the papyri were produced, using stock motifs of the art of the time and place the papyri were produced. The facsimiles thus are comparable to commonly used mediaeval illustrations in biblical manuscripts.

The community of professional Egyptologists will not recognize Joseph Smith’s interpretations of the facsimiles as competent scholarship. As a Church, we are certainly willing to acknowledge that Joseph was not an Egyptologist and that he did not render any kind of literal scholarly interpretation of the Facsimiles. We do enthusiastically testify that he was a prophet of God and that he used the facsimiles as a trigger or catalyst for receiving more revealed information about Abraham. Again, we see a phenomenon often repeated in church history. When the prophet Joseph received revelation from the Lord, the Lord seemed to often insist that there was present a “trigger” for that revelation. For example, that trigger for the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible was Joseph’s King James Version of the Bible. For the translation of the Book of Mormon, that trigger was the Urim and Thummim or Joseph’s seer stone. Less often, interestingly, it was the actual plates of the Book of Mormon. The actual receiving of the revelation in these cases was a true and unmitigated miracle. It would seem that the “triggers” for receiving the revelation somehow, symbolically, represented the Lord’s part in that process. Our understanding of the Lord’s use of these triggers or intermediate objects is incomplete.

When the Book of Abraham was published in the *Times and Seasons* at Nauvoo, Illinois in 1842, all three illustrations (Facsimiles 1-3) were included. It should be noted that when they were found, in their original context with the mummies and with the papyri, they had no connection with the Book of Abraham. They were included as illustrations for the Book of Abraham, however, as mentioned, because they were the catalysts for receiving further information about Abraham. Revelation received under these conditions led the Prophet to the conclusion that the vignettes were in fact related to the text of the Book of Abraham, a conclusion he never publicly questioned during his lifetime. The Book of Abraham is a true and authentic book. Though the Facsimiles may have been adapted out of context, they function as appropriate and meaningful

illustrations for our Book of Abraham in our day. Joseph's "interpretations" of the meanings of these facsimiles actually consist of the additional revelation about Abraham Joseph received using that particular trigger. We need not be beholden to the idea that Joseph's "interpretations" had anything to do with the meanings the Egyptians might have placed on the facsimiles.

Facsimiles 1 and 3 are located in the Book of Abraham in such a way as to appropriately illustrate the text of Abraham. For example, Facsimile 1, which shows the idolatrous priest attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice, illustrates the first chapter of Abraham. Facsimile 3 does not have the advantage of a text within the Book of Abraham to accompany, complement, and determine the sense in which this Egyptian scene is to be understood. It illustrates, according to Joseph's revelation about Abraham, Abraham teaching the principles of Astronomy in the Egyptian king's court. Facsimile 3 (in all editions before 1981) appears at the very end of the Book of Abraham, suggesting that it was intended to illustrate an additional but unpublished text of Abraham. Just such an addition to the Book of Abraham was promised by Joseph Smith. John Taylor became the editor of the *Times and Seasons* after the publications by the prophet Joseph of all we now have in the Book of Abraham. President Taylor encouraged the saints at that time to renew their subscriptions so that they would not miss the "further extracts." Facsimile 3 was published in May of 1842, unaccompanied by a text other than the brief "explanation" included with the facsimile. These "further extracts" may well have been anticipated to include the text which Facsimile 3 illustrates. Growing public hostility perhaps made it inadvisable to expose mankind to more scripture with the prospect that it would, if rejected, damn more lives than it would bless. Consequently the "further extracts" never saw the light of day.

History of the Coming Forth of The Pearl of Great Price

As discussed elsewhere (see especially the introductory commentary for section 112 in *Learning to Love the Doctrine and Covenants*) the year 1837 brought a spirit of apostasy and turmoil into the young Church in Kirtland, Ohio which threatened the church's very existence. It was under these conditions that Joseph received instruction: "God revealed to me that something new must be done for the salvation of his Church" (*HC* 2:489-90). As a result, in June 1837 the First Presidency set apart Heber C. Kimball, one of the Twelve, "by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, [with] prayer and laying on of hands . . . to preside over a mission to England." Orson Hyde, present at the meeting, was moved by the Spirit and asked if he could accompany Elder Kimball. The First Presidency set him apart as well (*Ibid.*). The two men headed the first foreign mission of the Church. It would prove, quite literally, to be the church's salvation. That mission would also result in the publishing of *The Pearl of Great Price*.

Missionary work went well in the British Isles. One of the chief means the missionaries used to get their message out was the publication of pamphlets and newsletters. From 1838 to 1848 quite a number came off the press and were eagerly read by the saints and other interested people. Many of these were available to the new converts in England from 1838 to the mid-1840s. However, many of these began to disappear from England, usually by being placed in the trunks of those British saints leaving for Zion. By the late 1840s there was a serious dearth of gospel learning materials available to the English saints. In 1848, the new mission president, Orson Pratt, saw that the British saints needed study materials focusing on church history and doctrine, and his apostolic associate Franklin D. Richards concurred.

President Pratt and Elder Richards began working hard to overcome the deficit (Peterson, H. Donl, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1987], 14). They were motivated largely by the pleas of the British saints to make the "pearls" of the restoration available to them. In response, President Pratt wrote several pamphlets and tracts, which he then printed and distributed. He, along with Elder Richards, admonished the saints to read these and pass them along to members and nonmembers alike. These two brethren also encouraged other missionaries to write and print materials. For example, Elder Pratt wrote to John Davis, a Welsh convert, "I wish you to take every method of increasing the circulation of the publications of the Church, by offering inducements to agents and by lessening the price in proportion to the increased circulation" (as quoted in Peterson, H Donl, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and Commentary*, 10). Elder Davis went to work on the assignment and within a few months was able to report success. As a result, Elders Pratt and Richardson wrote him again: "We are very thankful to learn that the circulation of the tracts is producing so great and good results in the principality, and

we pray that the printed word both in the English and Welsh languages may run far and wide, have free course and be glorified in turning many from the error of their ways unto the living and true God” (*Ibid.*). The saints were so enthusiastic about possessing their own material that in some branches they formed a “Circulating Tract Society Fund” for the purpose of purchasing and trading pamphlets and tracts. One enthusiastic missionary, Elder Kelsey, estimated that the total demand would exceed twenty-five thousand copies (*Millennial Star*, 1851, 34). Though his estimation may have been somewhat inflated, Kelsey’s statement nonetheless indicates the hunger the British saints had for the doctrines of the Restoration.

Under President Pratt’s direction, the saints developed an efficient system of distribution that allowed newly published materials to reach thousands. The leaders printed extra copies of their material and appointed conference agents whom they urged to “use every exertion to get them introduced into the principal stationers shops throughout the kingdom, and exposed for sale” (*Millennial Star*, 1850, 201). The shops proved a good outlet for the church materials, giving them a wide exposure. An additional boon was that they provided much-needed income for the elders (see Whittaker, David J. “Orson Pratt: Prolific Pamphleteer.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 3 [1982], 29).

Late in 1850, Brigham Young recalled Elder Pratt to duties in Utah, assigning Elder Richards to take Elder Pratt’s place as mission president. Orson Pratt left the mission field on February 1, 1851. By 1851 there were many members of the Church in the British Isles, more in fact than there were in the Salt Lake Valley (In 1850 Great Britain claimed nearly thirty-one thousand Latter-day Saints while all of Salt Lake Valley, headquarters for the Church, boasted of only slightly over six thousand members. The worldwide membership of the Church then was about fifty-seven thousand, meaning that over half of the members lived in the British Isles, and Elder Richards felt they needed church literature to encourage and uplift them.

President Richards did not let up on their common goal of getting church materials into the hands of the British saints. In fact, on the very day that Elder Pratt left England, President Richards sent a letter to his uncle, Levi Richards, then serving in Swansea, south of Liverpool, informing him of further publishing plans and enlisting his help. That letter contains the earliest known mention of his intent to publish material that would become *The Pearl of Great Price*.

