

#3: Apostasy, Reformation, and Joseph Smith

Monte F. Shelley, 1 Feb. 2009

Quotes

- What the caterpillar calls the end of the world the master calls the butterfly.
- After reading 1 Nephi 11:17 and Alma 7:11–12 with Kris and Owen Cherrington, Elder Maxwell said “Jesus Christ could have made the atonement by suffering only for our sins. He didn’t have to take upon Himself all of our infirmities, pains, and sicknesses. He did so because he wanted to understand our suffering, as only someone who has experienced it can. So He could ‘know according to the flesh how to succor his people.’” (Kris Cherrington)

1. New Testament Christianity

Apostasy, scattering, and restoration prophesied. Persecution.

Apostasy: “The Greek word *apostasia* (apostasy, falling away) means *rebellion* or *revolution*. It conveys the sense of an internal takeover by factions hostile to the intentions of the previous leaders. I personally prefer the translation *mutiny*, as it suggests that unauthorized members commandeer a ship and take it where the ship is not supposed to go. Since early Christians often thought of the church as a ship, I think *mutiny* conveys the sense of what Paul and others meant by the term *apostasia*. (See [2 Thes. 2:3](#).)” (Stephen Robinson, *Ensign*, Jan 1988)

SHEREM, KORIHOR, ZEEZROM

Acts 20:29–30 PAUL “after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” 2 Thes 2:3 “for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.” PETER prophesied that “there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord.... And many shall follow their pernicious ways....”

While the apostles were alive, they settled disputes about doctrines and practices. The apostle Peter wrote to James about false teachers, saying “These men, professing... to know my mind, undertake to explain my words... more intelligently than I who spoke them, telling their catechumens that this is my meaning, which indeed I never thought of. But if, while I am still alive, they dare thus to misrepresent me, how much more will those who shall come after me dare to do so!”

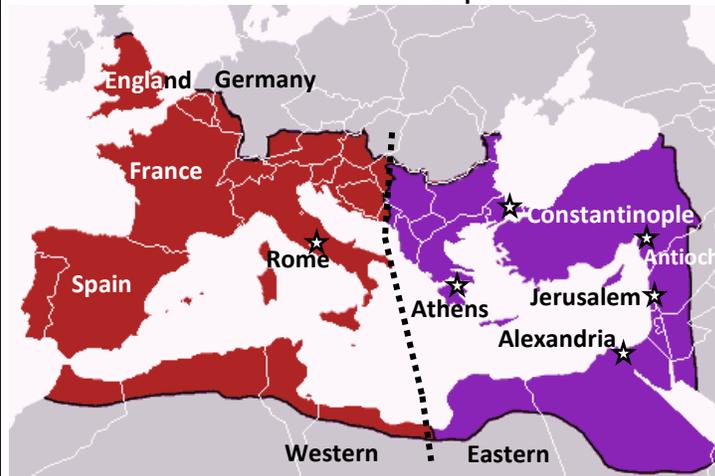
Persecution: “The early Christians did not believe that they were following a new religion. They were Jews... [who] were convinced that the Messiah had come....” Jewish religious leaders considered Christianity to be a heretical sect of Judaism that was “tempting good Jews to become heretics.” Christians were considered heretics because they *accepted new scripture, believed in new revelations, and rejected Jewish creeds, traditions, and authority*. Jewish religious leaders attempted to use *force* to silence dissent and heretics. Christians were put in prison, killed, or run out of town. About AD 60, the Roman emperor, Nero, had Christians persecuted, tortured, and killed. During the 2nd century (100–200), we have records of the arrest, trial, and death of Christian martyrs.

In AD 70, the Temple was destroyed. Jews were scattered.

2. What happened to Christianity after the apostles?

Mention map, GO TO TIMELINE

Western and Eastern Roman Empire: c. AD 395



Church	Headquarters	Language	People
Western	Rome	Latin	Gentiles +
Eastern	Constantinople	Greek	Gentiles +
Syriac	Antioch	Syriac/Aramaic	Jews +

3. How did God prepare people for the restoration?

“I believe these reformers were inspired to create a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority.” (Ballard, Nov 1994)

Reformation, common language Scripture, question authority
Churches differ on how many councils accepted?

