

A TALK ABOUT THE FIRST THREE WORDS SPOKEN BY THE PLAYERS IN THE ENDOWMENT

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“Brothers and sisters, as you sit here, you will hear the voices of three persons who represent Elohim, Jehovah and Michael. ...

“ELOHIM: Jehovah, Michael: see...”

A great deal is contained in these first three spoken words from the Endowment. Although what I say this evening represents my current thinking on the material, I could not have given this talk ten years ago. Nor do I expect that ten years from now I would give the same talk. My understanding changes over time, and this is a snapshot of my understanding taken from a moving picture. I hope it is useful to you.

This talk is all about the first three words spoken in the presentation of the Endowment. Keep that in mind. As we begin there are foundational materials which may seem unrelated at first. Bear with it, because we are only speaking about one subject, and everything will tie back to that single subject.

I should clarify this subject is not off limits for discussion. Nor is it something that if discussed, would violate any covenant. None of the keys, signs, tokens, names or sacred information guarded by covenants and obligations to keep as secret will be discussed. Therefore, you shouldn't have any apprehension about that as you listen tonight. I agree with Hugh Nibley's assessment that the greatest protection for the mysteries is the general disinterest of people. However, I do not rely upon such disinterest to protect mysteries which have been given to us. I police what I discuss, with the covenants I have made always in mind.

An 11th century muslim scholar attributed this saying to Christ: “He who bestows knowledge on the ignorant wastes it, and he who withholds it from the worthy has done them

wrong.” (Al-Ghazali, reference found in *The Niche of Lights*, p. 2.) This requires balance. If I err tonight, I hope to avoid doing the worthy a wrong.

I am convinced that truth should fit within the framework of established scripture. Anything new that contradicts established scripture ought to be rejected. However, this does not mean that there are no new truths to be discovered just because you have read all existing scripture. Indeed, just because you have never seen it before does not mean new truth should be rejected when it is brought to your attention. One of humanities’ great defects has always been resistance to new truth. Joseph lamented the Saints’ resistance to being taught: *“I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen.”* (TPJS p. 331.) Christ had the same problem with the Nephites when He could not teach them: *“I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.”* (3 Ne. 17: 2-3.)

Joseph explained his role (as any prophet’s role) included the obligation to teach forgotten truths. They became “new” truths because the current generation allowed the truth to be forgotten. As Joseph put it: *“It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries-new things-for my hearers.”* (TPJS p. 364.) It is surely true that the testimony of Jesus IS the spirit of prophecy! (Rev. 19: 10.) And it is equally true that without the testimony of prophets we forfeit truth by the erosive environment of this Telestial Kingdom where we all live.

Joseph once explained that truth could be “tasted” when it is taught. As he put it: *“This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you. They are*

given to me by the revelations of Jesus Christ; and I know that when I tell you these words of eternal life as they are given to me, you taste them, and I know that you believe them. You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also taste the spirit of eternal life. I know it is good; and when I tell you of these things which were given me by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you are bound to receive them as sweet, and rejoice more and more.” (TPJS p. 355.) As an aside, the compilation found in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* was prepared by Joseph Fielding Smith based on the original notes of those who heard Joseph’s talks. Those original notes from the Nauvoo era talks given by Joseph which Joseph Fielding Smith used to compile the TPJS have now been published in the book *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook. The quote I just read is an amalgamation of the notes of Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, appearing on p. 364 of WJS: “this is good d doctrin, it taste good, I can taste the principles of eternal life, so can you, they are given to me by the revelations of Jesus Christ and I know you believe it.” The Thomas Bullock Report appears at p. 352: “ you say honey is Sweet & so do I. I can also taste the Sp of Eternal life I know it is good & when I tell you of these things that were given me by Insp of the H S. you are bound to rece it as sweet & I rej more & more.” The William Clayton Report is on p. 360: “ I know that when I tell you those words of eternal life that are given to me I know you taste it and I know you believe it.”

A little farther into this talk we will carefully consider the original notes from two of Joseph’s final talks. These notes are our most accurate source for his actual words, and words matter a great deal. Because we will be discussing some of Joseph’s most lofty teachings, we will rely upon the original notes, and not the TPJS.

Joseph used “taste” and Nephi used “feel” to describe the very intangible way we detect truth as it is presented to us. Nephi, when talking to his older brothers about how to know a matter is true, used these words: “Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could

not feel his words;” (1 Ne. 17: 45.) This is delicate, refined and subtle. It is intended to stretch us, to quiet us down and calm our minds. We are supposed to receive our own anecdotal evidence which is personal to us, adapted to our own capacities, and something sufficient to convince us it comes from God. It is ALWAYS the case that these experiences are going to be anecdotal. Only the prepared are going to experience them. Others are excluded. One of the best examples of how this works is found in Daniel:

And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. *And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision;* but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. *Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision,* and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. (Daniel 10: 4-9, emphasis added.)

Daniel’s experience was real. But it was not open to the view of the unworthy. The physically demanding nature of this kind of experience is often referred to in scripture. Joseph Smith went through it when he collapsed, exhausted and returning home after the night spent with Moroni. (See JS-H 1: 48.) Also, King Lamoni, his wife and all within his house had a similar reaction to his great revelation. (See Alma 18: 40-19: 30.) Every such experience is real. They are physical and exhausting. But they are also necessarily personal and cannot be shared. Those lacking faith to have such access are free to disbelieve in them. It is true that this kind of “oil” cannot be shared. (See Matt. 25: 8-9.)

Taste and feel are two ways to communicate the highly personal nature of such experiences. I can think of two analogies using the idea of “balance” to illustrate the same point. When you ski, there is a ‘fall line’ on any given slope where the route you take down the mountain cooperates with the terrain, gravity and balance. You can feel the ‘fall line’ when you

are in it. There is such harmony between the skier and the slope that everything goes into balance. You know it is right. You can sense the balance, the harmony when you are in the fall line. It becomes effortless.

The other illustration comes from riding a Harley Davidson. There is a curious perfection about the Harley big-twins. The center of gravity is located below the axle and almost dead center between them. This low and middle center of gravity makes for harmony between rider and machine as soon as it is put into motion. Despite the great weight of the bike, when it is in motion, even at slow speeds, it is nimble. Riding on a Harley you can feel this nimble, stable balance. It is so delicate a matter that you can sense the difference between posted speed limit on the road and the design speed of the engineer who designed the roadway. It can be described with words, but the balance must be experienced to actually know what those words are trying to convey.

In both the skiing example and the Harley, the harmony in the movement with the skis or the motorcycle results in a oneness. Everything is an extension of your own body, and you can feel yourself in harmony with the terrain over which you are moving. These are childlike experiences. They force you into the moment. They put you into the NOW and all else is removed. You are compelled to ‘take no thought for the morrow’ because the moment overwhelms the senses.

You probably have your own experiences you could use to illustrate the point. Whether it is “taste” or “feel” or “balance” or some other highly subjective experience; the point is that you can know from this experience when it is just right. This is what hearing a new truth should be like. You were meant to know the truth. You long for it. We all do. There is something inside us that cannot be satisfied until we are back in contact with it. This is what is delicious about the Gospel. This is what we should be able to feast upon as a result of being a Latter-day Saint. The scriptures and Joseph’s teachings are filled with this idea. When we turn the Gospel into something stale and uninviting, we are profaning the great joy, the great light the Gospel was

intended to convey. [I've written a chapter on Joy in *Eighteen Verses* that demonstrates this idea.]

Every person who joins the church is expected to do so because of Moroni 10: 4: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” Missionaries teach people that God will speak to them. Investigators are assured this promise was meant for them. Then when the exciting experience of finding that God will actually speak to them results in an answer to prayer, a new life begins. That new life is accompanied by baptism and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. All of it is exciting, filling the senses and bringing the convert back into contact with God.

I went through the process when I was 19 years old. I learned for myself that God would answer prayer in this day, just as had been the case in the scriptures. Therefore, I joined the church. After 4 years as a member of the church, I began law school. By the time I finished law school, I was seven years into membership. When I graduated from law school, I was troubled by the thought there was nothing more to learn. That apprehension was because of the limited information being taught by the institutional church. The church, of course, has an obligation to new converts to teach fundamental doctrines. The church does not and cannot address the kind of learning that is required to continue throughout your life. (I address this in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*.)