President Richards told his uncle that he wanted to pull together the choicest items from tracts, books, newspapers, and other church publications. His objective, he said, was to issue “a collection of revelations, prophecies &c., in a tract form of a character not designed to pioneer our doctrines to the world, so much as for the use of the elders and saints to arm and better qualify them for their service in our great war” (*Ibid.*, 11). Unlike many of the tracts written by the missionaries, this one would include only material produced by or in association with Joseph Smith.

President Richards felt strongly about the power of tracts and pamphlets in reaching people with the message of the Restoration. At the British General Conference in October 1850, he declared, “The press is the most powerful and prolific means of spreading the knowledge of truth. Each book, pamphlet, or tract, is a preacher, exhorter, or defender of the faith; testifying of the things which we know, and which we most assuredly believe” (*Millennial Star*, 1850, 348). In the present case, he had a unique design in mind, a new pamphlet that would be a preacher and exhorter to the saints themselves. He gathered material from church publications brought to England by missionaries, including items from the *Lectures on Faith*, the Doctrine and Covenants, and a broadside published in Kirtland in 1836 or 1837 containing Joseph Smith’s inspired rendering of the Olivet Prophecy (now Joseph Smith–Matthew).

By May 8, 1851, Elder Richards had gathered all the pieces he wanted to include and was preparing them for publication. Significantly, by that date he had determined that the name of the collection would be “The Pearl of Great Price.” He enlisted the help of his Uncle Levi in preparing the material, and they worked on the project over the next few weeks. By May 15, Elder Richards was ready to announce the forthcoming publication. In the *Millennial Star* he wrote, “The Pearl of Great Price is the title of a new work which will soon be ready for sale, containing 64 pages on beautiful paper of superior quality, and on new type of a larger size than heretofore issued from this office.” In the press release he repeated the purpose for which he designed the book: “This little work though not particularly adapted nor designed as a pioneer of our faith to unbelievers of present revelation, will be a source of much instruction and edification to many thousands of the saints” (Richards, Franklin D., *Millennial Star*, 15 July 1851, 216-17).

President Richards’ words reveal his enthusiasm for the Pearl, and, as history has shown, it was not misplaced. In fact, he may not have been enthusiastic enough. The little book has influenced not thousands but millions. He ran another press release on June 15. In it, to whet the spiritual appetites of his readers, he listed the content of the volume. These can be reviewed in the table of contents of the first edition, as reviewed below.

On July 11, the little volume came off the press, and it sold well. It would be inaccurate, however, to say that it received more attention or adulation than other tracts being produced at the time. In fact, compared to the amount of press received by the LDS hymnal, published just a few months later, its entrance into the world was modest indeed. In the main, the work was viewed as just one insightful publication among many, but with a slightly different mission, a mission to the members. Even Elder Richards, once the volume was printed, said little more about it (Peck, David R. “A History of the Book of Moses to Its Canonization” [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, unpublished Master’s Thesis, 2002], 81).

Today the Pearl of Great Price does not have a preface, but the first edition in 1851 included the following preface:

PREFACE

The following compilation has been induced by the repeated solicitations of several friends of the publisher, who are desirous to be put in possession of the very important articles contained therein. Most of the Revelations composing this work were published at early periods of the Church, when the circulation of its journals was so very limited as to render them comparatively unknown at present, except to a few who have treasured up the productions of the Church with great care from the beginning. A small portion of this work has never before appeared in print; and altogether it is presumed, that true believers in the Divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, will appreciate this little collection of precious truths as a Pearl of Great Price that will increase their ability to maintain and to defend the holy faith by becoming possessors of it.

Although not adapted, nor designed, as a pioneer of the faith among unbelievers, still it will commend itself to all careful students of the scriptures, as detailing many important facts which are therein only alluded to, or entirely unmentioned, but consonant with the whole tenor of the revealed will of God; and, to the beginner in the Gospel, will add confirmatory evidence of the rectitude of his faith, by showing him that the doctrines and ordinances thereof are the same as were revealed to Adam for his salvation after his expulsion from the garden, and the same that he handed down and caused to be taught to his generations after him, as the only means appointed of God by which the generations of men may regain His presence.

Nor do we conceive it possible for any unprejudiced person to arise from a careful perusal of this work, without being deeply impressed with a sense of the Divine calling, and holy ordination, of the man by whom these revelations, translations, and narrations have been communicated to us. As impervious as the minds of men may be at present to these convictions, the day is not far distant when sinners, as well as Saints, will know that Joseph Smith was one of the greatest men that ever lived upon the earth, and that under God he was the Prophet and founder of the dispensation of the fulness of times, in which will be gathered together into one all things which are in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

Franklin D. Richards

15, Wilton Street, Liverpool

July 11th, 1851

The materials contained in the 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price was organized differently than that which is found in our present edition. There follows a

Table of Contents of the first edition. The brackets following each entry contain the reference as to where the material is now found in church literature.

Contents	Page
Extracts from the Prophecy of Enoch, containing also a Revelation of the Gospel unto our father Adam, after he was driven out from the Garden of Eden. Revealed to Joseph Smith, December, 1830 [Moses 6:43-7:69]	1
The words of God, which he spake unto Moses at the time when Moses was caught up into an exceeding high mountain, and he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure His presence. Revealed to Joseph Smith, June 1830 [Moses 1:1-5:16, part; 5:19-40; 8:13-30]	8
The Book of Abraham—A Translation of some Ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the Catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon Papyrus. Translated from the Papyrus by Joseph Smith [Abraham 1-5]	19
An Extract from a Translation of the Bible—being the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, commencing with the last verse of the twenty-third chapter. By the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, Joseph Smith [JS-M]	30
A Key to the Revelations of St. John. By Joseph Smith [D&C 77]	33
A Revelation and Prophecy by the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, Joseph Smith. Given December 25th, 1832 [D&C 87]	35
Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith—Containing an Account of the first Visions and Revelations which he received; also of his discovering and obtaining the plates of gold which contain the Record of Mormon—its translation—his baptism, and ordination by the Angel—Items of Doctrine from the Revelations and Commandments of the Church [JS-H]	36
From the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church—Commandment to the Church concerning Baptism [D&C 20:71, 37,72-74]	48
The Duties of the Members after they are received by Baptism [D&C 20:67-68]	49

Method of administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper [D&C 20:75-79]	ib.
The Duties of the Elders, Priests, Teachers, Deacons, and Members of the Church of Christ [D&C 20:38-44; 107:11; 20:45-49, 70, 80]	ib.
On Priesthood [D&C 107:1-10, 12-20]	50
The Calling and Duties of the Twelve Apostles (D&C 107:23, 33)	51
The Calling and Duties of the Seventy [D&C 107:34, 93-100]	52
Extract from a Revelation given July, 1830 [D&C 27:5-18]	ib.
Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [D&C 20:1-36]	53
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A Fac-Simile from the Book of Abraham.	No. 1	18	
Ditto	ditto	No. 2	24
Ditto	ditto	No. 3	29

In summary the original Pearl of Great Price contained:

1. the preface and most of the first six chapters of Genesis from Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible;
2. the entire five chapters from the writings of Abraham;
3. Joseph Smith's translation of Matthew 24;
4. excerpts from five sections of the Doctrine and Covenants;
5. extracts from Joseph Smith's history;
6. the Articles of Faith;
7. the poem entitled "truth"; and
8. the three facsimiles from the writings of Abraham.

As one studies the Table of Contents of the original Pearl of Great Price, it is seen that Elder Richards carefully selected material that would be of great worth to members of the Church.

Most of the items contained in the first edition had already been printed, but not in a form easily accessible to the British saints. Of those items never before printed was

what is now Moses 4:14-19 and 22-25 and, interestingly, Joseph Smith's prophecy on war, now D&C 87.