4. How did God prepare a country for the restoration?

“God inspired the earlier explorers and colonizers of America and the framers of the Constitution of the United States to develop a land and governing principles to which the gospel could be restored.” (Ballard, Nov, 1994)

Founding, Pilgrims, Diversity, Need for Union, Freedom of religion

1789: U.S. Constitution- divorce of marriage and nation, 6 of 13 states still had state religions

5. How did God prepare Joseph Smith?

Joseph Smith’s parents and grandparents were religious, patriotic, educationally minded, and of strong moral convictions. His grandfather, Asael Smith, stated years before Joseph was born, “It has been borne in upon my soul that one of my descendants will promulgate a work to revolutionize the world of religious faith” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, 25).

Joseph Smith’s parents were deeply devoted to God. They were also devoted parents, teaching their children the principles of faith and righteousness. Joseph Sr. had several dreams that gave him assurances that he would enjoy the blessings of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Once while Lucy was critically ill as a young mother, she made a covenant with God that she would serve Him completely if He would let her live to care for her family. Soon afterward she heard a voice comfort her, and she made a remarkable recovery. (See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 33–35, 47–50, 64–66)

Joseph Sr. and Lucy searched actively for religious truth. Both of them felt that none of the existing churches was consistent with the Church that Jesus Christ had established. For this reason, Joseph Sr. did not join any church. Lucy felt it was her duty to be baptized, so she joined the Presbyterian Church. When the gospel was restored, they both recognized the truth and embraced it.

- Why was Joseph Smith's family heritage important in helping prepare him for his mission as the prophet of the Restoration?

How did adversity or trials prepare Joseph?

While Joseph Smith was growing up, he and his family faced many challenges. When he was seven years old, he survived a typhoid epidemic that caused more than 3,000 deaths in the New England area. As he was recovering, a severe infection developed in the marrow of the bone in his left leg, and the almost unbearable pain lasted for more than three weeks.

The local surgeon decided that the leg would have to be amputated, but at the insistence of Joseph's mother, another doctor was sent for. Nathan Smith, a physician at nearby Dartmouth College, said that he would try to save the leg using a relatively new and extremely painful procedure to remove part of the bone. The doctor brought cords to bind the boy, but Joseph objected, saying that he would bear the operation without them. He also refused brandy, the only form of anesthetic available to him, and asked only that his father hold him in his arms during the operation. Joseph endured the operation with great courage, and Doctor Smith, one of the most knowledgeable physicians in the country, was able to save Joseph's leg. Joseph suffered for a long time before his leg healed and he could walk without pain.

- What can we learn about the character of young Joseph from this experience? In what ways could the trials and afflictions of Joseph's youth have helped prepare him to become the prophet of the Restoration? How have trials and afflictions helped prepare you for the responsibilities you have been given?

How did God get Joseph to Palmyra near the golden plates?

When Joseph was about 10 years old, three years of crop failures in Vermont left the Smith family in serious financial difficulty. After much deliberation, the family moved to the area of Palmyra, New York, where there was a prospect of better farming conditions.

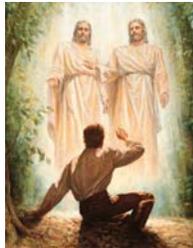
How did the religious atmosphere prepare Joseph?

At the time, there was great religious excitement and confusion in western New York, with many churches contending for converts.

What revelations did Joseph have before the First Vision?

- Why was Joseph confused about which church he should join? (See JS—H 1:5–10.) How was Joseph's situation like that of people today who are searching to know the truth?
- How did scripture study help Joseph resolve his confusion? (See JS—H 1:11–12.) What can we learn from Joseph's example? (Joseph not only read the scriptures but also searched and pondered them and applied them in his life.) How have the scriptures helped you in times of need or confusion?

6. Joseph's First Vision



Explain that on a spring morning in 1820, Joseph Smith went to the woods near his home to pray for guidance.

- How was Joseph's prayer on this morning different from other prayers he had offered? (See JS—H 1:14.) Why is private vocal

prayer often helpful when we are offering up the desires of our hearts to God?

- What happened as Joseph Smith began to pray? (See JS—H 1:15.) How was he delivered from this powerful darkness? (See JS—H 1:16–17.) What can we learn from this experience about overcoming the influence of Satan? Why is it important to keep praying in times of darkness or trial? (Invite class members to share experiences when prayer has helped them during such difficulties.)
- Why was Joseph Smith told that he should not join any of the churches? (See JS—H 1:18–19.)