As a result, I realized I could not depend upon the church's established curriculum and must continue the search on my own. The search has continued apace. I thank some of you for your contributions, both directly and indirectly to my continuing education. I remain an ignorant man, but still an eager student. Moses reported this statement from the Lord, in Chapter 1: 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.” So there are absolute limits

on learning. But there is nevertheless a great deal of knowledge which can and should be gained here. The scriptures also tell us we can know “all truth.” (Moroni 10: 5, see also D&C 50: 24 and 93: 28.) [Those promises should be read in the context of what mortals living here are permitted to know. It is a great deal. Nevertheless, there will always be some few questions we are not allowed to have answered while mortal.]

Before I speak, I need to know what I have to say is first approved by heaven. I take as an absolute standard the statement in D&C 42: 14: “if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.” Therefore, when I teach it will only be with permission and following the direction of a higher source. I also believe the Lord’s warning found in JST Matt 12: 31: “And again I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” So I expect to be accountable and to be judged for the words I speak this evening.

THE APOSTLE PAUL:

The Apostle Paul warned about our day. We are in the middle of the problem right now. His warning is found in 2 Tim 3:1-7:

1 ¶ THIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, **heady, highminded**, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 **Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:** from such turn away.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

7 **Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

This is a troubling problem to consider. I listen to talks on KBYU given at Education Week, or General Conferences, or Forum talks at BYU, BYU-Idaho or BYU-Hawaii, or the

Women's Conferences. Some speakers give talks just as they should - using the Spirit as a guide and speaking words of eternal life. Others, however, take their educational background as their guide. Whether they are trained in economics, education, business, philosophy, law or some other discipline, what they teach are the principles they learned in their specialty. They presume their education is so "true" that they are justified in relying upon it. And so they teach with their own learning, mingling it with scriptures, and selling us the philosophies of men. Such teachers lack any power of godliness, merely pretending to have the form. (See 2 Ne. Chapter 28.) I hope in everything I say or write to avoid being heady or highminded. But as soon as a person thinks they are safe from error, they are likely to be fooled. I need your prayers and faith to help us get only the truth here tonight. We cannot rely only on a form of godliness, but must seek the actual power of godliness. It is by relying upon the Spirit alone which can let us come to the knowledge of the truth. Because I am speaking to a small group here in my home, I do not expect this talk to be anything other than an intimate discussion among carefully chosen friends. In such a gathering, I hope the Spirit will allow inspiration, where more can be taught and even the speaker is able to learn. President Marion Romney once remarked that he knew when he was teaching by the Spirit because he would learn something new.

JOSEPH SMITH:

In the revelation found in D&C 88:118, it was revealed through Joseph that: "And as **all have not faith**, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith." This revelation gives the preference to learning by "faith" and only secondarily, as a consequence of the failure of faith, to learn by using "the best books" and "study." I study relentlessly. But I trust only the Spirit to guide me when accepting new truth. As a result, I reject many things I hear on KBYU, in church or in Deseret Book publications.

NEPHI:

Nephi also warned us about the limits of education in our day. We read in 2 Ne 9:28-29: "O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When

they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” Learning must be subordinated to the “counsels of God” if it is to be of use in saving our souls. Otherwise we rely upon “foolishness” while calling it “wisdom.”

MORONI:

Moroni gave us the formula for knowing all truth in Moroni 10: 4-5: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” [I have devoted a Chapter in *Eighteen Verses* to this verse.] This was the formula we were to follow. Find truth using the Spirit. Rely upon that source. It will lead you to know the “fullness” of all truth.

We read in D&C 93: 1: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am[.]” This is the final truth. For this is the definition of eternal life: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17: 3.)

I referred above to the 2 Nephi 28. That is an important enough warning that it bears setting out at length here. I have interrupted the flow of the chapter below to identify the ten times he warns us in this single chapter how in the last days we will fail, be misled and accept as true things which are false. Below the warnings are highlighted in yellow, and the count of the warnings is inserted in red:

2 Nephi, Chapter 28:

3 For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord's; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord's; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord--

4 And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance. **FIRST**

WARNING!

5 And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; **SECOND WARNING!**
and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; **THIRD WARNING!**
for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath
given his power unto men;

6 Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; **FOURTH WARNING!**
if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he
is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work.

...

11 Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted.

12 Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, **FIFTH WARNING!**
their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are
puffed up.

13 They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine
clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed
up.

14 **They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and
abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the
humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err
because they are taught by the precepts of men. SIXTH WARNING!**

[As an aside, I put an excerpt from this verse into the dedication of my first book, The Second
Comforter. That was quite deliberate. I think Nephi tells us in the verse exactly what we are
faced with in this dispensation. That, however, is a whole separate subject.]

15 O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all
those who preach false doctrines, **SEVENTH WARNING!**
and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto
them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell!

16 Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught and revile against that which is
good, and say that it is of no worth! For the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit

the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish.

17 But behold, if the inhabitants of the earth shall repent of their wickedness and abominations they shall not be destroyed, saith the Lord of Hosts.

18 But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth, and great must be the fall thereof.

19 For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish;

20 For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

21 And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion;¹ yea, Zion prospereth, all is well--and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

22 And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none--and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.

23 Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell; and death, and hell, and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

24 Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!

25 Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well!

26 Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! **EIGHTH WARNING!**

27 Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more!

28 And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy

¹The term "Zion" is never used to describe Gentiles who are unacquainted with the Gospel. It therefore necessarily refers to Latter-day Saints.

foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

29 Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! **NINTH WARNING!**

30 For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. [This is an ominous warning that Alma will revisit in Alma 12: 10-13. This verse inspired the teaching found there. They should be read together.]

31 Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost. **TENTH WARNING!**

32 Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

Remember that Nephi is giving us his “valedictory” address here. It is his final, great summation of all he has tried to teach. He concluded his record with these sober warnings. It is astonishing to me we have this lesson and yet give so little notice to it. He is warning us to avoid the wisdom of men, the arm of flesh, or in other words the social sciences, as a basis for decision-making. Nephi is telling us that the institutions of education, all our higher learning, is NOT to be the final source of truth for us. For us the Holy Ghost alone is to be the final guide.

Moroni 10: 5 is Moroni’s valedictory warning to us at the end of the entire Nephite civilization. He gives us the same message: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” We are supposed to receive truth only from the Holy Ghost. If there is no witness to you from the Holy Ghost, then there is no truth being taught you.

I found a talk given in General Conference by Elder Theodore M. Burton that is so relevant to the point I decided to quote it at length. It can be found in *Conference Report*, April 1961, Afternoon Meeting, at p.128-129:

A little learning is a dangerous thing, and too many men and too many women who have become experts in a tiny field of learning think that because they are trained in that field of learning, they are experts in all fields of learning. Many men who are well-trained in one limited field feel that this equally qualifies them to express learned opinions in the field of faith and religion, although many of them have never done any studying nor taken a class in these subjects. So, I say that the problem is not that they know too much, but that they know too much of what just isn't so. Actually they know too little. They have closed their minds to anything except the philosophies of men.

Now, brothers and sisters, in our Church in this day and age, when education is becoming more and more popular and more and more necessary, there is grave danger of intellectual apostasy. The problem is that of a closed mind as I see it. Jacob taught this beautifully as we read it in the Book of Mormon. "O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God." (2 Nephi 9:28-29.) That we should emphasize, "To be learned is good."

What causes intellectual apostasy? Why do some learned men and women turn from the faith? It is not learning for there are hundreds of us, thousands of us, equally well-trained. It isn't being exposed to different ideas, for we too were exposed to these ideas in the finest universities of the land. Why then, do they lose their testimony? Principally out of vanity and pride. They want to impress others with their learning. To put it indelicately, it is the problem of the swelled head, because that is exactly what the Prophet said. ". . . whoso knocketh," Jacob said "to him will he open, and the wise, and the learned, and they who are rich, who are puffed up" and that you see is just exactly what he said-"who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches-yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them." (Ibid., 9:42.)