The First American Edition

The book remained largely unknown in America over the next quarter of a century. Orson Pratt, however, was well aware of it and in 1877 sent a copy to a number of General Authorities, including John Taylor, then acting president of the Church. In the letter Elder Pratt sent with the book, he noted its value and volunteered to make an American edition. Elder Pratt was church historian at the time, and he was in a good position to do the editing and see that the work was published. John Taylor approved the idea and set the apostle to work.

Elder Pratt made only three substantial changes:

1. He removed the preface. President Richards had written it primarily for a British audience, so it did not fit the book's new American format.

2. He produced the book of Moses. He did this by combining and placing in chronological order the Pearl's first two original entries and then adding missing material, using the Inspired Version of the Bible. Having assisted Joseph Smith with the original materials, he was convinced that the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints had printed an accurate copy of the text and was, therefore, willing to use it. Joseph's inspired revision of the Bible had been published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1867 and was the source book for these several changes by Orson Pratt. This not only gave the book a text differing in some places from the 1851 Pearl of Great Price, but it also supplied many passages that were lacking in the 1851 edition. One interesting note is that the RLDS publication committee who worked on the Reorganites' 1867 publication of the JST produced a few changes from the original manuscript of the JST. These were carried over by Orson Pratt into our Pearl of Great Price. Some may think it strange that Elder Orson Pratt would copy the Moses material from the RLDS Church's 1867 printing of the JST, but the evidence is clear that he did. The 1878 Pearl of Great Price contains the precise text of the RLDS Inspired Version, including the identical variants and spelling in which the JST differs from the original manuscripts. Nearly all of the changes which the RLDS publication committee made in the original manuscripts of the JST are still found in our present text of the Book of Moses. Two examples of this are presented:

Moses 7:29

OT2 And Enoch said unto the heavens how is it that thou canst weep

OT3 And Enoch said unto the heavens how is it that thou canst weep

RLDS 1867 Inspired Version And Enoch said unto the Lord. How is it that thou canst weep.

Note: The manuscripts use the word “heavens.” The RLDS publication committee substituted “Lord.” This has been carried over into our current Book of Moses through the 1878 Orson Pratt edition.

Moses 1:21

OT2 And Moses receiving strength called upon God saying In the name of Jesus Christ depart hence Satan

OT3 And Moses received strength and called upon God in the name of his Son, saying to Satan depart hence

RLDS 1867 Inspired Version And Moses received strength and called upon God in the name of the Only Begotten, saying to Satan, Depart hence

Note: The RLDS substituted the term “Only Begotten,” which has been carried over into our current Book of Moses.

3. Orson Pratt added the revelation on eternal marriage (now section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants). Because of antagonism between the Church and the U.S. Federal Government over polygamy, the Brethren felt it would be good to have the revelation placed in the Pearl as well as in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Interest in publishing these revelations was heightened by the approach of the church’s fiftieth anniversary. The leaders wanted to use the moment to take care of important church business and to affirm its connection with the past. Over the course of the next year, the brethren discussed the need to reorganize the First Presidency (which had not functioned since the death of Brigham Young in August 1877) and to canonize the new revelations placed in the Doctrine and Covenants and also the Pearl of Great Price. Orson Pratt was assigned to prepare both for presentation at general conference. He did little more than make a few editing changes to the Pearl.

The 2:00 PM session of general conference held October 10, 1880, opened with church business. Church leaders moved three items forward: the congregation sustained the reorganized First Presidency with John Taylor as president, voted to accept the revelations added to the Doctrine and Covenants, and accepted the Pearl of Great Price as scripture. According to the minutes of the conference:

President George Q. Cannon said: “I hold in my hand the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and also the book The Pearl of Great Price, which books contain revelations of God. In Kirtland, the Doctrine and Covenants in its original form, as first printed, was submitted to the officers of the Church and the members of the Church to vote upon. As there have been additions made to it by the publishing of revelations which were not contained in the original edition, it has been deemed wise to submit these books and their contents as from God, and binding upon us as a people and as a Church.”

President Joseph F. Smith said: “I move that we receive and accept the revelations contained in these books as revelations from God to The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to all the world.” The motion was seconded and sustained by unanimous vote of the whole conference (Peterson, H. Donl, *The Pearl of Great Price: A History and a Commentary*, 22-23).

With the unanimous vote of the conference, the Church received the Pearl as its fourth standard work. However, the formation of the small book was not yet finished. Indeed, it would go through a number of revisions and refinements before it arrived at its present shape. Below is a simplified sketch of how it evolved into the work we know today.

An early move concerned the Articles of Faith. The 1880 conference had sustained the revelations contained in the Pearl, but a question arose about the Articles. Though many felt the power of inspiration behind them, the statements were not technically revelations in the sense of other portions of the book. In order to give them official status, in the October general conference in 1890, Franklin D. Richards read all thirteen, and the Brethren then asked that the saints accept them as scripture. The conference sustained their desires.

In 1900, both format and content underwent major changes. The First Presidency called Dr. James E. Talmage, then teaching at the University of Utah, to make the modifications. He began by deleting any of the material already in the Doctrine and Covenants and the poem “Truth,” written by John Jaques, which had been the last entry in the former editions. That piece, it should be noted, was later set to music and became the hymn “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” Talmage then divided the books into chapters and verses and added numerous cross-references. After he was satisfied, he submitted his suggested changes to the Church Reading Committee, made up of other General Authorities, and they approved the work. The First Presidency presented the changes for sustaining in the October 1902 general conference.

The next change came twenty years later, again under the hand of Dr. Talmage. By that time he had served as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for nine years. In 1920 President Heber J. Grant appointed him as chair of a committee whose task was to make revisions to all the standard works. Work on the Pearl began in 1921. Elder Talmage divided it into double columns and created an index. This edition became the standard for the next fifty-five years.

In the April 1976 conference, the First Presidency asked the saints to accept two additional revelations into the canon. These were Joseph Smith’s vision of the celestial kingdom and Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the redemption of the dead. Both recommendations were sustained and placed in the Pearl just ahead of the Articles of Faith. In 1978, the Brethren organized a Church Scripture Committee and assigned them the task of making it easier for the saints to use all the standard works together. The committee was also asked to recommend other necessary changes. In June 1979, in connection with publishing a new edition of the King James Version of the Bible, the

Brethren decided to remove the two recently added revelations from the Pearl and make them a part of the Doctrine and Covenants (sections 137 and 138).

Over the next two years, the Church prepared a new edition of the other three standard works. To the Pearl they added a preface, lacking since the 1851 version, and changed the titles of three of the four books. The “Book of Moses” became “Selections from the Book of Moses,” clearly indicating that Moses wrote more than is reproduced here. The “Writings of Joseph Smith 1” became “Joseph Smith–Matthew,” and “The Writings of Joseph Smith 2” became “Joseph Smith–History.” In addition, because of the deterioration of the book of Abraham facsimiles in earlier publications, the new edition contained photo prints of the originals found in the 1842 *Times and Seasons*. The scripture committee created new headings for each chapter and made minor textual changes “to bring the text into conformity with earlier documents” (“Introductory Note to the Pearl of Great Price”). The Quorum of the Twelve approved all the revisions suggested by the Scripture Publications Committee, on which some of them served. With those changes, the Pearl of Great Price reached its present form.

It is noteworthy that this work shows the Spirit working through the Lord’s servants in response to the desire of the saints for more of the meat of the gospel. To this day, the Pearl of Great Price continues to be a work “not particularly adapted nor designed as a pioneer of our faith to nonbelievers” but for those who have strong testimonies (Richards, Franklin D., *Millennial Star*, 15 July 1851, 217). For them, it “will increase their ability to maintain and to defend the holy faith by becoming possessors of it” (“Preface to the Pearl of Great Price,” 1851).