7. What truths were revealed in the First Vision?

President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "I submit that in the few minutes that Joseph Smith was with the Father and the Son, he learned more of the nature of God the Eternal Father and the risen Lord than all the learned minds in all their discussions through all centuries of time" (*Church News*, 24 Oct. 1998, 6)

In the Sacred Grove, Joseph learned:

- God the Father and Jesus Christ live.
- The Father and the Son are real, separate beings with glorified bodies of flesh and bones.
- We are created in the image of God.
- Satan and his power are real, but God's power is greater.
- God hears and answers prayers and cares for us.
- None of the churches had the fulness of Christ's gospel.
- Revelation has not ceased.

President David O. McKay, the ninth President of the Church, testified that the First Vision "answers all the [questions] regarding God and his divine personality. ... His relation to his children is clear. His interest in humanity through authority delegated to man is apparent. The future of the work is assured. These and other glorious truths are clarified by that glorious first vision" (*Gospel Ideals* [1954], 85).

8. Conclusion

Then summarize how God prepared the right time, the right place, and the right man for the restoration of the gospel.

Read JS—H 1:25–26, "I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true."

Elder Quentin Cook: As a teenager living in Somerset, New Jersey, Todd Christofferson participated in the cast of the Hill Cumorah Pageant near Palmyra, New York, for two summers. During the production his first year, young Todd remembered the words of a former bishop. He had encouraged the youth of the ward to never give up striving with the Lord until they had "burned into [their] hearts a testimony of the gospel."

Todd had taken the words of his priesthood leader seriously and had prayed about his testimony from time to time. But there in Palmyra, the cradle of the Restoration, he determined this was the time and place he was going to get a sure confirmation.

"One night after the performance, I went to the Sacred Grove alone," he remembers. "It was a beautiful summer evening. I took off my shoes, went in, and began to pray. I prayed very diligently for an hour, maybe more—and nothing happened."

After some time, he gave up and left. Disappointment consumed him. What had he done wrong? Why hadn't Heavenly Father answered his prayer?

In what seemed like no time at all, the two-week stretch of pageant performances ended, and Todd returned to New Jersey. About a month later, as he was reading the Book of Mormon at home in his bedroom, he received his answer.

"Without my asking for it, the witness came," he recalls. "It came without words, but I received a very powerful spiritual confirmation—the kind that leaves no doubt—about the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith.

"Looking back on that experience, I realize that we can't dictate to God when, where, or how He will speak to us. We just have to be open to receive what He disposes, when He disposes it. It comes according to *His* will.

"I'm glad that Heavenly Father didn't respond to me that night in Palmyra. I might have thought that you have to be in a special place to get an answer to prayer or to gain a testimony. But you don't have to make a pilgrimage to Palmyra to know that Joseph Smith was a prophet or that the Book of Mormon is true. You don't have to go to Jerusalem to know that Jesus is the Christ. If Heavenly Father found me in Somerset, New Jersey, He can answer the prayers of anybody, anywhere in the world. He knows us intimately, and He can answer us whatever our place or circumstances." (Quentin L. Cook, "Elder D. Todd Christofferson: Prepared to Serve the Lord," *Ensign*, Aug 2008, 10–15)

Quotes

President Hinckley: "A most remarkable manifestation occurred on a spring morning in the year 1820 when the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph Smith. . . . A testimony of [that vision] has touched the hearts of millions in many lands. I add my own witness, given me by the Spirit, that the Prophet's description of that marvelous event is true, that God the Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ spoke with him on that occasion in a conversation as real and personal and intimate as are our conversations today" (*Be Thou an Example* [1981], 10).

Questions

1. How do these things apply to me now in my circumstances?
2. As I read these chapters, how do I feel?
3. Do they invite and entice me to love God, and do good?
4. As I read, do I "remember how merciful the Lord hath been, and ponder it in [my] heart" and ask God if it is true?

See bbquotes.byu.edu/bbquotes/stories.htm for copies.

Key Dates in Christianity*

1st Century (AD 1–100)

New Testament, apostles, apostasy, persecution. MORALITY focus
Baptism by immersion, Lord's Supper or Eucharist.

70: Temple destroyed, Jews scattered

Churches (homes), unpaid clergy, work, charity, morality

Philosophy: Cautious acquaintance, Paul warned against

50-200: Blind spot in history, "Korihor", ...