Now remember, it isn't the simplicity of the tool that determines its value but the skill of the workman who uses that tool. God, I am sure, would prefer to use the most skilled, the most able, the best-trained person that he could find, but that person must be humble and he must be teachable, and he must be willing to

learn something new. We, with all our learning, stand just at the threshold of things that we need to know, just at the beginning of wisdom, with the rudiments of wisdom in our hands. As Paul taught, the workman is more important than the tool. "For ye see your calling, brethren," he said, "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But . . . God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;. . . that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:26-27, 29-30.)

Over the library of the Utah State University stands in big gold letters a statement taken from the scriptures: "Get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. 4:7) We must feed the spirit as well as the mind and as well as the body. I plead with our youth, get learning, and with all your getting get understanding. Get learning of the spirit. Get learning of the mind. Get learning of the soul, and become a rounded man or a rounded woman learned in all ways, for I testify to you this day that security, true security comes from a knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of all learning and of all wisdom.

So, we turn now to the setting wherein we can understand who the players are addressed by the first words spoken by Elohim in the endowment. As we look at the parties involved, ask yourself if the Holy Ghost confirms to your understanding the things that follow. If it does, then you have truth. If it does not, then you should discard it. But you must consult the witness of the Holy Ghost, and not your own prejudices or past understanding, to determine the truth.

Joseph Smith tried to identify the meaning of "God" during his final year in Nauvoo. He was excited about his expanding understanding of the nature and identity of God. He wanted to share the new insight, and first raised the subject in the April General Conference in a talk known as *The King Follett Discourse*. Then he returned again to the subject ten days before his death in June, 1844. His final June talk was cut short by rain, and he never finished his discussion. But we have enough from his comments to be able to know he was speaking from his translation of the Book of Abraham. To see what his comments drew from, first I'm going to set out the text from the Book of Abraham that provoked his excitement.

In order to expose how these scriptures speak about two different groups, I have

identified them using highlighting in two different colors to make recognizing them easier. In yellow highlighting below, the group known as “the noble and great” who are later referred to as “the Gods” are identified. In the green highlighting below is the second group, who are being “proven” by the experience here in mortality. The mission assigned to each of these two groups is distinct. One is “proving” and the other is being “proven.” The import of this is so profound that we should give a great deal of attention to it. It redefines what this estate is all about. It also caused Joseph Smith to make stunning remarks to the Saints in his last public address.

Both those who are identified as “noble and great” who are also called “Gods” are mortals here in this life, as well as those who are the “spirits organized before the world was” to be proven by this life. These two very different groups are both here in this world. For those who are being “proven” this life is a probation. For the others, they are “proving” their fellow men. The missions are quite different for these two groups. However, since there is a veil between here and there, the only way to know if you belong to one group or the other is if someone who is on the other side of the veil reveals it to you.

So first, we consider the scripture, using the highlighting to point out the two groups:
Abr. 3: 20-38:

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.*

20 The Lord thy God sent his angel to deliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah.

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.*

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**;

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.

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;

25 And **we** will prove **them** herewith, to see if **they** will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command **them**;

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.

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.

28 And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, **many followed after him**. [This is a third group, about whom I am not going to comment in this talk. However, I would note this is the “third” who followed the Dragon, which is not a numeric calculation, but a way of distinguishing yet a third type of person who appears here on the earth.]

Chapter 4

Abr 4:1-8

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.

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.

3 And **they (the Gods)** said: Let there be light; and there was light.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

When the various groups are identified by highlighting, it becomes apparent that there are two kinds of mortals here. One type has already been called “Gods” in scripture. They are among those who have a calling to teach truth here. They are “noble and great” because they teach truth. They teach truth, and know truth, because they were of such a character before they came here that they had accepted, obeyed and received the results of following truth. In a word, they were exalted before they were born here. Hence the need for the word “Elohim” to be plural.

However radical an idea this may seem to you as you first hear it, Joseph Smith was trying to teach this to the Saints in Nauvoo. So we turn to Joseph’s comments, first from the April General Conference talk. In this talk he introduces the concept of co-eternal existence for mankind as well as for God. He is introducing the notion that mankind has a higher or greater kind of existence than we may apprehend. Below are accounts first from Willard Richards, second Wilford Woodruff, and then finally from Thomas Bullock. I am leaving out the reports of George Laub and William Clayton. The talk took from approximately 3:15 pm to 5:30 pm:

Joseph Smith Diary By Willard Richards ; *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook*, p.340-343:

3 1/4 P. M.-Joseph commenced speaking on the subject of the Dead-relative to the death of elder King Follett who who was crushed in a well. by the falling of a tub of rock on him.-

If men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves. what kind of being is God?-Eternal life to know God. **-if man does not know God, has not Eternal life.**-if I am so fortunate as to comprehend and explain the [incomplete thought] let evry one sit in silence and never lift your voice against the servants of God again.

Every man has a right to be a false prophet. as well as a true prophet.-in the beginning. before the world was.-**Is a man like one of yourselves.-should you see him to day. you would see a man in fashion and in form.** Adam was formed in his likeness. - refute the idea that God was God from all eternity-Jesus said as the father had power in himself even so hath the son power to do what the father did. Lay down his body. & take it up again.-**you have got to learn how to make yourselves God, Kings, Priests, &c. -by going from a small to great capacity. Till they are able to dwell in everlasting burning & everlasting power.**- how consoling when called to part with a dear friend. to know their very being will rise to dwell in everlasting burning.-heirs of God. and **ascend a throne as those who have gone before.**-I saw the father work out his kingdom with fear & trembling. -god is glorified in salvation Exaltation-of his ancestors &c.-not all to be comprehended in this world.-the head, or the head **one-The head one of the Gods, brought forth the Gods.**-Dr & Lawyers that have persecuted.-**The head one called the Gods together in grand council-to bring forth the world.**-Example of error as yocabem Jacob-the son of Zebedee-& James James the son of Zebedee 4 Mat. 21. Greek Hebrew. German. & Latin.-**In the begining the head of the gods called a council of the Gods-and concocted a scheme to create the world.**-Soon as we begin to understand the character of the Gods he begins to unfold the heavens to us. -Doctors say.-created the earth out of nothing. Borau. **-creates.- it means to organized. -God had materials to organise the world.** Elements -nothing can destroy. no beginning no end.- The soul. Doctors of Divinity. God created in the beginning-he never the character of man. don't believe it.-who told you God was self existent? correct enough.-in hebrew put into him his spirit. -which was created before. **Mind of man coequal with God himself.** friends seperated for a small moment from **their spirits. coequal with God.** and hold converse when they are one with another- **If man had a beginning he must have an**

end.-might proclaim. God never had power to create the spirit of man. Intelligence exist upon a self existent principle no creation about it. all mind & spirit God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.-all things God has seen fit proper to reveal while dwelling in mortality, are revealed. precisely the same as though we were destitute of bodies. what will save our spirits will save our bodies-our tabernacles-for our spirits-All spirits who have not obeyed the Gospel must be damned.-who have not obeyed the decrees of son of man. We are looked upon by God as though we were in Eternity-the greatest responsibility resting upon us is to look after our dead.- they without us cannot be made perfect without us. Meet Paul ½ way.-Hence the saying of Elijah.-God made provisions before the world was for every creature in

All sin shall be forgiven in this world or world to come-except one Salvation for all men who have not committed a certain sin can save any man who has not committed the unpardonable sin. cannot commit the unpardonable sin after the diss dissolution of the body. Knowledge save a man.- No way for a man to come to understanding but give his consent to the commandment Damned by mortification-a lake as of fire of brimstone-as exquisite the disappointment of the mind of man - Why? Must commit the unpardonable sin in this world. will suffer in the eternal world until he will be exalted.- work of the devil. the plans the devil laid to save the world.- Devil said he could save them all -Lot fell on Jesus.-All sin &c forgiven except the sin against the Holy Ghost.-Got to deny the plan of salvation. &c. with his eyes open. Like many of the apostates of christ of the Church of Jesus Christ of last Days. Let All be careful.-lest you be deceived. best man brings forth best works. To the mourners your friend has gone to wait the perfection.-of the reunion.-the resurrection of your friend in felicity while worlds must wait myriads of years before they can receive the like blessings.-leave the subject. bless those who have lost friends. only gone for a few moments.- Shall mothers have their Children? Yes. they shall have it without price. redemption is paid possessing all the intelligence of a god. the child as it was before it died out of your arms thrones upon thrones. Dominion upon dominion just as you- Baptism of water fire & Holy Ghost. are inseparably connected. -found in the German Bible to prove what I have taught for 14 years about baptism.-I baptize you with water. but when Jesus comes having the keys-he shall baptize you with the baptism of fire & Holy Ghost.- Leaving the principles of doctrine of baptism &c -one god. one baptism. & one baptism -I.E. all

three. called upon all men. Priests and all to repent and obey the gospel.-if they do not they will be damned.-those who commit the unpardonable sin are doomed to Gnaolom. without end.-God dwells in everlasting burnings. -Love all men but hate your deeds.- You don't know me-you never will I don't blame you for not believing my history had I not experienced it could not believe it myself

5 ½ closed.