The Joseph Smith Papyri and their Relationship to the Book of Abraham

Let us first review the story of the acquisition of the papyri from which the book of Abraham was translated that is most commonly read and accepted by members of the Church:

In 1831 Antonio Lebolo, a “celebrated french traveler,” and a resident of northwestern Italy’s Piedmont region, after obtaining appropriate governmental approval, employed 433 men for four months and two days and excavated a catacomb (an underground burial site consisting of tunnels and rooms) in Egypt, near the place where once stood the renowned city of Thebes. On June 7, 1831, Lebolo entered the catacomb and obtained eleven mummies in sarcophagi or coffins. While transporting his mummies home in 1832 he put in at Trieste in Italy and, after a ten day illness, he expired. Before his death, he had drawn up a will and had named his Irish nephew Michael H. Chandler to inherit his new treasure. He thought his nephew was in Ireland, and thus he sent the whole package to Dublin. Meanwhile, Michael Chandler had immigrated to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania a few years previously. Chandler’s friends forwarded the mummies to New York, where they were received at the Customs House in the winter or spring of 1833.

Chandler went to the Customs House in New York and claimed his peculiar legacy. He discovered, when he opened the sarcophagi, that in connection with two of the bodies were two rolls of papyrus. Two or three other papyri fragments were found in association with some of the other mummies. These latter fragments contained astronomical calculations, epitaphs, etc.

Shortly after returning from New York to Philadelphia, Chandler made arrangements to display them in various arcades and museums in the city, charging an entrance fee of 25 cents per adult and 12½ cents per child. After several weeks of displaying the mummies in Philadelphia, Chandler took the mummies to Baltimore, Maryland, where they were well received. Later that summer he displayed the mummies in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Soon after receiving the mummies Chandler sold several of them to various buyers in Philadelphia. He had retained only six of the original eleven mummies by the time he traveled to Baltimore.

By the spring of 1835 Chandler’s original cache of eleven mummies had dwindled to four. After two years, Chandler, anxious to terminate his transient life-style, had advertised in a Cleveland newspaper both the Egyptian exhibit and the fact that the mummies were for sale. At each presentation he had inquired if there was anyone who could read Egyptian hieroglyphs. Several times Joseph Smith’s name was mentioned, mostly in derision, as one who professed to read Egyptian writings, since the plates of gold were claimed to be engraved in that ancient language. With the center of the

Church just a few miles east of Cleveland, Chandler made arrangements to exhibit his unusual display at Kirtland. During the last part of June and the first week of July 1835, Michael Chandler arrived and stayed in Kirtland. He brought with him four of his Egyptian mummies and the two rolls of Egyptian papyri covered with hieroglyphic figures.

The foregoing account of the finding of the mummies and papyri and their acquisition by Michael Chandler is based on account written by Oliver Cowdery after he had interviewed Michael Chandler (*HC*, 2:348-51). As mentioned above, it is the account most often read and accepted by members of the Church. It contains, however, some significant errors. A more accurate account has been related by John Gee, an Egyptologist at the Brigham Young University. Professor Gee's account follows:

When Napoleon invaded Egypt in July of 1798, he brought with him an army of French academics including mathematicians, anthropologists, linguists, political scientists, chemists, archaeologists, and others. They began to investigate and publish all that was interesting to science in that singular country. These publications, including a major collection of writings in French consisting of eighteen volumes and published under the title of *Description de l' Egypte* (Description of Egypt), resulted in widespread interest in Egypt, especially in Europe.

After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in June of 1815, one of Napoleon's soldiers, an Italian from the Piedmont area named Antonio Lebolo, had to fend for himself. Stigmatized in his home country for fighting with the French, he abandoned his wife and child and left for Egypt. There he was employed by another Italian from the Piedmont area, a Bernadino Drovetti who had also fought for Napoleon and who had previously served as the French consul general to Egypt. Drovetti employed Lebolo as his agent, sending him on errands to scout for antiquities to loot. At this time, Egyptian archaeology was indistinguishable from tomb robbery. Europeans were, at that time, anxious to acquire Egyptian antiquities for themselves, and men like Lebolo and Drovetti were willing to supply them. The business of robbing tombs for antiquities was characterized by rivalry, dirty dealing, and bribery, and those involved were uniformly unsavory scoundrels.

Among the loot acquired from various tombs, Lebolo kept a small personal collection that he took with him when he retired from the tomb robbery business. In 1822, he returned to his native town or Castellamonte in Italy with a black mistress and a collection of eleven mummies. Upon his untimely death in on February 19, 1830, he passed his collection of Egyptian antiquities to his son, Pietro, who, to earn money, sold them on consignment to Albano Oblasser to sell in America to whomever would purchase them for whatever price they might fetch.

When the mummies arrived in New York, they were purchased in 1833 by one Michael Chandler, who had borrowed a good deal of money to do so. Chandler had

hopes of getting rich, and upon opening the coffins to see what the mummies contained, he discovered that there was something indeed with the mummies. He had supposed or hoped it might be some diamonds or valuable metal, and he was no little chagrined when he saw, to his disappointment, no such valuables. On opening the coffins, he discovered that in connection with two of the bodies, there was something rolled up with a kind of linen, saturated with bitumen, which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyrus. Two or three other small pieces of papyrus were also found which contained astronomical calculations, epitaphs, etc. Chandler resolved to earn a living displaying the mummies and the papyri as part of an Egyptian freak show, much like P. T. Barnum did a few years later. Chandler eventually tired of life on the road and, needing to repay the money he had borrowed to purchase the mummies, decided to sell the collection. After passing through Cleveland, his circuit took him through Kirtland, Ohio. At that time he had only four of the original eleven mummies remaining. Finding a willing buyer in Joseph Smith, Chandler sold the mummies in July 1835 for \$2400 and settled down to farming.

Even though Joseph was not aware of the exact content of the papyri at the time of the purchase, he apparently was impressed by the Lord to raise the considerable amount of money being asked for them. The Kirtland saints became anxious to purchase the mummies and the papyri from Chandler. The \$2,400 was a large sum of money, especially when the completion of the temple was so pressing. Two of the saints contributed \$800 each, and many other saints with fewer resources contributed the \$800 balance. Joseph Smith was to translate the papyri and thus was given control of the antiquities.

After the purchase Joseph Smith, in company of his scribes, commenced to translate some of the hieroglyphs. Joseph wrote:

With W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt. . . . Truly we can say, the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth (*HC*, 2:236).

Joseph described the papyrus which contained the record of Abraham as being “beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and a small part red, ink or paint [called rubrics], in perfect preservation” (*HC*, 2:348-51). Joseph later indicated that in addition to the writings of Abraham, the papyri contained a record kept of Joseph in Pharaoh’s Court in Egypt.

Joseph began to translate the papyri in July of 1835. During that month the present text of the Book of Abraham (five chapters) was translated. During that same month the Prophet mentions working on a project that he called an “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.” He never explained his methods or his objectives for that project, and it was never mentioned again after July 1835. Joseph left off translating in August 1835

to visit the saints in Michigan. Translation did not commence again until October 1, 1835. The last record of any translation was in November 1835.

While Joseph revised the translation preparatory to its publication in 1842, there is no evidence that he worked on the translation itself after 1835.

There is no evidence that Joseph used the Urim and Thummim in translating the Book of Abraham. Indeed, the Urim and Thummim were probably surrendered to Moroni years previously. Warren Parrish, one of the scribes involved in the translation during late 1835, stated, "I have set by his side and penned down the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven." Joseph clearly regarded the Book of Abraham as divine revelation to the saints.

Subsequently the mummies and the papyri were transported to Missouri in the summer of 1838 and then to Illinois in the fall of 1838 with the rest of the saints.