"The worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected, originated within a hundred years after it was composed" "The sacred Scriptures... have been boldly perverted by [the followers of Artemon]; the rule of the ancient faith they have set aside, Christ they have renounced.... They fearlessly lay their hands upon the holy Scriptures, saying that they have corrected them. ... Should any one collect and compare their copies one with another, he would find them greatly at variance among themselves....

Copies of many... [are] altered by the eagerness of their disciples to insert each one his own corrections...." (Eusebius)

2nd Century (AD 100–200)

No apostles: visions and prophecy cease, persecution

In response to Gnostic and Marcion heresies, the "catholic"

(universal) church defined the **core of the New Testament**,

developed the Apostles' creed, and accepted only teachings of bishops as the successors of the apostles. CREEDS → heretics.

I believe in GOD THE FATHER Almighty. And in JESUS CHRIST, his only Son, our Lord; Who was born by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary; Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried; The third day he rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the HOLY GHOST; The Holy Church; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body (flesh).

Infant baptism starts

Baptism for the dead (1 Cor. 15:29) ceased *ca* AD 200

Work of "great and abominable church" completed

Heresies: When the apostles were gone, false teachers were able to misrepresent the apostles and their writings.

Hegesippus (*ca.* AD 110–180) wrote "When the... apostles became extinct, and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom, had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusion of false teachers. These also, as there was none of the apostles left, henceforth attempted, without shame, to preach their false doctrine against the gospel of truth."

Philosophy: Casual friends, self defense

In Athens and Alexandria (LXX), Greek philosophy included religion and what we now call science. "Greek education, and even more Latin, while it included grammar, arithmetic, music and astronomy, laid great emphasis on rhetoric, the art of presenting a case, of praising or criticizing, of accusing and defending. Such skills were essential for anyone engaged in public life, and constantly shaped the forms of expression available. This was why, in spite of the polytheistic beliefs implied, Christians had their children educated in the classics, and continued to function as teachers of this traditional material.... Most Christian theologians were well trained in rhetoric. This often accounts for the way they interpret biblical texts, and for the forms their arguments take; it certainly accounts for the uncharitable vituperation they use about their opponents, which was a skill taught to schoolboys."

Greeks frequently criticized Jewish and Christian beliefs that were not academically correct according to Plato and the

other Greek philosophers. Celsus (ca. 185 AD), a Greek philosopher and critic of the Christian church, made fun of the God of the Prophets found in the Old Testament. "The Christians say that God has hands, a mouth, and a voice; they are always proclaiming that 'God said this' or 'God spoke.' 'The heavens declare the work of his hands,' they say. I can only comment that such a God is no god at all, for *God has neither hands, mouth, nor voice, nor any characteristics of which we know.* And they say that God made man in his own image, failing to realize that God is not at all like a man, nor vice versa; God resembles no form known to us. They say that God has form, namely the form of the Logos, who became flesh in Jesus Christ. But we know that God is without shape, without color. They say that God moved above the waters he created—but we know that it is contrary to the nature of God to move. Their absurd doctrines even contain reference to God walking about in the garden he created for man; and they speak of him being angry, jealous, moved to repentance, sorry, sleepy—in short, as being in every respect more a man than a God. They have not read Plato, who teaches us in the *Republic* that God (the Good) does not even participate in being. It is true that all things are derived from the Good, as Plato says; but it is also clear that God made nothing mortal. *This God of the philosophers is himself the underivable, the unnameable; he cannot be reached by reason.... He cannot be comprehended in terms of attributes or human experience, contrary to what the Christians teach; moreover, he is outside any emotional experience.*"

Celsus accused Christians of changing their scriptural writings that were not academically correct. "It is clear to me that the writings of the Christians are a lie, and that your fables have not been well enough constructed to conceal this monstrous fiction. I have even heard that some of your interpreters, as if they had just come out of a tavern, are onto the inconsistencies and, pen in hand, alter the original writings three, four, and several more times over in order to be able to deny the contradictions in the face of criticism."