Wilford Woodruff Diary, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, p.343, 344, 345, 346, 347-348:

3 o'clock P M April Sunday 7th 1844

The following important edefying & interesting discourse was deliverd by President Joseph Smith to about twenty ten thousand souls upon the subject of the death of Elder King Follett I now call the attention of this congregation while I addres you upon the subject of the dead The case of our Beloved Brother King Follett, who was crushed to death in a well, as well as many others who have lost friends will be had in mind this afternoon, & shall speak upon the subject in general as far as I shall be inspired by the Holy Spirit to treat upon the subject it, I want the Prayers & faith of the saints that I may have the Holy Ghost, that the testimony may carry conviction to your minds of the truth of what I shall say, & pray that the Lord may strengthen my lungs, there is strength here & your prayers will be herd. Before I enter upon an investigation of this subject, I wish to pave the way, and bring up the subject from the beginning that you may understand. I do not intend to please you with oritory but with the simple truths of heaven to Edify you. Go to the morn of creation to understand of the decrees of the Eloheem at the Creation. It is necessary for us to have an understanding of God at the beginning, if we get a good start first we can go right, but if you start wrong you may go wrong. But few understand the character of God. they do not know they do not understand their relationship to God. the world know no more than the brute beast, & they know no more than to eat drink and sleep & this is all man knows about God or his exhistance, except what is given by the inspiration of the Almighty. go then to the beginning that you may understand. I ask this congregation **what kind of a being**

is God? turn your thoughts in your hearts, & say have any of you seen or herd him or communed with him this is a question that may occupy your attention The scriptures inform us that this is eternal life to know the ownly wise God & Jesus Christ whom He has sent. If any inquire what kind of a being God is, I would say **If you don't know God you have not eternal life**, go back & find out what kind of a being God is. If I am the man that shows you what kind of a being God is, then let evry man & woman sit in silence and never lift up his hand against me again if I do not do it, I will not make any further pretentions to inspiration or to be a prophet, I would be like the rest of the world, fals teachers & you would want to take my life. But you might just as well take the lives of other fals teachers as mine if I was fals, But meddle not with any man for his religion, evry goverment ought to permit evry man to enjoy his religion, I will show the world is wrong by showing what God is. I am going to inquire after God so that you may know God, that persecution may cease concerning me, I go back to the beginning to show what kind of a being God was, I will tell you & hear it O Earth! **God who sits in yonder heavens is a man like yourselves That God if you were to see him to day that holds the worlds you would see him like a man in form, like yourselves.** Adam was made in his image and talked with him & walked with him. In order to understand the dead for the consolation of those that mourn, I want you to understand God and how he comes to be God. **We suppose that God was God from eternity. I will refute that Idea, or I will do away or take away the veil so you may see.** It is the first principle to know that we may converse with him and that he once was a man like us, and the Father was once on an earth like us, And I wish I was in a suitable place to tell it The scriptures inform us mark it that Jesus Christ said As the Father hath power in himself so hath the son power in himself to do what the father did even to lay down my body & take it up again do you believe it, if not, don't believe the bible. I defy all Hell and earth to refute it. And **you have got to learn how to make yourselves God, king and priest, by going from a small capacity to a great capacity to the resurrection of the dead to dwelling in everlasting burnings**, I want you to know the first principle of this law, how consoling to the mourner when they part with a friend to know that though they lay down this dody [body]. it will rise & dwell with everlasting burnings to be an heir of God & joint heir of with Jesus Christ enjoying the same rise exhaltation & glory untill you arive at the station of a God. What did Jesus Christ do, the same thing as I se

the Father do, see the father do what, **work out a kingdom, when I do so to I will give to the father which will add to his glory, he will take a Higher exaltation & I will take his place and am also exalted.** Those are the first principles of the gospel. It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole If I should say anything but what was in the bible the cry of treason would be heard I will then go to the Bible, Barasheet in the beginning, Analyze the word in and through the head, an old Jew added the word Bath, it read **the head one of the Gods, broat forth the Gods,** I will transpose it in the english language. I want you to know & learn that the Holy Ghost knows something. The grand Council set [sat?] at the head and contemplated the creation of the world, some will say, the scriptures say so & so, but I will show you a text out of an old book containing the four languages, the german is here what does this text say, yoakabeam, the son of Zebedee, the bible says James the son of Zebedee, but this says Jacob son of Zebedee 21 ch 4th ver Matthew The Dr says (I mean Dr of Law not of physic) If you say any thing not according to the Bible we will cry treason, But if ye are not led by revelation how can ye escape the damnation of Hell, here we have the testimony of four I have the oldest Book in the world & the holy Ghost I thank God for the old Book but more for the Holy Ghost. **The Gods came together & concocked the plan of making the world & the inhabitants,** having an knowledge of God we know how to Approach him & ask & he will answer An other thing the learned Dr says the Lord made the world out of nothing, you tell them that God made the world out of something, & they think you are a fool. But I am learned & know more than the whole world, the Holy Ghost does any how, & I will associate myself with it. Beaureau, to organize the world out of chaotic matter, element they are principles that cannot be dissolved they may be reorganized. Another subject which is calculated to exhalt man I wish to speak of The resurrection of the dead The soul the mind of man, where did it come from? The learned says God made it in the beginning, but it is not so, I know better God has told me so. If you don't believe it, it wont make the truth without effect, **God was a self existing being, man exists upon the same principle. God made a tabernacle & put a spirit in it and it became a Human soul, man existed in spirit & mind coequal with God himself,** you who mourn the loss of friends are ownly seperated for a moment, the spirit is seperated for a little time, they are now conversant with each other as we are on the earth. I am dwelling on the immutability of the spirit of man, **is it**

logic to say the spirit of man had a beginning & yet had no end, it does not have a beginning or end, my ring is like the Existence of man it has no beginning or end, if cut into their would be a beginning & end, so with man if it had a beginning it will have an end, if I am right I might say God never had power to create the spirit of man, God himself could not create himself. Intelligence is Eternal & it is self existing, All mind that is susceptible of improvement, the relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. God has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences that they may be exalted with himself this is good doctrine, it tastes good, I can taste the principles of eternal life, so can you, they are given to me by the revelations of Jesus Christ and I know you believe it. All things that God sees fit to reveal to us in relation to us, reveals his commandments to our spirits, and in saving our spirits we save the body, the same as though we had no Body how comes the awful responsibility in relation to our dead, if they do not be baptized they must be damned, (I wish I had 40 days to talk) what promises are made, what can be said in the grave, God dwells in eternity, and he does not view things as we do, the greatest responsibility laid upon us in this life, is in relation to our dead Paul said we cannot be made perfect without us [them], for it is necessary that the seals are in our hands to seal our children & our dead for the fulness of the dispensation of times, A dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man. All sins and blasphemy, were to be forgiven except the sin against the Holy Ghost. God has made provision for every spirit in the eternal world, and the spirits of our friends should be searched out & saved, Any man that has a friend in eternity can save him if he has not committed the unpardonable sin, He cannot be damned through all eternity, there is a possibility for his escape in a little time, If a man has knowledge he can be saved, if he has been guilty of great sins he is punished for it, when he consents to obey the gospel whether Alive or dead, he is saved, his own mind damns him I have no fear of hell fire that don't exist No man can commit the unpardonable sin, until He receives the Holy Ghost, All will suffer until they obey Christ himself, even the devil said I am a savior and can save all, he rose up in rebellion against God and was cast down,. Jesus Christ will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do 10 commit the unpardonable sin they must receive the Holy Ghost have the heavens opened unto them, & know God, & then sin against him, this is the

case with many apostates in this Church, they never cease to try to hurt me, they have got the same spirit the devil had, you cannot save them, they make open war like the devil, stay all that hear, don't make any hasty moves you may be saved, if a spirit of Bitterness is in you, don't be in haste, say you that man is a sinner, well if he repents he shall be forgiven. I could go back and trace every subject of interest concerning the relationship of man to God if I had time, there is many mansions in my fathers Kingdom, What have we to console us in relation to our dead, we have the greatest hope in relation to our dead, of any people on earth we have seen them walk worthy on earth and those who have died in the faith are now in the celestial kingdom of God, they have gone to await the resurrection of the dead, to go to the celestial glory, while there is many who die who will have to wait many years, But I am authorized to say to you my friends in the name of the Lord, that you may wait for your friends to come forth to meet you in eternity in the morn of the celestial world, those saints who have been murdered in the persecution shall triumph in the celestial world, while their murderers shall dwell in torment until they pay the utmost farthing.