In 1842 over six years after his last known work on the papyri, Joseph finally had time to again turn his attentions to the papyri and his translation of them. Three installments of the Book of Abraham were published in the *Times and Seasons* beginning in March of 1842—all containing facsimiles, although only the first two installments contained text. Abraham 1:1-2:18 was published in the March 1, 1842 edition; Abraham 2:19-5:21 in the March 16, 1842 edition; and Facsimile 3 in the May 16, 1842 edition. Elder John Taylor indicated in the February 1, 1843 edition of the *Times and Seasons* that Joseph Smith planned to publish more of the translation. However, Joseph's martyrdom and the events leading up to it prevented this. The Prophet had indicated that writings from Joseph, the son of Jacob, were also found among these papyri (*HC*, 2:235), but he did not publish any translation of those writings. The facsimiles accompanying the publication of the Book of Abraham were made to size by Reuben Hedlock, the former elders' quorum president in Kirtland. The Book of Abraham was also published in the *Millennial Star*, a publication of the British Mission beginning in July of 1842. It was later included in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price in 1851.

Further installments of the Book of Abraham were promised but never published. Anson Call in his journal said that in 1838 the Book of Abraham took about two hours to read out loud, which would seem to mean that it was approximately four times the length of the published version.

After the death of the prophet Joseph in June of 1844, the four mummies and the papyri were entrusted to the care of Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's widowed mother. She exhibited the mummies and the papyri until her death and charged the going rate of 25 cents. The Prophet's mother died on May 14, 1856. Meanwhile Emma had remarried; her new husband was Lewis C. Bidamon. After Lucy Mack's death the mummies and papyri reverted to the care of the Prophet's widow, Emma Smith Bidamon, who, within two weeks of the death of the Prophet's mother, sold the mummies and the records to a Mr. Abel Combs, a traveling salesman. Mr. Combs sold

two of the mummies with some papyri to the St. Louis Museum in St. Louis, Missouri, in the summer of 1856 (Combs apparently retained for himself some of the fragments of papyri). There they remained until July of 1863 when they were sold to the Wood Museum which later moved to Chicago. The fate of the other two mummies is unknown.

The mummies and papyri remained in the Wood Museum in Chicago until the great Chicago fire of October 1871. It is believed that all of the papyri which were in Chicago at that time were destroyed.

For a long time it was felt that all of the papyri were destroyed, but it was not so. There remained the fragments of papyri which Mr. Combs did not sell to the St. Louis Museum. These were willed at his death to his housekeeper, Charlotte Benecke Weaver. These ended up in the possession of the housekeeper's daughter, a Mrs. Alice Heusser of Brooklyn, New York. Alice Heusser approached Albert M. Lythgoe of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City with the papyri in 1918, but Lythgoe decided that the museum was not interested. In the spring of 1946, however, the Metropolitan had a change of heart due, in large measure to the efforts of Ludlow S. Bull. Bull had studied Egyptology at Yale University and he was appointed assistant curator in the Department of Egyptian Art in 1922. He was made associate curator six years later. Bull maintained an interest in the papyri and tried in 1946 to ascertain what had happened to them. By the time Bull returned to acquire the papyri for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alice Heusser had died, so Bull negotiated with her widower, Edward Heusser. These were purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

In 1967 New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art was under the dynamic direction of Thomas Hoving. Hoving wanted the biggest and the best of everything. To get the funds for the biggest and the best, he needed to get rid of the less desirable of the museum's pieces and instructed the various departments to rid themselves of the least historical pieces. This included the Egyptian galleries, which had a problem: What should they do with the Mormon papyri? Who would want them? Maybe the Mormons would want them back.

Opportunity presented itself in the form of Aziz S. Atiya, a Coptic scholar on the faculty of the University of Utah. On a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to research Coptic objects in its collections, Atiya was approached by Henry Fischer, the curator of the Department of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan, with a delicate matter. Did he think that the Mormons might be interested in the papyri? Would he approach the Mormons and find out? He would. Atiya approached N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency of the Church. Negotiations began in earnest in 1966, but it took a year to get the matter approved through the museum's de-acquisition process. The transfer was then arranged for on November 27, 1967. An anonymous donor gave a gift to the museum and in exchange the museum gave the Church the papyri.

The newspapers came up with a slightly colored version of this story which was released to members of the Church. This version maintained that Dr. Atiya was in the museum searching through some manuscripts. He found a file which contained Facsimile No. 1, which he recognized from his reading of the Pearl of Great Price. He searched further and “saw more pieces of papyri stacked together and suspected that Providence had assisted” (Jay M. Todd, “Egyptian Papyri Rediscovered,” *Improvement Era*, January 1968, 14).

The file obtained from the Metropolitan Museum of Art consisted of ten fragments of papyri and a bill of sale transferring “four Egyptian mummies with the records of them” from the Prophet’s widow to Mr. A. Combs.

The Church published an article about the fragments of papyri obtained from the Metropolitan Museum of Art two months after their acquisition, in February of 1968. In that article the fragments were categorized and numbered, I to XI. The numbering scheme which we use today for the fragments today goes back to that original article.

There was likely significant deterioration and fragmentation of the papyri at the time of their purchase by the Church in 1835. In 1835 the papyri had been removed from their sarcophagi, and there was no way to associate a particular papyrus with its mummy. During the few years in which the Church possessed the papyri, while some remained in roll form, there was also significant fragmentation and parts became separated into sheets. Some of these were mounted on paper and preserved under glass.

Let us go back to 1835 and compare what Joseph might have had in his possession then with what was delivered to the Church in 1967 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is believed that the materials that came into possession of the Church in 1835 consisted of four mummies and at least four separate papyrus scrolls or rolls, and a hypocephalus. The papyri of which we are now aware include:

1. One roll contains a Book of Breathings, a sort of abbreviated Book of the Dead, that belonged to a man named Hor the son of Usirwer. The existing papyrus fragments which belonged to this roll include fragments I, XI, X (arranged in that order from right to left). Facsimiles 1 and 3 were apparently described as being part of this roll. An Egyptologist who saw this papyrus in the Wood Museum, Gustavus Seyffarth, described the open line of the text on the scroll as “Beginning of the Book of . . .” Unfortunately his description does not allow us to determine exactly which book was included.

Critics of the Church have assumed that this Book of Breathings must be the manuscript from which the Book of Abraham was translated. They give as evidence the fact that illustrations on this manuscript (Facsimiles 1 and 3) were included in the Book of Abraham. Therefore, they conclude that Joseph must have used this manuscript for his “translation” of the book of Abraham. This manuscript contains two damaged lines of hieratic (a form of ancient Egyptian writing consisting of abridged forms of

hieroglyphics, used by the priests in their records) writing (only eighteen characters in all), and there is no reason to believe that it had anything to do with the Book of Abraham.

2. Parts of a Book of the Dead belonging to Tsemminis, daughter of Eshkons. The existing papyrus fragments which belong to this roll include fragments VII, VIII, V, VI, IV, and II (arranged in order from right to left) along with papyrus IX whose miscellaneous fragments belong throughout the roll. Twenty-seven chapters from the Book of the Dead are still contained in the remaining fragments. This roll seems to have contained a vignette of a tree, a man, and a woman with a snake standing on its legs with its head in the woman's ear. This is consistent with eyewitness descriptions. This is likely the papyrus that was described in 1835 as the one from which "some linguists say they can decipher [the symbolic number] 1336" written in red ink. Dr. Gee suggests that this number 1336 probably represents is likely the result of a mistaken attempt to translate a hieratic phrase written in red ink which Dr. Gee has translated as "words said by."

3. Parts of a Book of the Dead belonging to a woman named Neferirtnoub. Fragment III was from this scroll. From early accounts this roll was likely described as "a roll as [like] No. 1 [the Tsemminis roll], filled with hieroglyphics, rudely executed" and found on a female mummy.

4. Joseph apparently once possessed a Book of the Dead belonging to a man named Amenhotep. No fragments were discovered from this scroll. It is known only from a poor quality partial copy which was made and found among the so called Kirtland Egyptian Papers. The copy suggests that this scroll also contained at least parts of the Book of the Dead. Other parts have thus far resisted identification with any known Egyptian text.

5. Joseph also possessed The "hypocephalus" of a man named Sheshonq. The Church does not have this in its possession. We have it only in the form of Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham. Hypocephalus is Greek for "the thing under the head," presumably the head of the dead.

On the basis of the handwriting, the historical period in which the religious writings on these papyri were in use in Egypt, and other historical references to at least one of the original owners of the papyri, these Egyptian documents can be reliably dated to somewhere between 220 and 150 BC.

Professor John Gee, an Egyptologist on the faculty of Brigham Young University has estimated that the fragments obtained from the Metropolitan Museum of Art probably represent about 13% of the papyri Joseph once had in his possession. The remainder was destroyed in the Chicago fire. He also estimates that the original scrolls existed in long rolls measuring 126 inches (about ten feet) by 12 inches.

The Joseph Smith Papyri are generally termed typical funerary documents. Some people assume that if the documents are funerary, they cannot contain anything

else. Some Book of the Dead papyri, however, do contain other texts (see John Gee's article, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence," in *The Disciple as Witness, Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges, 192). Just because the preserved sections of the Joseph Smith Papyri are funerary in nature does not mean that they could not have had other texts on the missing sections of the rolls. For example, Papyrus Vandier (Posner, 1985) features a Book of the Dead on one side of the papyrus roll and, on the other side, a story about a man name Meryre who was sacrificed on an altar.

It seems appropriate to comment on a strange batch of early church papers filed together in a gray cardboard box in the Church Historian's Office. They are all in the handwriting of men associated with Joseph Smith in Kirtland in 1836 and 1837, and all have been classified for one reason or another as "Egyptian." They have therefore been called the "Kirtland Egyptian Papers."

The Kirtland Egyptian Papers have been grouped into two classes of documents, (1) manuscripts containing parts of the Book of Abraham, sometimes associated with Egyptian hieratic symbols written in the margins of the text, and (2) other types of Egyptian manuscripts. At least one of the former type seems to be a printer's manuscript for the very first installment of the Book of Abraham. In the second category, along with a number of odds and ends, is a notable document, a bound manuscript entitled "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language."

All of these documents are written in the handwriting of six men: W. W. Phelps, Frederick G. Williams, Warren Parrish, Oliver Cowdery, Willard Richards, and Joseph Smith. The contributions of Richards, Williams, and Joseph Smith are trivial which leaves Phelps, Cowdery, and Parrish as the key operators.

Modern Church scholars have not been able to make much sense out of these documents. No one is sure why they were written, in what context they were created, what was their intended purpose, or what role the prophet Joseph had in their creation. For example, it is not clear what the intended purpose of the "Grammar and Alphabet" was. Was it intended to be a key to translation? If it was, it was a project only barely and timidly begun. It is a bound book but only 34 of 220 pages have entries. The written pages do not run consecutively, but are scattered at intervals throughout the book. The "alphabet" consists of only thirty symbols. There are hundreds of hieroglyphic and thousands of hieratic symbols to choose from. Why only thirty? Of the thirty symbols only one is completely explained.

Scholars have been able only to speculate on the meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. Perhaps they represented some type of mandatory period of investigation and exploration during which men are required to "study it out in your mind" (D&C 9:8), making every effort to "obtain for themselves" whatever can be so

obtained, thereby discovering and acknowledging their own limitations before asking for direct revelation from on high.

Perhaps also the brethren, particularly Phelps and Cowdery, between whom there seemed to be considerable rivalry and jealousy, were trying to use their own gift of translation. And why not? Joseph had always encouraged them to seek their own gifts. He always gave them a free hand. There seemed to be also some degree of jealousy of even the Prophet himself among these brethren. They seemed to be impatient of Joseph Smith's scholarly limitations and were at the same time invited by him to surpass them.

There has been much speculation about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers and their relationship to the Book of Abraham, especially among critics of the Church. Critics have even claimed that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham using the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. But the Kirtland Egyptian Papers were created after the translation of the Book of Abraham was complete. As is common with most deciphered ancient languages, the decipherment and translation comes first, and a grammar is written after the text is understood. Therefore, the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, if anything, may have been the result of an effort by the brethren to align the Book of Abraham—already received by revelation—with papyri documents in their possession, although even this is doubtful.

The question of full participation by Joseph Smith in the creation Kirtland Egyptian Papers is made doubtful by (1) the absence of his handwriting on the documents, (2) the demonstrable independence of the scribes even when working in coordinated fashion, (3) the promises to scribes like Warren Parrish (in whose handwriting much of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers are) that “he shall see much of my ancient records, and shall know of hidden things, shall be endowed with a knowledge of hidden languages” (*Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:79), and (4) the well-known fact that “the scribes and clerks often composed and recorded information on their own” (Howard C. Searle, “Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay,” *BYU Studies* 21/1 [1981]:105).

More needs be said regarding the translation of Egyptian records. Basically, Egyptologists have not been able to successfully translate ancient Egyptian texts. Egyptian scholars do have the ability to change hieratic text into hieroglyphics, and the hieroglyphics can be changed into English phonetic equivalents. The problem is that once this is done, the scholar is left with gibberish or technical jargon of uncertain meaning. This kind of mechanical translation need in no way imply understanding. This has been the repeated experience of many Egyptologists. The ablest Egyptologists have always insisted that the main difficulty that confronts them is not a matter of grammar or vocabulary but a complete ignorance of what the Egyptian writer really had in mind. One scholar said “The difficulty is not in literally translating the text, but in understanding the meaning which lies concealed beneath familiar words” (Peter Le

Page Renouf, *The Egyptian Book of The Dead*, 14). Another Egyptologist wrote, “A certain helplessness in the face of these mythological records is unavoidable to both layman and Egyptologist” (Rudolf Anthes, “Review of Alexandre Piankoff, *The Shrines of Tutankh-Amun*, 2 volumes” in *Artibus Asia* 20.1 [1957]:92). No matter how well one knows Egyptian grammar, one may still be totally excluded from the real meaning of any Egyptian text.

What is a *translation*? We have already demonstrated that a literal translation of Egyptian texts—changing of the text from Egyptian into English—is not generally helpful. Probably the most carefully thought out definition of translation is: “A statement in the translator’s own words of what he thinks the author had in mind.” A little reflection will show that this is the best if not the only possible definition. A translation must be not a matching of dictionaries but a meeting of minds. This has simply not been possible with ancient Egyptian documents. Every good translator will tell you that after all the aids and implements at his disposal, including his own long training, have been brought to bear, it is, in the last analysis, his own feeling for things that makes a convincing translation. Without intuition he could never make any kind of intelligible translation. If truly scientific translation were possible, machine translation would have been perfected long ago, but where wide gaps of time and culture exist such a thing as a perfect mechanical translation is out of the question. In the end it is the translator’s own imponderable intuition that is his claim to distinction. The most learned linguists do not always make the best translators.

Joseph never shared with us the actual method which he used to translate. It is highly unlikely that he translated the Book of Abraham in the same way that an Egyptologist would translate. The Prophet never claimed to be operating as a linguist. Rather the translation was given to him by “the gift and power of God”—by revelation. Obviously the most important aspect of “translation” is to tell us what the original author wanted to say. No one ever stated the case more clearly than the prophet Joseph himself when he said concerning 2 Peter 1: “The things that are written are only hints of things which existed in the prophet’s mind” (*HC*, 5:401-02). Joseph did not translate the Book of Abraham after the manner of the scholars. He had neither their tools nor their problems, for he had another method. Consider the introduction to D&C 7: “Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829, when they inquired through the Urim and Thummim. . . . The revelation is a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.” Here we have a translation which Joseph Smith did not make—it was given to him, and he called it a revelation; yet it was made from a real document, on parchment or treated leather, which John wrote with his hand and then hid away. Another example is the book of Enoch which was made from a document that was never in the Prophet’s possession and may indeed have been destroyed thousands of years ago. Did Joseph know the original language of Enoch? Nobody does, but that makes no difference when

a translation is not worked out but given to one by revelation. Yet another example is the book of Moses (Moses 6:26-50 and Moses 7) which was “translated” beginning in June of 1830 when Joseph set out to revise the book of Genesis. Plainly this type of translation depends on the help of the Spirit and is not to be accomplished by intellectual effort alone.

Actually the Book of Mormon was translated in this same way—by the gift and power of God and not by any power of man. If all the Prophet had to do was to read off an English text, why did he need the original characters in front of him? He didn’t apparently! “I frequently wrote day after day,” Emma Smith recalled, “often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with a stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us. . . . He used neither manuscript nor book to read from . . . the plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth” (*Emma Smith to Joseph Smith III*, 289-90).

Just what was the process of translating the Book of Abraham and what is the relationship of the papyri to the Book of Abraham? First, let us acknowledge that the papyri fragments which the Church now owns have nothing on them which relates to the book of Abraham. Critics of Joseph Smith claim this proves he was a fraud. There are four theories which have been put forth to explain how Joseph came to translate the book of Abraham:

1. The missing papyrus theory. Since the preserved papyri account for, at best, about thirteen percent of the papyri that Joseph Smith possessed, the reason the Book of Abraham does not match the translation of the preserved papyri is that the Book of Abraham was translated from a portion of the papyri that is now missing. Perhaps the Book of Abraham was the second text on the papyrus of Hor. It must be acknowledged that even the proponents of this theory readily admit that Joseph did not translate an ancient record as an Egyptologist would translate. Rather the process was one of personal revelation. The translation “unfolded” by the gift and power of God. The process was one of revelation not of research. Proponents of this theory would also readily admit that the papyrus from which Joseph translated the book of Abraham was not an autograph by the prophet Abraham, that is it was not written in his own hand. It, rather, would be a copy handed down over the centuries to eventually be buried with someone who died in Egypt in the second or third century BC.

2. The pure revelation theory. Did the two rolls of Egyptian papyri in the possession of Joseph at the time of the translation of the Book of Abraham actually contain the writings of Abraham and ancient Joseph written in the language of the ancient Egyptians? It is difficult to be certain, but perhaps they did not. Perhaps with the papyri functioning as some type of trigger or catalyst, the book of Abraham was given to Joseph by pure revelation. This idea, while worthy of serious consideration, does seem to contradict several statements by the Prophet that he was translating the

book of the papyri (*HC*, 2:235; *Jessee*, 1989, 2:50, 87, 90). This may be explained by the fact that Joseph never had reason to question that the book of Abraham was coming from the papyri, as he was simply empowered to “translate” them, and the Book of Abraham resulted.

3. The Kirtland Egyptian Papers theory. There is no substance to this theory as documented from the foregoing materials. It is highly likely that these papers are an after-the-fact byproduct of the translation process.

What about the association of Facsimiles 1 and 3 with the Hor Book of Breathings? A reasonable explanation is that the original illustrations drawn by Abraham or prepared under his direction have been modified and adapted for use by Hor, the owner of the papyrus. What Joseph Smith did with the facsimiles is thus similar to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible—he gave the original meaning of Abraham’s illustrations, correcting for the changes and distortions that had taken place over nearly two millennia. The same, of course, holds true for Facsimile 2. But is there any evidence that, even in distorted form, these illustrations were ever associated with Abraham anciently? There is indeed. In an ancient Egyptian papyrus dating to roughly the first or second century AD there is a lion-couch scene similar to the one shown in Facsimile 1. Underneath the illustration the text reads, “Abraham, who upon . . .” (Johnson, Janet H. “The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384,” [1975], column XIII line 6). There is a break in the text here, so we do not know what word followed. The key point, however, is that an ancient Egyptian document, from approximately the same time period as the papyri Joseph Smith owned, associated Abraham with a lion-couch scene similar to that found in Facsimile 1.

There are more than a hundred examples of hypocephali (like Facsimile 2) in museums around the world. On an Egyptian papyrus of the early Christian period appears the expression “Abraham, the pupil of the eye of the Wedjat” (Griffith, Francis Llewellyn, and Herbert Thompson, *Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden*, [London: H. Grevel & Co., 1904], column VIII line 8, 64-65). In the 162nd chapter of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which gives instructions on how to make a hypocephalus, the Wedjat eye is described, and the hypocephalus itself is called an “eye” (Lepsius, Richard, 18452, pl. XXVII). The Apocalypse of Abraham, a pseudepigraphical text dating from the early Christian era, describes a vision Abraham saw while making a sacrifice to God. In this vision he is shown the plan of the universe, “what is in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, in the abyss, and in the lower depths” (Apocalypse of Abraham, 12). This excerpt is very close to the expression found in Facsimile 2, figures 9, 10, and 11, reading, “O Mighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, of the hereafter, and of this great waters.” The similarity to the hypocephalus, which for Egyptians represents the whole of the world in a circular format is striking. There is even a description of what are clearly the four figures labeled number 6 in Facsimile 2 (*Ibid.*, 18). This text also relates how Abraham is promised the priesthood, which will continue in his

posterity, and this promise is associated with the temple (*Ibid.*, 25). He is shown the “host of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out, and the elements of the earth obeying them (*Ibid.*, 19). This passage shows a remarkable parallel to the wording in Abraham 4:10, 12, 18, 21, and 25. In *The Testament of Abraham*, another pseudepigraphical text of the early Christian era, Abraham sees a vision of the Last Judgment that is unquestionable related to the judgment scene pictured in the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, thus clearly associating Abraham with the Egyptian Book of the Dead (*Testament of Abraham*, recension A, 12-13). One of the Joseph Smith papyri is in fact a drawing of this judgment scene from the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, and Facsimile 3 portrays a scene closely related to this.

We may summarize this last paragraph by saying that several ancient Near Eastern documents—roughly contemporary with the hypocephalus and the other Egyptian papyri owned by Joseph Smith—associate Abraham with the scenes portrayed in Facsimiles 1, 2, and 3. Significantly, none of these documents had even been discovered at Joseph Smith’s time. These facts strongly support the authenticity of the book of Abraham and Joseph Smith’s association of the facsimiles with Abraham.

Why are gadgets or physical devices (Urim and Thummim, seerstone, plates, papyri) necessary? Why did Joseph Smith need a Urim and Thummim, and why did he go through the greatest pains and perils to get and keep the plates if he didn’t really need them? Can’t we forget all the hardware and be guided by the Spirit alone? No, because God does not want it that way. Whether we find it agreeable and rational or not, God makes use of both human agents and physical implements in carrying out his purposes in the earth, not because he needs to, but because he wants to help us help ourselves. We are here, among other things, to learn and we will learn precious little if we get all our solutions from the answer book. We must have our faith tested and our skills improved. In a way, the gadgets or physical devices of translation (Urim and Thummim, seerstone, plates, papyri) are analogous to physical ordinances and rituals. There is nothing of arbitrariness in the Lord’s use of these objects. Rather, he is trying to teach those who utilize these gadgets important spiritual truths through the use of them. For a discussion of the Lord’s use of physical ordinances and ritual, see the important commentary for Moses 6:35.

Let those who are still shocked at the proposition that the Spirit works with and through physical devices consider the visits of the Lord to his disciples after the resurrection. On one occasion, he walked with two of them on the road to Emmaus. The Lord himself, of course, is the source of all knowledge and the wellspring of the scriptures themselves. He could well have pushed the dusty books aside and admonished his listeners to heed him alone, from whom all the books came in the first place. Instead of that, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Among the Nephites he called for the records and personally inspected them for errors and

omissions, admonishing the people to spend their days reading the words of a prophet who had been dead for seven hundred years, “for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1). If the Holy Ghost brings all things to our remembrance, one may well ask, why do we need to record anything at all? Because God has so commanded “for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23).

We must not think that the Lord, in giving his servants special devices to assist them, was letting them off easy. He did not hand them the answer-book, but only a slide rule. It takes far more formidable qualifications and far more intense concentration and cerebration to use a seer-stone than it does to use a dictionary. The existence in our midst of computers does not mean, as some fondly suppose, that mathematicians and translators and genealogists no longer have to think—they have to think harder than ever. A Urim and Thummim, like a dictionary, is only an aid to the translator who knows how to work it and may gradually be dispensed with as the translator becomes more proficient in his spiritual exercise. Certainly the documents with which Joseph Smith was dealing could be translated in no other way than by the Spirit. How can any mortal ever know what the original first writer of Genesis had in mind save by the power of revelation? And without that knowledge no translation is possible. It was Brother Joseph’s calling to interpret the minds of other dispensations to our own.

There is evidence that the prophet Joseph’s mind may have been imbued with parts of the Book of Abraham even before he sat down with the papyri to translated. He had revised chapters 11-25 of Genesis which are chapters which pertain to Abraham. Therefore the life and times of Abraham were certainly on his mind. One LDS scholar, James R. Harris, has found some writings of Joseph Smith from December 1833 which closely resemble a passage from the Book of Abraham. These are recorded in the “Patriarchal Blessing Book No. 1: “We diligently sought for the right of the fathers and the authority of the holy priesthood, and the power to administer in the same for we desired to be followers of righteousness and the possessors of greater knowledge.” This has a striking resemblance to Abraham 1:2: “I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge.” Brother Harris concluded: “It is this author’s contention that the text of the Book of Abraham was already impressed upon the mind and heart of Joseph Smith before he received the papyri collection” (*Studies in Scripture, Volume 2, The Pearl of Great Price*, 280). It is possible that a papyrus text in the hands of the Prophet was not essential to the production of the translation of the Book of Abraham.

One interesting question is when was the text of our Book of Abraham originally written and by whom? Most members of the Church, including Dr. Gee, feel that the text was written by the patriarch Abraham, though the papyri from which Joseph Smith translated it need not have been an original autograph penned by the hand of Abraham. Rather it would be the text of a book written by the hand of Abraham which had been

handed down for centuries before a manuscript version of it was placed in the sarcophagus near Thebes. A small minority of Latter-day Saints think that the Book of Abraham was written in Hellenistic Egypt (in the few centuries before the time of Christ) and that it was an ancient pseudepigraphon translated by Joseph Smith. Most critics of the Church, of course, think that the Book of Abraham is a modern fabrication by Joseph Smith.

Where did Abraham write the text of the Book of Abraham, and how was it transmitted to that catacomb near Thebes? Of course those who believe that the text dates back to Abraham automatically hold that the manuscript was written in Egypt by the hand of Abraham and that there was no transmission of the text. Those who believe that the text was originally written in Hellenistic Egypt in the second and third centuries BC also automatically believe that there was no transmission of the text. Others believe that Abraham wrote the text while he was in Egypt and that it was transmitted by Egyptians and that the papyri are a later manuscript. Yet another theory of transmission postulates that the Book of Abraham was written by Abraham and passed down through his descendants, some of whom took a copy to Egypt where it was copied (after being translated) onto a later manuscript.

One may well differentiate the method of translation from the results of translation. It is on the grounds of *method* that Egyptologists have weighed Joseph Smith in the balance and found him wanting. They maintain, "He was no scholar, he was not one of us, he did not use our methods!" Once the method has been discredited, it has been considered unnecessary to look further into the results of that method. But the Prophet has saved us the trouble of faulting his method of translating by announcing in no uncertain terms that it is a method unique to himself, depending entirely on divine revelation. This still leaves wide open the truly effective means of testing any method, which is by the results it produces. And to this venture we invite any and all—to read and test the Book of Abraham. It mattereth not by what imponderable method Joseph Smith produced his translations, as long as he came up with the right answers. It matters even less from what particular edition of what particular text he was translating. It is enough to know that the Prophet was writing real books of Abraham, Moses, Enoch, Mosiah, and Zenos. We testify enthusiastically that the Book of Abraham is authentic and true, and we invite the world to test it!

Moses and Mount Sinai

Moses's first direct epiphany or audience with the Lord took place in Midian, on the slopes of Mount Sinai where Moses was attracted to a bush which continually burned but was not consumed (Exodus 3:1-6). The Lord called Moses to deliver Israel out of captivity. The eighty year old Moses was a spiritual adolescent, and it appears that the Lord began a series of visits with Moses during which Moses was instructed spiritually by the Lord. These may well have occurred on Mount Sinai. The only account of these "visions" or audiences with the Lord are contained in Moses 1. Moses 1:1 may refer to this period in Moses's life when it says: "The words of God, which he spake unto Moses at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain, And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence."

About two months after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, they arrived and camped in the wilderness of Sinai at the foot of Mount Sinai. Subsequently Moses was to make several journeys up onto the mountain to communicate with the Lord. These will each be summarized briefly.

1. Shortly after the Israelites' arrival at Sinai, Moses was invited up onto the mountain to discuss with the Lord the possibility of the Israelites' making solemn covenants with the Lord that would enable them to become "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6) akin to the covenants which Enoch's people made with the Lord.

After returning to the people and reporting this conversation, the people agreed to do all that they were asked by the Lord.

2. Moses returned to the mount to report his people's favorable response to the Lord's offer. While there, the Lord instructed Moses to return to his people and have them sanctify and prepare themselves by washing their clothes, and that on the third day the Lord would appear to Moses's people to prove his reality to them (Exodus 19:10-11). The Lord also warned the people not to set foot on the mountain. On the third day, the Lord did appear to the people in the form of "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" (Exodus 19:16).

3. During these miraculous manifestations, Moses was invited back up onto the mountain. On arriving at the top of the mount, the Lord immediately sent him back down the mountain to warn his people not to attempt to start up the mountain. Before Moses departed again for the base of the mountain, the Lord promised to allow Moses's brother Aaron to come up onto the mountain with him. After Moses returned to his people, the miraculous demonstration by the Lord continued, and the Lord spoke so that all could hear him and gave unto them the ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).

4. Moses then immediately re-ascended the mount, and the Lord revealed to him his laws concerning the behavior of the people of Israel (Exodus 21-23). By these laws, Moses would govern and judge his people. The Lord then invited Moses to return again up the mountain and this time bring with him Aaron, two of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel. These would be allowed to ascend only part way up the mountain. Moses returned to his people who entered into a covenant to obey the laws of the Lord.

5. Then Moses returned to the mountain, this time accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel. God showed himself to these 73 men. The men were then commanded to wait while Moses and Joshua ascended up further onto the mountain. Joshua was allowed to ascend part way to the top, and then he was also asked to tarry while Moses completed the journey to the top. On the top of the mount, Moses waited six days before the Lord manifest himself. Moses was on top of the mountain for forty days where he received the tablets containing the ten commandments written by the finger of the Lord. He also received the plans for a portable temple or tabernacle and the temple ordinances to be used in the tabernacle. The Lord promised to dwell among the Israelites if they kept their covenants just as he had dwelt among the people of Enoch.

When Moses finally descended the mount, he learned that Joshua had followed Moses's instructions and had waited faithfully for him, but Aaron and the others had already descended the mountain. At the base of the mountain, Moses found that his people had corrupted themselves by worshiping a golden calf which had been made by Aaron! In anger he broke the plates into pieces. The Lord threatened to destroy the people, and the Levites were commanded to slay 3,000 of the most unrighteous among the people.

6. Moses again ascended the mountain to plead for the lives of his people, and the Lord relented. The portable tabernacle was constructed, and Moses saw and spoke with the Lord in the tabernacle.

7. Moses then returned up onto the mountain for the final time and brought with him two tablets of stone. He again remained on the mountain for forty days, and the Lord inscribed the ten commandments again upon the plates of stone and made another covenant with Israel—the lesser covenant. Moses received the law of carnal commandments, the law of Moses. As he descended the mountain some of his people observe that his face was shining—a residual from his having been transfigured so that he might tolerate the presence of the Lord.