Clement said Barnabas "expounded with simplicity, and without any craft of speech, such things as he *had heard* from the Son of God, or *had seen*. For he did not confirm his assertions by the force of arguments, but produced... many witnesses of the sayings and marvels which he related.... Those who thought themselves learned or philosophic began to laugh at the man, and to flout him, and to throw out for him the grappling-hooks of syllogisms, like strong arms.... [Barnabas responded] 'We... declare to you the words and the wondrous works of Him who hath sent us, and... confirm the truth of what we speak, *not by artfully devised arguments, but by witnesses produced from amongst yourselves...* [who] have heard... the things which we have heard, and... seen what we have seen....' When he had thus spoken, all... with rude voice raised a shout of derision, to put him to shame, and to silence him, crying out that he was a barbarian and a madman.... I... cried out..., 'Because their speech makes no show of knowledge of the grammatical art, but in simple and unpolished language they set before you the divine commands, so that all who hear may be able to follow and to understand the things that are spoken, you deride the ministers... not knowing that it is the condemnation of you who think yourselves skilful and eloquent.... Ye think that truth dwells not in simple, but in ingenious and subtle words, and produce countless thousands of words which are not to be rated at the worth of one word ...'"

3rd Century (AD 200–300)

Baptism by aspersion or sprinkling starts. THEOLOGY focus

Philosophy: Close friends; THEOLOGY more than MORALITY
Alexandrian School: **friendship of Christianity and Greek philosophy.** Origen “gave Christianity full scientific standing”

Origen (AD 185–232) “gave Christianity full scientific standing in that age” by interpreting the Bible allegorically instead of literally. Origen wrote, “the Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written.” Only simple and ignorant Christians accepted the literal interpretation of the Bible. He said Celsus argued against beliefs of “some simple and naïve folk who do not know the meaning of the Bible”.

4th Century (AD 300–400): Constantine

“Christmas” moved from May to Dec. 25, a pagan sun festival.
First Christian *monastery*.

313: Emperor **Constantine** becomes Christian, religions toleration
Soon 90% were Christians

325: 1st council of Nicaea (Christ of one substance with the Father, beginnings of Trinitarian (“3 in 1”) doctrine, *Arias)

Marriage of church and state; force used to suppress heresy

After the council at Nicea, Constantine gave “a grand banquet” and presents. The Catholic Church was now entitled to **government money** and to use **government force** to silence dissent and heretics. ORTHODOX use force on other Christians. “Eventually, far more Christians... were slaughtered by the sword of the church than had ever been slain by the Romans.”

Clergy: paid, celibacy encouraged, social status; new RITUALS
Great churches built with baptisteries for immersion

381: 2nd council (Holy Ghost divine, *Apollinaris)

Philosophy: Courtship

The second council (Constantinople, AD 381) decided that the Holy Ghost was also divine and of one substance and coequal with both the Father and the son. After this council, the belief that God has a human form was suppressed. In 399, “the customary festal letter from Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria... included... a long refutation of the absurd heresy of the Anthropomorphites. Nearly all the monks in Egypt, being uneducated..., received this with bitterness and hostility. ... [They asked] a deacon of great learning, named Photinus, ... how the Catholic Churches of the East understood the text in Genesis: ‘Let us make man after our image and likeness.’ Photinus explained how *all the leaders of the churches understood the text spiritually, not literally nor crudely*.... “That unmeasurable, incomprehensible, invisible majesty cannot be limited by a human frame or likeness. His nature is incorporeal, uncompounded, simple, and cannot be seen by human eyes nor conceived adequately by a human mind.’ At last old Sarapion was moved by the numerous and convincing assertions of this learned man.... When we stood up to give thanks to the Lord in prayer, the old man felt mentally bewildered at having to pray, because he could no longer sense in his heart the anthropomorphic image of God which he had always before his mind’s eye when praying. Suddenly he broke into bitter weeping and sobbing, and throwing himself prostrate on the ground with groans, cried: ‘Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me, and I have none to grasp, and I know not whom to adore or to address.’” Ultimately the anthropomorphic monks “answered by descending in force on Alexandria and creating such a storm that Theophilus executed a sudden” about face.

Prayer to *martyrs* as intercessors, *relics*

5th Century (AD 400–500)

General agreement on accepted scripture including Revelations, but a list approved by a reg. council in 692 didn’t include Rev. Augustine: Trinity (“3 in 1”), *original sin, infant baptism, predestination, grace, sacraments necessary for salvation, six sacraments.*