I have Fathers, Brothers, children, that are gone to eternity soon to meet me, the time will soon be gone, the trump will soon be blown. A question will Mothers have their children in Eternity yes, yes, you will have the children But as it falls so it will rise, It will never grow, It will be in its precise form as it fell in its mothers arms. Eternity is full of thrones upon which dwell thousands of children reigning on thrones of glory not one cubit added to their stature I will leave this subject here and make a few remarks upon Baptism, I will read a text in German [German] upon Baptism, John says I Baptise you with water But when Jesus Christ Comes He shall administer the baptism of fire & the Holy Ghost, John said his baptism was good for nothing without the Baptism of Jesus Christ, Many talk of any baptism not being essential to salvation but this would lay the foundation of their damnation, There has also been remarks made concerning all men being redeemed from Hell, But I say that any man who commits the unpardonable sin must dwell in hell worlds without end.

Thomas Bullock Report , *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon

W. Cook, p.348-349, 350, 351, 352:

The President having arrived-the Choir sung an hymn Elder Amasa Lyman prayed.

The Prophet while I address you on the subject which was contempd in the fore pt. of the Con.

-as the Wind blows very hard it will be hardly possible for me to make you all hear it is of the greatest importance & the mo solemn of any that cod. occupy our attentn. & that is the subj of the dead on the dece of our bror. Follit who was crushed to death in a well-& inasmuch as there are a great many in this congre who live in this city & who have lost friend I shall speak in genl. & offer you my ideas so far as I have ability & so far as I shall be insp'd. by the H S. to dwell on his subjt. I want your prayer faith the insp'n. of Alm God to say things that are true & shall carry the testimony to your hearts & pray that he may streng my lungs-stay the winds-& let the pray of the Saints to heaven appear-for the prayers of the righteous avail much & I verily believe that your prayers shall be heard before I enter in this investign. fully of the subjt. that is lying before us I wish to make a few preliminaries in order that you may understand when I come to it I do not calculate to please your ears with oratory with much leang. but I calculate to edify you with simple truths from Heaven. **I wish to go back to the begin: of creation-it** is necessary to know the mind decree & ordinatn. of the great Elohi beging at the creatn. & it is necy. for us to have un understandg. of God in the beging. if we start right it is very easy for us to go right all the time but if we start wrong it is hard to get right There are very few who understand rightly the char of God-They do not comprehend any thing that is past or that which is to come & com: but little more than the brute beast if a man learns know nothing more than to eat, drink, sleep, & does not comprehend any of the desn. of God the Beast com the same thing eats drin sleeps-[k]noes nothing more & how are we to do it by no or. way than the insp'n of A. God.

I want to go back to the begin & so get you into a more lofty sphere than what the human being generally understands I want to ask this cong: every man wom: & child to ansr. the questn. in their own heart what kind of a being is God I agn. rept. the questn. **what kind of a being is God** does any man or woman know have any of you seen, him heard him, communed with him, here is the questn. that will peradventure from this time henceforth occupy your attentn.-The Apos: says this is Eternal life to know God & J.C. who he has sent -that is eternal. life if any man enquire what kind of a being is God if he will search deligently his own heart that

unless he knows God he has no eternal life-my first object is to find out the character of the true God & if I shod. be the man to com: the God & I com: them to your heart let every man & woman henceforth shut their mouths & never say anything agst. the man of God & If I do not do it I have no right to revn. inspn. if all are [indecipherable word] to the God they will all be as bad off as I am. they will all say I ought to be d d. there is not a man or wom who wod not breath out an anathema on my head & some wod feel authd. to take away my life-if any man is authd. to take away my life who say I am a false teacher so I shod. have the same right to all false teacher & where wod. be the end of the blood & there is no law in the heart of God that wod. allow any one to interfere with the rights of man every man has the right to be a false as well as a true prophet-If I shew verily that I have the truth of God & shew that ninety nine of 100 are false prop. it wod. deluge the whole world with blood. I want you all o know God to be familiar with him & if I can bring you to him all persecut. agst. me will cease & let you know that I am his servt. for I speak as one havg. authy. and not as a scrib[e] open your ears & eyes all ye Ends of the Earth & hear & I am going to prove. it to you with the Bible & I am going to tell you the desns. of God to the human race & why he interferes with the affairs of man **God himself who sits enthroned in yonder Heavens is a man like unto one of yourselves who holds this world in its orbit & upholds all things by his power if you were to see him today you wod. see him a man** for Adam was a man like in fashion & image like unto him Adam wkd talked & convd. with him as one man talks & com: with anor. in order to speak for the consoln. of those who mourn for the loss of their friend it is necy. to understand the char. & being of God for I am going to tell you what sort of a being of God. for he was God from the begin of all Eternity & if I do not refute it-truth is the touchstone they are the simple and first princ: of truth to know for a certainty the char. of God that we may conv[erse] with him same as a man & **God himself the father of us all dwelt on a Earth same as Js. himself did** & I will shew it from the Bible-I wish I had the trump of an Arch An. I cod. tell the story in such a manner that pers: shod cease for ever-J. Sd. as the Far. hath power in himself even so hath the Son power to do what the Far. did that ansr. is obvious in a manner to lay down his body & take it up-J-did as my Far. laid down his body & take it up agn. if you don't believe it you don't believe the Bile the Scrip says & I defy all hell all learnng. wisdom & records of hell togr to refute it here then is Etl. life to know the only wise and

true God you have got to learn how to be a God yourself & be a K. & God Priest to God same as all have done by going from a small copy to anr. from grace to grace until the resn. of & sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before & God in the L D. while certn. individuals are proclaiming. his name is not trifling with us-how consoling to the mourner when they are cald. to part with a wife, mother, father dr. relative to know that all Earthly taber shall be dissolved that they shall be heirs of God & jt. hrs of J. C. to inherit the same power exaltn. until you ascd. the throne of Etl. power same as those who are gone bef. what J. did I do the things I saw my Far. do before worlds came rolld. into existence I saw my Far. work out his K with fear & trembling & I must do the same when I shall give my K to the Far. so that he obtns K rollg. upon K. so that J treads in his tracks as he had gone before. It is plain beyond comprehensn. & you thus learn the first prin of the Gospel when you climb a ladder you must begin at the bottom run[g] until you learn the last prin of the gospel for it is a great thing to learn Saln. beyond the grave & it is not all to be com in this world. I sup I am not alld. to go into investign. but what is contd. in the Bible & I think there is so many wise men who wod. put me to death for treason I shall turn commentator today. I shall go to the first Hebrew word in the Bible the 1st sen: In the beginning-Berosheat -In by thro. & every thing else. Roshed the head when the Inspd. man wrote it he did not put the 1st pt. to it. a man a Jew witht. any authy. thot. it too bad to begin to talk about the head of any man. **"The Head one of the Gods brought forth the Gods"** is the true meang. of the word-if You do not believe it you do not believe the learned man of God-no man can tell you more than I do thus **the H God brot. forth the Gods in the Head council-I** want to bring it to English. Oh ye lawyers ye doctors I want to let you know that the H G. knows something as well as you **do-the Head God called togr. the Gods & set in Grand Council &c** when I say a lawyer I mean a lawyer of the Scrip. I have done so hither to let the lawyers flutter & let everybody laugh at them. some learned Dr. mit. take a notn. to say thus & so-& are not to be altd. & I am going to shew you an error I have an old book in the Latin Greek Hebrew & German & I have been readg. the Germ: I find it to be the most correct that I have found & it corresponds the nearest to the revns. that I have given the last 16 yrs 72 years it tells about Jachabod means Jacob-in the English James-& you may talk about James thro all Eternity in the 21 v. of 4th Mat: where it gives the test. that it is to Jacob & how can we escape the dn. of hell

witht. God reveal to us. Latin says that Jackobus means Jacob-Hebrew says means Jacob-Greek says Jacob German says Jacob thank God I have got this book & I thank him more for the gift of the H G. I have all the 4 Test. come here ye learned men & read if you can. I shod. not have brot. up this word unt only to shew that I am right when we beg to learn in this way **we beg to learn the only true God & when we be[g]in to know how to come to him-he begins to unfold the heavens to us & tell us all abt. it** bef our prayers get to his ears at the bo now I ask all the learned men who hear me wher. the learned men who are preachg. Saln. say that God created the Heavens & the Earth out of nothing & the reason is that they are unlearned & I know more than all the world put togr. & If the H.G. in me com: more than all the world I will associate with it-What does Boro mean it means to organize same as you wod. organize a Ship.-**God himself had materials to org. the world out of chaos which is Element & in which dwells all the glory-that nothing can destroy they never can have an ending they coexist eternally-** I have anor. to dwell on & it is impossible for me to say much but to touch upon them-for time will not permit me to say all-so I must come to the resn. of the dead-the soul the in[ne]r Spirit-all man says God created in the beging. the very idea lessens man in my idea-I don't bel. the doct: hear it all ye Ends of the World for God has told me so I am going to tell of things more **noble-we say that God himself is a selfexisting God**, who told you so, how did it get it into your head who told you that man did not exist in like manner- how does it read in the Heb. that God made man & put into it Adams Spirit & so became **a living Spirit-the mind of man-the mind of man is as immortal as God himself-** hence while I talk to these mourners-they are only separated from their bodies for a short period-their **Spirits coexisted with God** & now converse one another same as we do-does not this give your satisfactn. I want to reason more on the Spirit of Man for I am dwelling on the body of man on the subjt. of the dead-the SP of man **I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man, the im[mor]t. Sp. bec. it has no beging.** Suppose you cut it into but as the D[evil] lives there wod. be an end all the fools & wise men from the beging. of creation **who say that man had begin-they must have an end & then the doc of annihilitn. wod. be true-but if I am right I mit. with boldness proclaim from the housetop that God never had power to create the Sp of Man at all-it is ne God himself cod. not create himself-intelligence is self existent it is a sp. from age to end & there is no creatn**

abt. it the first principles of man are self exist with God-that God himself finds himself in the midst of Sp & bec he saw proper to institute laws for those who were in less intelligence that they mit. have one glory upon another in all that knowledge power & glory & so took in hand to save the world of Sp: you say honey is Sweet & so do I. I can also taste the Sp of Eternal life I know it is good & when I tell you of these things that were given me by Insp of the H S. you are bound to rece it as sweet & I rej more & more. Mans rel. to God & I will open your eyes in rel to your dead all things which God of his inf reason has seen fit to reveal to us in our mortal state in regard to our mortal bodies are revd. to us as if we had no bodies & those revns. which will save our dead will save our bodies. & God reveals them to us in the view of no eternal dissn. of the body-hence the awful responsibility that rests upon us for our dead-for all the Spirits must either obey the gospel or be d-d solemn thot. dreadful thot. is there nothing to be done for those who have gone before us without obeyg the decrees of God Wod. to God that I had 40 days & nights-to tell you all to let you know I am not a faln prop-what kind of characters are those who can be saved altho their bodies are decaying in the grave-the greatest responsibility that God has laid upon us to seek after our dead-the apostle says they without us cant be Perfect -now I am speaking of them I say to you Paul, you cant be perfect witht. us.-those that are gone before & those who come after must be made perfect-& God has made it obligatory to man-God said he shall send Elijah &c I have a declarn to make as to the provn. which God made from before the foundn. of the world. what has J. sd. All sins & all blas. every trans. that man may be guilty of there is a Saln. for him or in the world to come -every Sp in the Et. world can be ferreted out & saved unless he has comd. that Sin which cant be remd to him-that God has wrot. out saln. for all men unless they have comd. a certn. sin. a friend who has got a friend in the world can save him unless he has comd. the unpard sin & so you can see how far you can be Savior there is no thing that a man can commit the unpardonable sin after the dissn of the body & there is a way possible for escape. not Part[icul]arly st[ate]d those that are witht. wisdom until they get exalted to wisdom so long as man will not give acct. of his sins a sinner has his own mind & is in his own condemner for the G will the torment of the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burng. with fire & brimstone -I know the Scriptures I understand them-no man can commit the unpardonable sin after the dissn. of the body but they must do it in this World-hence the Saln. of J. C was

wrought out for all men to triumph over the devil-for he stood up for a Savior-J. contd. that there wou. be certn. souls that wou. be condemned & the d[evi]l sd. he cou. save them all-as the grand council gave in for J. C. so the d I fell & all who put up their heads for him. All sin shall be forgiven except the sin agt. the H. G. he has got to say that the Sun does not shine while he sees it he has got to deny J. C. when the heavens are open to him. & from that time they begin to be enemies like many of the apostates of the Church of J. C. of L.D.S.-when a man begins to be an enemy he hunts him-for he has the same Sp. that they had who crucd. the Lord of life-the same Sp. that Sin agt. the H. G. I advise all to be careful what you do-stay-do not give way-you may find that some one has laid a snare for you be cautious-await-when you find a Sp. wants bloodshed murder same is not of God but is of the devil out of the abundance of the heart man speaks-the man that tells you words of life is the man that can save you-I warn you agt all evil characters who sin agt. H. G. for there is no redempn. for them in this world nor in the world to come I can enter into the mysteries-I can enter largely into the eternal worlds-for J. sd. where my In my Fars. mansion there are many mansions &c There is one glory of the moon sun & star &c we have the reason to have the greatest hope & consoln. for our dead- for we have aided them in the 1st princ for we have seen them walk in the midst & sink asleep in the arms of J. & hence is the glory of the Sun-you mourners have occn. to rejoice for your husband has gone to wait until the redn. & your expn. & hope are far above what man can conceive-for why God has revd. to us-& I am authd. to say by the authy. of the H. G. that you have no occasn. to fear for he is gone to the home of the just-don't mourn don't weep-I know it by the test of the H. G. that is within me-rejoice O Israel-your friends shall triumph gloriously-while their murderers shall welter for years.-I say for the benefit of strangers I have a Far. Bror. Friends who are gone to a world of Sp-they are absent for a momt.-they are in the Sp. then shall we hail our Mor. Fars. Friends & all no fear of mobs-&c but all one Eternity of felicity-Mothers you shall have your Children for they shall have it-for their debt is paid there is no damn. awaits them for they are in the Spirits-as the Child dies so shall it rise from the ded & be living in the burng. of God. -it shall be the child as it was bef it died out of your arms Children dwell & exercise power in the same form as they laid them down

The Bap of Water witht. the B of Fire & the H G. attg. it are necy he must be born of W. & Sp in

order to get into the K of God & in the German text bears me out same as the revns. which I have given for the 14 years-I have the test to put in their teeth that my test has been true all the time You will find it in the declar of John the Bap (reads from the German) John says I bap you with Water but when J comes who has the power he shall adm the bap of F & the H. G. Gt. God now where is all the Sect. world. & if this is true they are all d-d as clearly as any Anathama ever was-I know the text is true-I call upon all to say I-(shouts of I) Alex Campbell -how are you going to save them with water-for John sd. his bapm. was nothing witht. the bap of J. C. One God, Far., Jesus, hope of, our calling, one baptism -all three bap make one. I have the truth & I am at the defiance of the world to contradict. I have preached Latin Hebrew Greek German & I have fulfilled all I am not so big a fool as many have taken me for-the Germans know that I read the German correct-Hear it all ye Ends of the Earth-all ye Sinners Repent Repent-turn to God for your reln. wont save you & ye will be d-d but I do not say how along-but those who Sin agt. the H. G. cannot be forgiven in this world or in the world to come but they shall die the 2nd. death -but as they concoct scenes of bloodshed in this world so they shall rise to that resurn. which is as the lake of fire & brimstone-some shall rise to the everlasting burning of God & some shall rise to the dn. of their own filthiness-same as the lake of fire & brimstone-I have intd. my remarks to all-to all rich & poor bond & free great & small I have no enmity agst any man. I love you all-I am their best friend & if persons miss their mark it is their own fault-if I reprove a man & he hate me he is a fool-for I love all men especially these my brethren & sisters-I rejoice in hearing the test of my aged friend-You never knew my heart. No man knows my hist-I can not do it. I shall never undertake-if I had not experienced what I have I should not have known it myself-I never did harm any man since I have been born in the world-my voice is always for peace-I cannot lie down until my work is finished-I never think evil nor think any thing to the harm of my fellow man-& when I am called at the trump & weighed in the balance you will know me then -I add no more God bless you. Amen-The choir sung an hymn at ½ p 5.

These comments were made in April. By June, Joseph was ready to take the subject up again and elaborate on what was first introduced during the King Follett Discourse. His comments in June appear below. First, the quote found in the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which is

accepted by the church as an authoritative source. There we find this quote: "I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have selected this text for that express purpose. **I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I have preach on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods.** It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years." (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 370.)

The more complete account from which the comment was taken came from Thomas Bullock, a scribe for Joseph Smith at the time the talk was given. This report is set forth more fully below. In the more extended account below, Joseph tells us that his information about plurality of Gods came from translating the Book of Abraham, the source we quoted above. Here, then, are Joseph's final comments on this subject, given just ten days before his death:

Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, p.378-382

(16 June 1844 (1) (Sunday Morning). Grove East of Temple.)

Thomas Bullock Report

Prayer by N Whitney choir sang "Mortals Awake" The Prophet read the 3rd Rev. text 6th. v. & made us K & P. unto God & his Far to him be glory & dom. for evermore-

It is altogr. correct in the transltn. -now you know that **of late some have sprung up & apostat. & they declare that Pro bel[ieves]. in a plurality of Gods** -&c. & behold a very great secret they cry it has been my intentn. to take up this subj. & show what my Faith is in the matter-I have contemplated the saying of Je[sus] as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be at his 2nd. coming & if it rains I'll preach-the plurarlity of Gods-I have selected this text **I wish to declare I have allways-& in all congregats. when I have preached it has been the plurality of Gods** it has been preached 15 years-I have always decld. God to be a distinct personage-J.C. a sep. & distinct pers from God the Far. the H.G was a distinct personage & or Sp & these 3 constit. 3 distinct personages & 3 Gods-if this is in accordance with the New Test.-lo & behold we have 3 Gods any how & they are plural any how-our text **says the apost[les] have disc[overe]d. that there**

were Gods above-God was the Far. of our Ld. J.C. -my object was to preach the Scrip-& preach the doctrine there being a God above the Far. of our Ld. J.C. -I am bold to declare I have taut. all the strong doctrines publicly-& always stronger that what I preach in private-John was one of the men & the apos. declare they were made K. & P. unto God the Patr. of our Ld. J.C. it reads just so hence the doctrine of a plurality of Gods is as prominent in the Bible as any doctrine-it is all over the face of the Bible, it stands beyond the power of controversy-a wayfaring man tho a fool need not fail-Paul says there are gods many & Lords many -I want to set it in a plain simple manner-but to us there is but one God pertaining to us, in all thro all, -but if J. Smith says there is Gods many & Lds. many they cry away with him crucify him mankind verily say that the Scrip [i]s with them-Search the Script & & they testify of things that apostates wod blaspheme-Paul if Jo Smith is a blasphemmer you are-I say there are Gods many & Lds many but to us only one & we are to be in subject to that one & no man can limit the bounds, or the eternal existence of eternal time-hath he beheld the e[terna]l. world. & is he authd. to say that there is only God he makes himself a fool-& there is an end of his career in knowledge he cannot obtn. all knowledge for he has sealed up the gate to some say I do not interpret same as you-they say it means the heathen God. Paul says there are Gods many &c it makes a plurality of Gods any how-wiht. a revn. I am not going to give the God of Heaven to them any how-you know & I testify that Paul had no allusions to it-I have it from God & get over it if you can-I have a witness of the H.G-& a test. that Paul had no allusion to the heathen G. in the text-Twice I will shew from the Heb. Bible & the 1st. word shews a plurality of Gods-& I want the apostate & learned men to come here-& prove to the contrary an unlearned boy must give you a little Hebrew-Berosheit &c In the begin. rosheit-the head-it shod. read the heads of-to organize the Gods-Eloiheam Eloi. God in sing. heam, reanders Gods I want a little learning as well as other fools

Popes quot: Drink deep all the confusion is for want of drinking and draught the head God-organized the heavens & the Earth-I defy all the learning in the world to refute me- In the begin the heads of the Gods organized the heaven & the Earth -now the learned Priest-the people rage-& the heathen imagine a vain thing-if we pursue the Heb further-it reads The Head one of the Gods said let us make man in our image I once asked a learned Jew once-if the Heb. language compels us to render all words ending in heam in the plural-why not render the

first plural-he replied it would ruin the Bible-he acknowledged I was right. I came here to investigate these things precisely as I believe it-hear & judge for yourself-& if you go away satisfied- well & good- in the very beginning there is a plurality of Gods -beyond the power of refutation-it is a great subject I am dwelling on- the word Eloheim ought to be in the plural all the way thro - Gods-the heads of the Gods appointed one God for us -& when you take a view of the subject it sets one free to see all the beauty holiness & perfection of the God-all I want is to get the simple truth-naked & the whole truth- Men say there is one God-the Far. Son & the H.G. are only 1 God-it is a strange God any how 3 in 1. & 1 in 3. it is a curious thing any how-Far. I pray not for the world but I pray for those that thou givest me &c &c all are to be crammed into 1 God-it wou. make the biggest God in all the world-he is a wonderful big God-he would be a Giant I want to read the text to you myself- I am agreed with the Far. & the Far. is a greed with me & we are agreed as one -the Greek shews that is shod. be agreed -Far. I pray for them that thou hast given me out of the world &c &c that they may be agreed & all come to dwell in unity & in all the Glory & Everlasting burngs of God & then we shall see as we are seen & be as God-& he as the God of his Far.-I want to reason- I learned it by translating the papyrus now in my house -I learned a test. concerning Abraham & he reasoned concerng. the God of Heaven-in order to do that sd. he-suppose we have two facts that supposes that anotr. fact may exist two men on the earth-one wiser than the other-wod. shew that antr. who is wiser than the wisest may exist-intelligences exist one above anotr. that there is no end to it -if Abra. reasoned thus-if J.C was the Son of God & John discd. that god the Far. of J.C had a far. you may suppose that he had a Far. also-where was ther ever a Son witht. a Far.-where ever did tree or any thing spring into existence witht. a progenitor-& every thing comes in this way-Paul says that which is Earthly is in likeness of that which is Heavenly - hence if J. had a Far. can we not believe that he had a Far. also -I despise the idea of being scared to death-I want you all to pay particr. attent. J. sd. as the Far. wrought precisely in the same way as his Far. had done bef -as the Far. had done bef.-he laid down his life & took it up same as his Far. had done bef-he did as he was sent to lay down his life & take it up again & was then committed unto him the keys &c I know it is good reasoning-I have reason to think that the Church is being purged-I saw Satan fall from heaven-& the way they ran was a caution. all these are wonders & marvellous in our eyes in these last days-so long

as men are under the law of God they have no fears, they do not scarce themselves-I want to stick to my text-to shew that when men open their lips- they do not injure me-but injure themselves-To the law & to the testimony -they are poured all over the Scrip When things that are great are passed over witht. even a thot I want to see all in all its bearings & hug it to my bosom-I bel. all that God ever revd. & I never hear of a man being d[amne]d for belg. too much but they are d-d for unbel. they found fault with J.C. bec. he sd. he was the Son of God & made himself equal with God -they say like the apost. of old I must be put down -what Je. say-it is written in your law I said Ye are Gods -it was thro' him that they drink of the rock -of course he wod. take the honor to himself J. if they were called Gods unto whom the word of God why shld. it be thot incredible that I shod. say I am the Son of God. Oh Apostates did ye never think of this bef. these are the quotations that the apostates take to the Scrip- they swear that they bel the Bible & the Book of Mormon &c & then you will get filth & slander & bogus makers plenty-& one of the Church members prophesied that Jo Smith shld. never preach any more-& yet I am now prachg.-go & read the vision -there is glory & glory-Sun, moon & Stars-& so do they differ in glory & every man who reigns is a God-& the text of the Do & Covt damns themselves-Paul what do you say-they impeached Paul & all Went & left him -Paul had 7 churches & they drove him off from among them-& yet they cannot do it by me-I rej. in that-my test. is good-Paul-says there is one Glory of the Sun the moon & the Stars-& as the Star differs &c -They are exalted far above princ. thrones dom. & angels-& are expressly decld. to be heirs of God & jt. heirs with J.C. all havg. et[erna]l. power-the Scrip are a very strange doct.-I have an[othe]r. Scrip-now says God when visited Moses in the Bush-moses was a stutt[er]ing sort of a boy like me-God said thou shalt be a God unto the children of Israel-God said thou shalt be a God unto Aaron & he shall be thy spokes. I bel. in these Gods that God reveals as Gods-to be Sons of God & all can cry Abba Father -Sons of God who exalt themselves to be Gods even from bef. the foundatn. of the world & are all the only Gods I have a reverence for- John sd. he was a K[ing]. J.C. who hath by his own blood made us K & P to God. Oh thou God who are K. of K's & Ld. of Lds. -we cannot bel. thee-old Catholic Church is worth more than all -here is a princ. of logic-that men have no more sense-I will illustrate an old apple tree-here jumps off a branch & says I am the true tree. & you are corrupt-if the whole tree is corrupt how can any true thing come out of it-the

char[acte]r of the old ones have always been sland[ere]d. by all apos[tates] since the world began-I testify again as God never will acknowledge any apost: any man who will betray the Catholics will betray you-& if he will betray one anothr. he will betray you-all men are liars who say that they are of the true-God always sent a new dispensatn. into the world-when men come out & build upon o[the]r men's foundatn.-did I build on anotr. mans foundtn. but my own-I have got all the truth & an indepent. rev[elatio]n. in the bargain - & God will bear me off triumphant-I will drop this subj. I wish I cod. speak for 3 or 4 hours it is not expect. on acct. of the rain-I will still go on & shew you proof on proof. all the Bible is as equal one part as another

In the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, p.374, we have this statement drawn from the above material: “ These Scriptures are a mixture of very strange doctrines to the Christian world, who are blindly led by the blind. I will refer to another Scripture. ‘Now,’ says God, when He visited Moses in the bush, (Moses was a stammering sort of a boy like me) God said, ‘Thou shalt be a God unto the children of Israel.’ God said, ‘Thou shalt be a God unto Aaron, and he shall be thy spokesman.’ I believe those Gods that God reveals as Gods to be sons of God, and all can cry, ‘Abba, Father!’ Sons of God who exalt themselves to be Gods, even from before the foundation of the world, and are the only Gods I have a reverence for.”

Well, Joseph did not have those 3 or 4 hours, and never returned to teach on the subject. We do have, however, other statements in scripture which also bear on the subject of mankind’s potential godlike existence. For example, from Jesus Christ we have the following: (John 10:34) “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?”

Then again we have Christ responding to a question in Luke 17: 20-21: “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” If it is within some (or maybe even all) of us, then we possess it already. We cannot possess it without having brought it with us from

before.

The idea that we bring something eternal or possessing power with us from before this life is affirmed in Alma's teaching regarding high priesthood. He wrote the following:

Alma 13: 2-7:

2 And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained--**being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God**, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore **they having chosen good**, and exercising **exceedingly great faith**, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

4 And thus they have **been called to this holy calling on account of their faith**, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus **this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world** for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared--

6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest--

7 This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, **which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity**, according to his foreknowledge of all things--

From these teachings we know that high priesthood relates back to preparation and calling before the foundation of the world. Those who inherit it here brought that right with them when they came. This gives new meaning to two things: First, it shows why the authority of the priesthood

is something which can be conferred upon anyone, but the power of priesthood is something which only a few will possess. (See D&C 121: 34-41: Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson-- That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;”)

In President Boyd K. Packer’s last General Conference address (April, 2010) he spoke about the success the church has had in distributing the administrative authority of the priesthood throughout the world. But he lamented the failure to have the power of the priesthood spread co-equal with the authority. This may not be so much a failure of the church to discharge responsibility devolving upon it as it may be a failure of those who receive it here to have ever qualified in the first place to bear such priestly power. This, however, is off the main subject now being discussed. So we return to the main topic.

Joseph’s comment about those who “exalted themselves to be gods before the world began” came after the full definition of exaltation was known. Indeed, the then most recent recorded revelation was what now appears as Section 132. It had been written down in its final form on July 12, 1843 and dealt with the definition of exaltation. Among other things that

revelation contained the following language:

D&C 132:16-25:

16 Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

17 For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain **separately and singly, without exaltation**, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are **not gods, but are angels of God** forever and ever.

18 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them--Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths--then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and **they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.**

20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from

everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

23 But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

24 This is **eternal lives**--to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

25 Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to **the deaths**; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law.

For those who qualified before this life to be “exalted” to meet the definition of the word, they must have been sealed into a family unit, husband and wife, possessing the capacity for the continuation of lives. This would mean, therefore, that the Elohim (being plural) included those who were parents. Parents whose decision to come here and prove their own children, required them to in turn come and minister here as servants for those children whom they hope to redeem.

We have a very limited view of the workings of God among men. We have taken a Judeo-Christian view when we were meant to understand things which go far beyond anything these religious traditions have been able to retain. The Restoration of All Things was supposed to revolutionize our understanding. Just as the vision of the three degrees of glory (D&C Section 76) changes fundamentally the picture of the afterlife for us, so also Joseph’s restoration of the record of Abraham changes our view of the pre-earth councils.

We should spend less time trying to harmonize our beliefs with mainstream Christianity and more time allowing what we have been given to inform us of things which we have never known.

Returning then to the first three words spoken by the players in the endowment: Elohim, who speaks, is not a solitary figure. At a minimum it is a couple, male and female. It may include, however, hundreds of others who qualified as both “noble and great” and “the Gods” before this earth was formed. The Elohim speak and say, first: “Jehovah.” The first word spoken is the name of the Lord and Redeemer. Of a truth He is then the Word. He is the beginning of the words of God the Father or the Elohim. He is first. His role will be primary. Not just in creation, but also in redemption of that creation.

The Word, Jehovah, is followed by the name “Michael.” Michael is ‘simply symbolic so far as the man and woman are concerned.’ Michael may be the name of a real pre-earth person, but here it is also a symbol for all those who are similarly situated. These would include both pre-earth men and women. All those who were ‘noble and great’ and destined to come and inhabit this world. These are all those who are called in Chapter 4 of Abraham “the Gods.”

The third word spoken, after naming those to whom direction is being given, is a command to “see.” It could be restated: “behold.” Or “look.” Or “open your mind to understand.” Or, “lose your blindness and accept what is before you.” No matter how you render it, the command remains one of the most important still for us to obey. We must be willing to “see.” What we will see from the foregoing is this:

First, there are those who were identified as “the Gods” before the world was organized.

Second, there were those for whom this world was designed to be a time of “proving” and testing who were not identified as “the Gods” before the world was organized.

Third, Joseph regarded those who were identified as “the Gods” to be “sons of God who exalted themselves to be gods before the world was made.”

Fourth, you cannot know the group to which you belong because there is a veil between all of us and the pre-earth existence. The risks of mortality, however, are the same for all who are here. The way back is the same no matter which group you belong to, and either can fall from their exaltation or can acquire their exaltation, depending entirely upon the kind of life they live here.

Fifth, only the Lord knows and can tell you of your pre-earth status. If you learn of that it will be only through revelation.

Sixth, nothing about this changes the risks of mortality or the obligations we owe to God while here. It should not change in any way the life you live. It may let you understand things differently, may give you more hope for things, or a deeper appreciation for some ideas, but it should not change how you understand your obligation to live your life. I am hoping, however, that it gives you a new way to view the endowment and how much more we can see within it with a little effort to open our eyes, and follow the admonition from Elohim, to “see.”