Augustine (AD 354–430), the son of a Christian mother, was embarrassed by the Christian belief that God had a body. “Augustine’s career as a teacher of rhetoric took him from his native Africa to Italy... where, under the influence of Bishop Ambrose, he became acquainted with Latin translations of **Platonist writings and with the possibility of God’s being a purely ‘spiritual,’ i.e., totally immaterial, invisible and incorporeal being.** Augustine accepted this view of God and, with his long-standing stumbling block to Christian doctrine now removed, he was converted to the faith in 386.... In his newly found Neoplatonic reinterpretation of Christian doctrine, he exults: ‘But when I understood withal that ‘man, created by Thee, after Thine own image,’ was not so understood by Thy spiritual sons... as though they believed and conceived of Thee as bounded by human shape... with joy I blushed at having *so many years* barked not against the Catholic faith, but against the fictions of carnal imaginations.... For Thou, Most High, and most near; most secret, and most present; Who hast not limbs... but art wholly every where and no where in space, art not of such corporeal shape.... Thy Catholic Church... I *now* discovered... not to teach that for which I had grievously censured her. So I was confounded, and converted; and I joyed, O my God, that the One Only Church... had no taste for **infantine conceits**; not, in her sound doctrine, maintained any tenet which should confine Thee, the Creator of all, in space, however great and large, yet bounded every where by the limits of a human form.’... Augustine acknowledges that belief in God’s corporeality was still found among contemporary Christians, whom he mocked for not being able or willing to interpret the Bible allegorically.”

COVENANTS changed to sacraments

431: 3rd council (Virgin *Mary* foremost saint, *Nestorius)

Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, Abyssinian churches

451: 4th council (Christ divine and human, *Eutyches)

Marriage of Christianity and Greek philosophy: “Platonic Christianity”

In the Vatican Museum’s Signature Room, two large murals painted by Raphael in 1510–1511 recognize and celebrate this “marriage” of Christianity and Greek Philosophy. “School of Athens” depicts Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle (in the center), Pythagoras, Euclid, Zoroaster, Ptolemy, Epicurus, and Socrates. **On the opposite wall, “Disputation over the Most Holy Sacrament” depicts God the Father, Christ between Mary and John the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost in heaven with prophets (e.g., Adam, Abraham, Moses) and apostles (e.g., Peter, James, John, Paul).** On the ground is the Most Holy Sacrament on an altar that is between disputants which include St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great.

Bishop of Rome recognized as *Pope* of Western Church (Latin)

<p>6th Century (AD 500–600) 553: 5th council (condemned “Three Chapters”, *Origen’s pre-existence of souls) Pope Gregory: <i>purgatory, penance, confession, intercessors</i> (saints), <i>remissions</i> (alms) <i>Infant baptism</i> universal</p>
<p>7th–10th Centuries (AD 600–1000) 680: 6th council (condemned monothelism [Christ had divine will not human will] and *Pope Honorius) 787: 7th council (<i>images</i> venerated not worshiped, condemned destroyers of images) 870: 8th council 9th Latin dead language known only to priests. Latin Scriptures</p>
<p>11th Century (AD 1000–1100) Crusades: Roman Catholic wars to recapture Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Muslims <i>Indulgences</i> (e.g., money, pilgrimages, Crusades) could remit penalties for “deadly” sins. 1054: <i>Greek Orthodox Church</i></p>
<p>12th Century (AD 1100–1200) 1123: 9th council 1139: 10th council (compulsory <i>clerical celibacy</i>) 1179: 11th council (method of papal election)</p>
<p>13th Century (AD 1200–1300) 1215: 12th council (<i>Transubstantiation</i>, annual confession and communion, regulated inquisition, *Waldensians, *Albigensians) <i>Inquisition</i>, heretics killed Forbade laity to possess Bible, translations denounced. <i>Baptism by aspersion</i> or sprinkling becomes common. 1245: 13th council 1274: 14th council (Papal elections)</p>
<p>14th Century (AD 1300–1400) Italian Renaissance 1311: 15th council</p>
<p>15th Century (AD 1400–1500) Spanish inquisition, forced conversions 1431: 17th council 1448: Gutenberg press invented 1455: Gutenberg’s Bible (Latin Vulgate) published 1492: Columbus discovered America</p>
<p>16th Century (AD 1500–1600) Reformation and English Renaissance 1517: Luther’s 95 Theses, beginning of <i>Lutheran Church</i> 1525: Tyndale’s English New Testament (KJV NT=84%; OT=76% of parts translated) 1534: <i>Church of England</i> 1536: Calvin’s <i>Institutes</i> 1545–63: 19th Council of Trent; *many protestant doctrines; Aquinas theology, <i>Latin Bible official</i>; tradition, seven sacraments, Apocrypha official Protestants killed as heretics. Bible translations banned or burned Inquisition, forbidden books listed</p>
<p>17th Century (AD 1600–1700) 1611: <i>King James Version</i> of the Bible. New Testament based primarily on Byzantine Greek manuscripts (<i>Eastern/Greek Church</i>); majority (95%) manuscripts 1647: Westminster Confession (Protestant Creed) Pilgrims and other protestants come to America. State religions. <i>Puritans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Quakers</i> Kepler, Galileo, Newton</p>

<p>18th Century (AD 1700–1800) 1789: U.S. Constitution- divorce of marriage and nation, 6 of 13 states still had state religions John Wesley (<i>Methodists</i>) Rationalism</p>
<p>19th Century (AD 1800–1900) 1820: Joseph Smith’s First Vision 1830: The Book of Mormon printed, <i>The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i> 1854: <i>Immaculate conception of Mary</i> proclaimed by Pope 1870: 20th council: <i>Pope infallible</i>: 1881: Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible. NT based primarily on Alexandrian Greek manuscripts (from <i>Western/Latin Church</i>)</p>
<p>20th Century (AD 1900–2000) 1901: <i>Pentecostal</i> churches (<i>Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ</i>) 1962–65: 21st council (common languages used in rites & Masses)</p>

* *Italicized words* indicate Catholic doctrines rejected by many Protestants as being based on tradition, not scripture. An asterisk identifies people or doctrines (e.g., *Arius) declared to be heretical by the Catholic Church. ***Bold Italics*** (e.g., *Church of England*) identify the beginning of major Christian religions which include the denominations listed in the top ten largest Christian bodies in the US. The dates of the 21 universal Catholic councils are listed with key decisions. (Adapted from Monte F. Shelley, “Our Judeo-Christian Heritage,” unpublished)

(Pearl of Great Price | JS-History 1:Heading - 26)

Joseph Smith tells of his ancestry, family members, and their early abodes—An unusual excitement about religion prevails in western New York—He determines to seek wisdom as directed by James—The Father and the Son appear and Joseph is called to his prophetic ministry. (Verses 1–20.)

1 OWING to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they have transpired, in relation both to myself and the Church, so far as I have such facts in my possession.

2 In this history I shall present the various events in relation to this Church, in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now [1838] the eighth year since the organization of the said Church.

3 I was born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December, in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, State of Vermont . . . My father, Joseph Smith, Sen., left the State of Vermont, and moved to Palmyra, Ontario (now Wayne) county, in the State of New York, when I was in my tenth year, or thereabouts. In about four years after my father's arrival in Palmyra, he moved with his family into Manchester in the same county of Ontario—

4 His family consisting of eleven souls, namely, my father, Joseph Smith; my mother, Lucy Smith (whose name, previous to her marriage, was Mack, daughter of Solomon Mack); my brothers, Alvin (who died November 19th, 1823, in the 26th year of his age), Hyrum, myself, Samuel Harrison, William, Don Carlos; and my sisters, Sophronia, Catherine, and Lucy.

5 Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo, here!" and others, "Lo, there!" Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

6 For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the **seemingly good feelings** of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their **good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.**

7 I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined that church, namely, my mother, Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia.

8 During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to **serious reflection and great uneasiness; but though my feelings were deep and often poignant**, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them; but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

9 My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

10 In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: **What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?**

11 While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse [James 1:5], which reads: ***If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.***

12 Never did any passage of scripture **come with more power to the heart of man** than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I **reflected on it again and again**, knowing that if any person needed **wisdom** from God, I did; for **how to act I did not know**, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.

13 At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the **determination to "ask of God,"** concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

14 So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to **pray vocally.**

15 After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was **seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me**, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

16 But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at

this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

17 It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

18 My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

19 I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

20 He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, "Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off." I then said to my mother, "I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true." It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?

Some preachers and other professors of religion reject account of First Vision—Persecution heaped upon Joseph Smith—He testifies of the reality of the vision. (Verses 21–26.)

21 Some few days after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement; and, conversing with him on the subject of religion, I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had had. I was greatly surprised at his behavior; he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them.

22 I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me.

23 It caused me serious reflection then, and often has since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy, of a little over fourteen

years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling. But strange or not, so it was, and it was often the cause of great sorrow to myself.

24 However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

25 So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.

26 I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed. I had found the testimony of James to be true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided.