Dear Vance,

Shortly after mailing you a draft of our Sunstone Symposium paper I received your letter. I imagine our correspondence passed each other in the mail. I wish to thank you for the obvious concern and effort you put forth to provide me with an uplifting and enlightening response to some questions that I have raised. Having written a number of similar letters to my sister (I think you may have seen one or two of them), I realize the sacrifice in time, study and prayer that such an epistle requires. I really do appreciate it.

The tone of your letter was one of useful dialogue and for that I am grateful. It is true we disagree, but it nice we are doing it agreeably. The most valuable portion of your letter dealt with the "mentalities of the fundamentalist mind" which I am understanding better. However, one objection I will offer to you is that I might have understood it more than you originally gave me credit. You anticipate that I would not find some of your answers totally satisfying and that I was, in some ways, "misleading the point of the real question." Your letter did instruct me better, but my point has been authority right from the beginning. Remember that I chose the topic of the fireside. It was not a treatise on the topic of "Do the Lord requires we to be polygamists today?" for a full exegesis in the next life." Rather, I chose to address the issue of: Are the sealing keys available to us today? I remind that I started by presentation by observing that the response by you and your congregation would fall into one of two categories with respect to the issue of authority I was examining.

I Understand and Believe

It isn't Important

I had both of these statements made into slides. My impression is (and please correct me if I understand wrong) that with respect to your authority, you understand and believe it until the hard questions arise and when the weaknesses of the Lorin C. Woolley 1886 ordinations are brought to light, your response is this: it isn't important and I am missing the real question. I'm probably over simplifying, but that is how I see it. As I contemplated your words, I felt that I focus more correctly. I wonder if the Lorin C. Woolley 1886 ordinations never occurred, are you still justified before God? I make this question at the risk of missing the point again. You did write that "it is not the Lorin Woolley statement, but the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith that are the basis of our convictions.

However, the Lorin Woolley statement is, I believe, the basis of your authority.

Of course if you state no, Fundamentalists are not justified without authority, to the question above, I will feel that my analysis of the 1886 ordinations requires more emphasis. I spent last Friday at the Church Historical Department going over the rest of Samuel Bateman's journals. He never alluded to any council or quorums of friends. He never read it for yourself. The evidence against the ordinances is rather significant. Do you care to defend Lorin C. Woolley's recollections? You're probably thinking, "Brian is missing the point again."

If you answer yes to that question, that you are justified without Lorin C. Woolley's claim to sealing keys, I would ask: Where did you get your authority? Also, I would like to add that line of claimed authority to my chart. If you have none, what about D&C 132:18?

In light of your revealing statement: "I offer that authority has to exist outside the Church, as otherwise, it would not be possible to receive of the same fullness as Joseph instituted," I still think we must be sure of our authority source. The assumption that we must be polygamists does not authorize (neither do Lorin C. Woolley's claims). The Lord was in D&C 132:18. Possibly you feel that the ground rules have changed somewhat and the Lord is more lenient today... or do you ascribe to the 1886 ordinations? These are some of my thoughts.

Three points you brought up require a mild rebuttal. The first deals with the idea that A. Milton Mussner uncovered solid evidence of the 1886 revelation while serving as Assistant Church Historian. Where did you get this idea? You suggest that there are many journals and diaries that have pages missing and paragraphs blotted out etc. and that these deletions somehow support Lorin Woolley's claims; where did you get this important information? It is true that we cannot see John Taylor's diary. It is likely that that decision was made by Wilford Woodruff or Joseph F. Smith and so subsequent President of the Church has desired to reverse the decision. I truly wish they would release it so we would know what it contains. I have observed that besides the burning testimonies, the greatest supports for some fundamentalist doctrines are contained in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, the unavailable John Taylor diary and the lost L. John Nuttall diary for September, 1886.

Do you agree? The reason I am certain that A. Milton Mussner knew nothing of the 1886 ordinations comes from reading the journal of his son, Joseph W. Mussner. I made a copy of the entire volume and have been systematically reading it. If A. Milton Mussner knew anything of Lorin C. Woolley's ordination, he never told Joseph his son. Joseph in the early 1920's, before teaming up with Woolley which occurred towards the end of the decade, spent a great deal of time with John T. Clark. He is the one who claimed to be the "One Mighty and Strong" from D&C 85:7 and also the "most literal descendant of Jesus Christ on the earth" (see Mussner's journal for 16 May 1922). Woolley discounted these ideas, but that did not deter Mussner from spending many hours with Clark helping him publish his claims (see entries for May 30, 31, June 1, July 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, and August 4, 1924), even allowing Clark to borrow his typewriter and later to bless him (December 18, 1922). It does not appear that Mussner, in 1922, identified Lorin C. Woolley as the conduit through which the sealing keys would be made available to modern polygamists. If A. Milton Mussner held Joseph that John and Lorin C. Woolley held the keys and were prophets and priesthood leaders, wouldn't there have been a problem earlier and not wasted much energy with the likes of John T. Clark? Joseph Mussner mentioned Woolley in his diary as early as 1922, but then several years go by without any other interaction with him. I suggest this would have been an unlikely relationship if Joseph Mussner had been taught the Lorin Woolley story by his father A. Milton Mussner.

Incidentally, did you know that Joseph Mussner supported the change in the garment (shortening the sleeves and pant legs etc.) when it first occurred? His entry for May 24, 1923 reads:

"Quite a furor is being caused in church circles by action of authorities in changing the design of the garment - short arms and legs and low necks. Since, as I understand it, the garment is only a symbol, it matters little what these details which are less important than the inconvenience of having long sleeves etc. to bother in the warm summer weather."

I don't wish to get into a discussion of the changes in the garment directly (though we can
if you desire), but I suggest that most Fundamentalists have an idea that the five supposedly ordained in 1886 just gradually took over the responsibility of plural marriage as the Church gave it up. In reality, no one assumed authority from Woolley's claims until at least 14 years after the Church President stopped authorizing polygamy (1897 at the latest to 1911). Even Woolley's (and later Musser's) teachings evolved. There was no smooth transition. Fundamentalist theology and its authority is almost entirely "retrospective." Musser's early acceptance, but later condemnation of the third temple garment supports this evolution. The movement of plural marriage from within the Church to the present day Fundamentalists was not a smooth, divinely inspired, progression as often implied. Rather decades after the Church suspended practice, supporters of polygamy continued and their doctrine evolved. This transpired in the late 1920's and 1930's. I submit that those polygamists, namely John W. and Lorin C. Woolley and later Joseph W. Musser, were inspired, authorized and commissioned back in 1886, a smooth identifiable transition would have occurred. Fundamentalism did not grow as a living branch, preserved by the Lord, for a dike cloud. Instead it blossomed as wild flowers in a abandoned field, bolstered by hope and firm conviction. For while the sunlight is now sufficient to keep these wild blossoms healthy, the heat of the day is yet to come and they will not endure it.

I Forgive me the analogy and the associated dramatics. I would be curious why you would disagree with my comparison.

A second brief observation deals with an important topic to my book. You stated that there are numerous instances of both plain apostles and those who held the fullness (High Priest Apostles according to Musser). Unfortunately, the only example you give suggests that John W. Young received the plain apostleship in 1855, but that Brigham Young jr. received the fullness in 1866 when he was made a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and that it was the "fullness," not his membership in the Quorum of the Twelve that allowed him to succeed Lorenzo Snow in 1901. It is no mystery that apostles have existed outside the Quorum of the Twelve. Likewise I think you will find that if you go back to the Quorum of the Twelve (see Joseph Smith, Jr., pp. 10-11) as I am sure you will find, it is also well known that the "senior apostle" resides to that position through the Quorum, not simple chronological ordination. It is curious that you would suggest that of the two apostles, the one who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve (as the Quorum has always been the senior Quorum) held an higher authority. This is in contrast to Musser who discounted the apostleship of the Twelve (see A Priesthood Issue, pp. 10-11) as I am sure you know. My challenge is to find other of the numerous examples you alluded to. In my book, I write that there are no instances of "ordination" of an apostle giving them the "fullness" or making them High Priest Apostles. Likewise I note that no priesthood authority has ever directly taught this idea. I would like these statements to be accurate.

The last point to consider is whether Joseph Smith ever taught that Adam was the physical Father of Jesus Christ. You quoted B. H. Roberts who observed that it was indeed Joseph who placed Adam as the patriarchal head of the human race, which I agree with (see Joseph Smith, pp. 39-40). However, it still requires a quantum leap of faith to state that Joseph taught that Adam was the literal Father of the Savior and the Elohim of the Old Testament. Joseph Smith taught Adam was subordinate to Christ as did Walford W. Woolley. John Taylor didn't teach specifically either. John Taylor didn't teach specifically either.

A few other observations on your letter: Challenging me to gain a testimony of fundamentalism by studying the teachings of Joseph Smith is something to challenge someone to gain a testimony of Catholicism by studying the teachings of the apostle Peter. It is like challenging someone to study the authority held by Christ to gain a testimony of the Pope's authority and having an investigator study the keys held by Joseph Smith to understand modern fundamentalist sealing priesthood authority. Sorry, there I go again with the authority question.

I have been impressed by the level of confidence expressed by members of your congregation. It appears that it is important to them to tell me that they are not afraid of anything that I might present to them. This is admirable. However, I wonder if it is because they are aware of their theology, or if possibly that have dedicated themselves to fundamentalist teachings irrespective of what history or reality may present to them.

A second point that has been presented to me over and over is that many modern polygamists believe they have asked the same questions that I am asking and those questions led them into the "work." This is likely the source of one of the things that I'm sure my sister shares that if I keep praying (as I assure you I am doing) and studying the teachings of Joseph Smith and all the Lord's prophets, that I will become a believer. As I have mentioned, I know what Joseph taught concerning plural marriage, but I am unable to derive the authority from these teachings to practice it. I am also unable to set aside the question of authority in light of D&C 132:18.

Your anticipation of my response to your inability to reveal the sources of some of your teachings is correct. Because of this, your explanations are less impressive to me. I'm curious who wrote of the Church not existing until Mosiah 18 (Hyrum Andrus)? It is not true that important because I am sure he did not assume that a "Frischood" organization, similar to your church did exist. You also will not discuss who holds the keys today out of reverence for his calling and your desire to protect him. But I might point out that the secrecy surrounding the man with that mantle is of recent origin. Likewise, it is implied that I might have a desire to hurt him, which is untrue. God has seldom hidden His prophet from His children.

I appreciate your addressing Musser's High Priest Apostles and beliefs on the Church Patriarch. As I am sure you expected, I am not too impressed however. I believe I have studied every reference to "High Priest Apostles" that Musser had written. Certainly I have read enough to understand that it was not an "euphemism" for your "fullness of the apostleship." Truly, this is the reality of the issue. Your explanation will serve to soothe the concerns of neo-Fundamentalists, but Musser wrote sufficiently to tell the world what he believed. It does not appear to me to be as you suggested.

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For just a minute I wish to list some evidences that support both your present theology and mine. It is likely I will not be balanced, so feel free to modify the lists. It has occurred to me that there may be more of an intellectual element to some Fundamentalist testimonies than I originally realized. They read the quotes from the various prophets and scriptures and conclude, from those sources, that we are required to be polygamists today. The source of supporting the modern practice of plural marriage include:

1. Personal Warrant
2. Interpretations of D&C 132, particularly verses 1-3, 21, 32-34
3. Joseph Smith's quote which is interpreted to be referring to Plural Marriage:

"All men who become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ will have to receive the fullness of the ordinances of his kingdom, and those who will not receive all of the ordinances will come short of the fullness of that glory, if they do not lose the whole."

The version from Restoring the Joseph Smith Discourses by Steven Knecht states it a
little differently:

"That to become heirs of God and Christ it must be upon the same laws, ordinances and principles of Jesus Christ and be he who will not live them all will come short of the glory if not of the whole." (Page 159, verse 21.)

4. Multiple quotes by various Church leaders between 1852 and 1890 stating that for a full exaltation, those Saints had to participate in polygamy. The best source for these quotes is probably The Nones... by Robert L. O’Brien, pages 293-295 (item 27.3).

Sources that directly suggest that the Lord has lifted the mandate to practice plural marriage include:

1. Personal Witness.
2. An inspired 1890 Manifesto. The Lord was still directing Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow etc. who supported it. (I submit the Manifesto was not given because the Saints demanded it or because they were unrighteous, I also doubt that the righteousness of Fundamentalists today is any greater than the righteousness of the Saints who were practicing polygamy in 1890.)
3. D&C 132:19 where the promise of eternal increase is given to the monogamist who marries in the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage.
4. Examples of great Book of Mormon prophets who were definitely monogamists.
   The earliest example to cite is Jacob who heard the voice of the Lord and saw angels and was clearly not a polygamist. See Jacob 2:15 and 2:27. If the Lord could command Abraham and not command Jacob (Book of Mormon), why couldn’t He also command Joseph and not command Wilford Woodruff?
5. Many quotes exist stating that a monogamist with his wife could be exalted if he just believed: See JD:10:186, 11:268-269*, 16:184, 19:253, 20:28-31, 22:124, 25:2, also Brigham Young in Minutes of Salt Lake School of the Prophets, 12 Feb, 2 July 1870, Joseph F. Smith Diary 15 July 1871, John Taylor in Minutes of the Salt Lake School of the Prophets, 10 Feb. 1873, and Wilford Woodruff Journal for 24 September 1871 which recorded Brigham Young as saying:

   "...Tom Presti & Young spoke 58 Min. He said a Man may embrace the Law of Celestial Marriage in his heart & not take the Second wife & be justified before the Lord."
6. There is no authority available today to practice plural marriage. The Lord was explicit about the authority issue.

I witness to you that there is another side of the question: Does the Lord require us to practice plural marriage today? You see, Joseph Smith taught plural marriage, but he also taught: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Ninth Article of Faith). I perceive an inability for Fundamentalists to receive all that the Lord has sent to us from heaven through His prophets.

Please don’t be offended with anything I have written. I insist that many in your group have never considered my questions because they felt they were "not important" or just plain off the mark. Maybe I am just stiff-necked or have a hard heart, but I am unable to assume authorization from studying the teachings of Joseph Smith. I am aware that many Fundamentalists (see Keys of the Priesthood Illustrated, page 279) claim that if I don’t understand where the authority is located, it is because I lack faith etc. Maybe so. I struggle to feel authorized by following your father’s admonition to study the teachings of the Prophet Joseph. (Additionally you must study the teachings of Joseph Smith to the exclusion of the teachings of Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith etc.) Maybe I am making my position better known to you. If there is no authority available today, possibly the Fundamentalists should give the teachings of the Prophet Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and Joseph F. Smith another examination, balancing their post-1890 teachings with those given prior. You offered "that authority has to exist outside the church, as otherwise, it would not be possible to receive of the same fulness as Joseph instituted." but I suggest that since there is no authority, Joseph’s statements were specific to those Saints to which they were given and that the Lord, through continued revelation, has given us the Law He requires of us today. That was how he taught his prophet Abraham, his Book of Mormon Jacob, Joseph Smith and Wilford Woodruff.

It would be great to have a response from you regarding some of the issues I have discussed above. Possibly it would be better to meet sometime, instead of having to write so much. Regardless, understand that I realize the sacrifice it would require from you and if you are unable for any reason, I will understand. I hope you might preview the book and help maintain accuracy... but that would require even more time. Let me know. Thanks again. May the Lord bless you and all who believe with you.
Dear Brother Brian:

April 1, 1991

Thank you for your letter and the information that you enclosed with it. I appreciate your interest in wanting to gain as correct an insight into the "fundamentalist perspective" as you can. I was not surprised to read that your purpose for writing was not to seek more information to guide you on a spiritual quest, but that instead, you have already drawn your conclusions and want to gather more precise information for a book that you are writing. You raise some very valid questions. I hope that should my response be a disappointment to you that you would still continue to communicate with me as I have enjoyed my brief association with you and I look forward to further exchanges.

I have contemplated the course of our "debate" on March 17 at great length. If you would allow me to say so, I feel that you are not grasping the central or focal point of "fundamentalism." Consequently, I anticipate that you will judge all of my responses as evasive. Please try to understand, however, that rather than evading the letter of your questions, I am trying to answer the spirit of your inquiry.

The Lord tells us that eternal life is to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. In other words, that it is His will and pleasure that we approach him, fulfill his laws and ordinances and qualify to enter into his presence as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Of course, I am confident that you recognize that the exact references would be in Sections 131, 132, 84 and 93. I especially enjoyed your reference to the Revelation of 1860, as I had just been reading it this morning, before I opened your letter. I agree completely with you in your observation of the holding of the Apostolic keys. I, however, also ask that you read again that part of the revelation in which the Lord states:

"And I say again, woe unto that nation or house or people who seek to hinder my people from obeying the Patriarchal Law of Abraham, which leadeth to Celestial Glory, which has been revealed unto my saints through the mouth of my servant Joseph, for whosoever doeth these things shall be damned saith the Lord of Hosts, and shall be broken up and wasted away from under heaven by the judgments which I have sent forth, and which shall not return unto me void."

I must admit that I perceive that you and I continue to see the heart of the matter from totally different perspectives. You are offering the line of reasoning that has been offered by many others who represent the same position that you are taking: you feel that if the fundamentalists' claims of authority can be discredited that their position will fall. And I, of course, am offering the same line of reasoning that has been offered by many others who represent the same position that I am taking: only through obedience to the law of Celestial Marriage, which of necessity requires a plurality of wives, can we qualify to receive the fullness of the covenant that God made with our fathers from the foundation of the world--to enter into his glory, receive a blessing at his hands, and have eternal increase as co-equals with Jesus Christ.

We are operating from totally different bases of reasoning. Your position requires that you accept the dictates and teachings of the living prophets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Our position requires that we
accept the dictates and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. That, Brother Brian, is where the difference lies. The questions of the veracity of Lorin Wooley's statement, or the validity of the concept of "High Priest Apostle" become academic when compared to the real question. And I offer it to you: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? If we could agree to that point, then we would be able to move on to an understanding.

In response to your inquiries of the difficulties in supporting the thin thread that ties Lorin Wooley to John Taylor, or any other and every explanation of the descent and perpetuation of the fullness of the priesthood to the present day administrator, no one is more aware than we are. I could agree with every challenge that you would produce, and it would not change the one basic question: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? Perhaps you might understand my mindset, and possibly the mentality of the "fundamentalist mind," in the following explanation that my father gave me.

What I am asking you to understand, Brother Brian, whether you accept our position or not, is that each and everyone one of us who aligns himself with the successors of Joseph Musser and Rulon Allred has had to follow exactly the same path that you are following. The reason that we understand your queries, is because we ourselves have all had them. I was faced with mine at the young age of 19 years. I hope that you do not err in assuming that just because Rulon Allred was my father that I automatically accepted his calling. Not hardly. My father made sure that I followed the same search and pursued the same answers that he followed, and that each and everyone of us who has arrived here followed. I remember, as vividly as though it were today.

As I told you, I had fallen in love with a beautiful young woman in the church. Her father was a stake high councilman in the stake over which Henry W. Richards presided. She and her father challenged me, challenged my support of my father's position. I had to honestly admit to her that I did not have a testimony myself as to what was right or wrong. Because of my acquaintance with her family, I had access to all of the information that Henry Richards and Max Anderson had accumulated to that point. As it happened, my closest friend had also come into contact with Max Anderson that same year. We both had to follow the same path and investigate for ourselves.

What I am trying to impress upon you, is that rather than trying to bolster his position to me, my father simply asked that I study the revelations, sermons and writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I did. I received an incontrovertible testimony of the validity and necessity of Joseph Smith's teachings. Here again, do you have that same testimony? I recognized the awesome opportunity that the Lord promises to us if we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ through his servant the Prophet Joseph Smith, and at the same time the difficulty that the church's challenges to the validity of the Lorin Wooley statement presented. I was trying to understand, praying and studying, seeking for the tangible, physical proof that would provide the indisputable proof that the Lord had preserved the fullness of the keys of the Priesthood through Lorin Wooley. Every time that I saw my dad I grilled him with a whole battery of questions: I believe that I pressed him with every question that you have presented to me so far. One day I was driving him in my car, and I was trying to understand who held what keys at what time, and his response to me was that I was having difficulty understanding the whole question, because I was seeking specific answers to minute questions rather that attempting to grasp the
significance of the question itself.

His response to me is what I will offer to you. He said that rather than trying to understand what person had held what key at what time, that I should instead be grateful to God and glorify his name because He had preserved the fullness of His priesthood and made certain that there was always at least one man on the earth at a time who had been willing to receive and accept all the laws and ordinances of the gospel, who had obeyed and fulfilled all the covenants of the holy priesthood through the righteous living of all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel, and who had qualified to perpetuate that same fullness of the priesthood to others who were willing to receive, accept, obey, fulfill and perpetuate those same laws and ordinances and keys themselves. That conversation changed my life. I knew then that that was the answer to my queries and prayers. Please try to understand why his explanation would be so strong as to provide the basis and motivation of every fundamentalist's testimony.

You see, Brother Brian, it all comes back to the same question: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? If you would agree that he was, then we would agree then that in order to receive the same reward, to dwell in the same kingdom and to receive the same blessings as he has, then reason, and Section 130:20 also, tell us that we have to receive, obey, fulfill and perpetuate every single law, ordinance, commandment, and key that he did. Is there a man alive in the church today, Brother Brian who will claim, or admit, that he has done everything and received everything established by the Prophet Joseph Smith? I would like to know. I am sure that you anticipate where I am leading: once we accept that Joseph found the way to approach God as his co-equal, and that he himself followed that same pattern, and that he perpetuated that in others to follow after him, then the only question that remains is where is that man who has received, accepted, obeyed and fulfilled all the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Please do not feel that I am evading or trying to circumvent your questions; in all honesty, this is the answer.

As I read through all of your observations and the accompanying documents, I kept wondering why you never addressed the question that I offered to you as to what was the basis of Section 132, or the necessity of living and obeying the teachings of Joseph Smith. Of course, this reflects the differences in our perceptions as to the very nature of the dialogue in the first place. If you enclosed the article by Elden J. Watson as a counter-response to my reading of Section 132, I would simply offer the following observations. Did Joseph Smith have an angel appear to him with a flaming sword telling him that he had to live, obey and implement the law of a plurality of wives or not? I am assuming that you have read the works of Orson F. Whitney. I was compelled to smile over the list of brethren that you cited as references on the fullness of the Apostolic keys: all of them were polygamists, who had received a fullness of the ordinances. They all knew how Joseph Smith "interpreted" Section 132; I am confident that should you study their diaries, journals or teachings that you would find that my "careful interpretation" of Section 132 is entirely consistent with the teachings of the Nineteenth Century Mormon leadership.

While I was reading Mr. Watson's analysis of Celestial Marriage being in reality 'Temple Marriage' my mind raced over the thoughts of those brethren like Rudger Clawson, George Reynolds, Lorenzo Snow, Abraham Cannon and hundreds of
others who "interpreted" Section 132 the same way that I did the other night—so much so that each of those men was willing to go to prison, and as Abraham Cannon said, willing to give his life for that principle. I am wondering if Brother Watson has read Brigham Young's discourses on the necessity of practicing and fulfilling the law of Celestial Marriage, which Brigham interpreted to mean a plurality of wives. Why did President Young teach these doctrines? Would you agree that he knew Joseph Smith better than anyone? Would you agree that Brigham Young understood the meaning and interpretation of Joseph Smith's revelations, teachings and endowment ceremonies better than anyone? Do you consider Elder Watson to be better informed of the correct interpretation of Section 132 than Brigham Young, John Taylor or Joseph F. Smith? Or even Joseph Smith himself? Can you see why I might feel that you have evaded the central issue?

To get to the specifics of some of your questions let me offer the following observations. What Brother Joseph Musser taught, and my father also, was that it was possible for men and women to receive a fullness of what the Prophet had established. In what may appear to be an evasion, or an intellectual "cop-out" to you, neither of them wished to challenge the church or to place the church in an embarrassing situation. What I feel you are still struggling to comprehend, is that I can agree with everything that you might say in support of the church's position, because we accept the validity of the church's position, while at the same time seeing no contradiction to our own. We honor and uphold the church in its administration and perpetuation of the primary principles of the gospel. But we want more. We want what Joseph Smith established; the church does not offer that. Let me offer to you the following hypothetical situation.

What would result, if I were to produce irrefutable, incontrovertible evidence of the validity of the Lorin Wooley statement? Would it convince you? Would it strengthen your testimony? Would it enforce and bolster the church's ability to perform and carry out its vital purpose and role if we could prove, physically by means recognizable to the academically minded, the validity of the "fundamentalist" position? I think not. I doubt that one soul would be moved to accept more of the ordinances or obey more of the laws. Would it not totally discredit the church and throw their hierarchy in disarray? Would not the general membership of the church fall into confusion? Have you ever considered the possibility that we would guard the existence of such irrefutable proof more zealously than you would, because we do love, honor and support the church and we have always sought to spare the church any difficulty or embarrassment.

As you no doubt are aware, A. Milton Musser, the father of Joseph W. Musser, was the assistant church historian for years. In that position he had access to the unaltered, unedited, uncensored journals and diaries of Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Abraham Cannon, and numerous others of the brethren, that did provide just that type of incontrovertible evidence. Before the advent of the photocopy machine, Brother Joseph, with the consent and approval of his father poured over those diaries and preserved that information.

Where is it, you might ask? Perhaps you could explain to me, why whole pages are missing, paragraphs blotted out in many of these manuscripts. Perhaps you could explain to me why today, none of us has ever been permitted to gain access to the archives of the L.D.S. church historical records? Is it perhaps that some one fears that we might find such documentation? But to us, it is all
a curiosity, or a passing interest, because, as I have tried to explain to you, it was not that physical evidence that convinced any of us, but the witness of the Holy Ghost that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. We want what he has.

Your question about the calling of "High Priest Apostle" is one that I also pursued. For years, Brother Musser, and my father struggled with the question of how to say something, or convey the idea or message of a principle without compromising the sacredness of an ordinance of the holy priesthood. Just in the past ten years, numerous historical analyses by historians have revealed to the world the concepts and terminology that the priesthood itself has guarded and preserved. The works of Michael Quinn, Andrew Ehat, the Toscanos, David Buerger and Marty Martin have placed before the world the concepts of the "fullness of the priesthood," the "holy order," that we have been taught quietly, sacrely once we had progressed to a point to which the priesthood had the confidence in us that we would not divulge those sacred things. Just as you pondered, yes, the term "High Priest Apostle," is a euphemism for one's being a member of the holy order, or having received a fullness of the priesthood, or having accepted and received a fullness of the keys.

I would agree with you in your interpretation of the Revelation of 1880, that all of the Apostles, who hold a fullness of the keys, hold that authority in common. I would also agree, that those Apostles, who do NOT hold a fullness of the keys, also hold that authority in common. Yes, I am offering that there are two types of Apostles: ones who have received a fullness of the priesthood, and those who have not. Look at that list of sources, and cross reference them with temple ordinances received, both endowments and sealing ordinances, particularly the dates of when these men received the "second endowment": you might find that your list supports our position more than you realized.

I am sure that you are aware of numerous instances in which there were both kinds of Apostles in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism. Just one example: Brigham Young Jr., and his younger brother John W. Young, were ordained Apostles by Brigham Young in 1855. In 1866 Brigham Young ordained Joseph F. Smith to the Apostleship. In 1867 Joseph F. Smith was called and ordained to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles; the following year, Brigham Young, Jr. was called to the Quorum of Twelve. In 1901 which one succeeded Lorenzo Snow? Which had been an Apostle longer? The point that my father explained to me is that the Apostleship is a calling that men receive which enables them to receive and perpetuate as many of the gospel principles and keys as they themselves are willing to accept. How do we distinguish between those who accept some? And those who accept all? Brother Musser chose to use a phrase, while not totally accurate from the church's point of view, would at the same time, make that distinction without belittling or denying the action and position that those presiding brethren in the church had chosen to assume.

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lightly, we agree with John Taylor completely; Brother Joseph Musser was using "Patriarch" as a euphemism for one who had received a fullness of all the 
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a curiosity, or a passing interest, because, as I have tried to explain to you, it was not the physical evidence that convinced any of us, but the witness of the Holy Ghost that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. We want what he has.

Your question about the calling of "High Priest Apostle" is one that I also pursued. For years, Brother Musser, and my father struggled with the question of how to say something, or convey the idea or message of a principle without compromising the sacredness of an ordinance of the holy priesthood. Just in the past ten years, numerous historical analyses by historians have revealed to the world the concepts and terminology that the priesthood itself has guarded and preserved. The works of Michael Quinn, Andrew Ehat, the Toscanos, David Buerger and Marty Martin have placed before the world the concepts of the "fullness of the priesthood," the "holy order," that we have been taught quietly, sacredly once we had progressed to a point to which the priesthood had the confidence in us that we would not divulge those sacred things. Just as you pondered, yes, the term "High Priest Apostle," is a euphemism for one's being a member of the holy order, or having received a fullness of the priesthood, or having accepted and received a fullness of the keys.

I would agree with you in your interpretation of the Revelation of 1880, that all of the Apostles, who hold a fullness of the keys, hold that authority in common. I would also agree, that those Apostles, who do NOT hold a fullness of the keys, also hold that authority in common. Yes, I am offering that there are two types of Apostles: ones who have received a fullness of the priesthood, and those who have not. Look at that list of sources, and cross reference them with temple ordinances received, both endowments and sealing ordinances, particularly the dates of when these men received the "second endowment": you might find that your list supports our position more than you realized.

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mention, as he explained it in one of his discourses on the Book of Mormon. I feel that you would be surprised to find that your position on this point is in complete opposition to one of the leading scholars and teachers of the church. I will not mention his name in this letter, but should you be interested to see some of his teachings, I would be glad to show you: I leave his name out because I feel that it would be unfair to him to mention him as a source and have him involved in this exchange.

The only reason that I stress this here is that I get the impression, perhaps incorrectly, that you feel that I would just offer unsubstantiated doctrine, developing new concepts and ideas as I need them to support my case. Not so, I assure you. I offered that analysis of the relationship of Alma to Mosiah, Alma's calling, and the division of the two offices only after careful study and prayerful thought, to be sure that it, like everything else we teach, is well founded in the teachings of Joseph Smith. I would suggest that you consult the *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 19:345 and read the teachings of President Lorenzo Snow on Alma the elder. I could have gone into greater length on March 17, but, here again, my purpose was not to convince you, as I expected you to respond essentially as you did. My appeal, as you would no doubt anticipate, was to use the teaching opportunity to explain the principle to our youth.

Whether you accept the division of the two offices or not, it is important that you understand that we ascribe the same loyalty and devotion to that man as Ammon expressed to King Limhi about King Mosiah. We have not sought to publish his position, or his name, but rather, we instead await upon the Lord to lead those who are ready to receive, in righteousness, through His servants, more of the laws and ordinance of the gospel than the church is able to administer to them. Once again, I wish to quote the words of Joseph Smith, (D. H. C.: 5: 424)

> All men who become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ will have to receive the fullness of the ordinances of his kingdom; and those who will not receive all of the ordinances will come short of the fullness of that glory, if they do not lose the whole. *Jacob 5:22*

I am sure that you would anticipate my next question: as the church no longer teaches the necessity of the fullness of the ordinances, and no longer teaches the necessity of obedience to the fullness of all the laws upon which those ordinances are predicated, then where are we, or from whom are we to seek the fullness of the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Not just part—but all of them? Whom would you have us choose: Joseph Smith, who knew God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, or one of the living prophets who preaches a different doctrine? As Joseph also said in Volume 6, page 184, "House we named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too."

Here again, we return to the differences in our basic premises: you offer that no authority exists outside of the church; I offer that authority has to exist outside the church, as otherwise, it would not be possible to receive of the same fullness as Joseph instituted—because I am sure that you will agree with me that the church makes no claim that it has either the right or the need
to administer the fullness of the laws of the priesthood today as they were established by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is there any man in the church today who can say that he has received, obeyed, fulfilled and perpetuated all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith? If you answer "yes," then we would be interested in knowing who he is. If you answer "no," then you would begin to understand why we have diligently sought a testimony from God, and have received an answer from the Holy Ghost as to where to find a man who does represent Joseph Smith today.

I hope that this letter has not been a disappointment to you. Whether you will recognize them or accept them, I have offered answers to all of your questions. I have not intended to be argumentative or evasive with you. Rather, I have tried to the best of my ability to place before you the basis of our position. I pray that you will receive what I am about to offer you. You referred to my statement that fundamentalists are paranoid. Although I feel that you took my statement out of context I will not take exception to what you offered. We are ever ready to consider new information. I believe that our invitation to you, and my having my own children present to hear you was indicative of that willingness to hear new information. I am waiting for you to demonstrate that same degree of willingness on your part, or the part of your ward, or stake. Would they be willing to hear one of us come bear our testimony of the necessity of living and obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith? I think not.

What I meant by paranoid is this. I can remember as a small child being swept from my home and transported on a moments notice to keep from being arrested. I can remember living in the constant fear of being "found-out." I can remember having to change schools, move to new cities, and go weeks upon end without seeing my father or my brothers or sisters, because of the practice of this sacred principle of Celestial Marriage. I can remember being distrustful of anyone who was not one of us. You probably can not understand why. Neither, I doubt, could you ever begin to understand what level of commitment that we have to the preservation and continuance of the fullness of the priesthood. You see, I feel, Brother Brian, that you have missed the whole issue. When someone like Joseph Smith would give his life for the priesthood, Rudger Clawson would go to prison for the practice of this principle, and when my own father would pay that same price, I have difficulty in accepting such a view of Section 132 as you offered to me. I also sense that you feel that we simply have never considered what it is that you have presented to us, because if we had, or so I feel you believe, we would obviously see things your way.

As I told my uncle today, I hope that you will present something new for our consideration. I want to be able to present something to my children, to sit down with them and say, "read the ideas that Brother Brian has presented, got to the scriptures, search the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and we will search and pray about these things." But so far, Brother Brian, you have presented the same perspective that we have heard before. I hope that you will not take offense, but I perceive in you an attitude which says, "O.K. You guys are wrong. Tell me what you believe so that I can explain why it is wrong." Perhaps I am wrong, but that is how several of us have read your position. What I am hoping to help you do is to try to view things from our perspective so that you might understand why we are committed to our course. I am not saying that you will have to become converted; not hardly. I am asking you that you present a viewpoint more analytical of the full scope of the fundamentalist appeal. So
far, you have concentrated on what appears to you to be the central issue, but I hope that you are beginning to grasp that there is something far deeper here.

Although I do not know your sister well, I am sure that she, like everyone else that has accepted the calling of obeying and fulfilling all of the laws would tell you the same thing. It was the teachings of Joseph Smith, Section 132 and all the other revelations of Jesus Christ through his appointed and anointed Prophet, Seer and Revelator Joseph Smith that drew us to seek after the Lord and find his answer to our prayers. We were not converted by the Lorin Wooley statement, the teachings of Joseph Musser or Rulon Allred— you keep missing this very important point— we follow the same teachings and accept the same ordinances and receive the same priesthood that Joseph Smith received from Jesus Christ. Can you say the same? Can anyone in the church say the same? I think not.

We are not just a group of people tied to the traditions of some fundamentalist creed. We have a testimony of the Lord’s purposes for us, we respect you in your decision to pursue your course, and we honor and respect the church in its position today. You might wish to take the time to converse with others, who were not born into this work; there are several brethren who followed the same path that has brought you to investigate this work. All of them, just like those of us born into this group, were converted by the scriptures, the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and most importantly, the witness of the Holy Ghost. Any incidental information such as what you continue to dwell on never was, is not now, nor ever will be more than just that— incidental information.

I hope that you would be interested in continuing our communications. I particularly would appreciate any new insights you might be able to present concerning what appears to be your feelings that one does not have to follow the teachings or receive the ordinances instituted by the Prophet Joseph Smith. We all have sought the words of Jesus Christ, as revealed through his holy, anointed seer, Joseph Smith. We have all received that testimony and witness of who Joseph Smith is. Do you have a testimony of him as well?

I am confident that there would be several who would enjoy hearing from both you, and Max Anderson and others in the future. Every time that we have exchanges like this it causes all of us to return to the scriptures and to study the teachings of Joseph Smith more carefully than before. I have enjoyed the pondering and examination that your inquiry has prompted me to do. Thank you. As I mentioned to you, we are always interested in new information and insights, and we encourage our young people to investigate these things for themselves. We invite you to do the same.

Sincerely,

Vance L. Allred
Dear Brother Brian:

I apologize for taking so long in sending this letter to you. I had wanted to consult with several of the brethren, most of whom you met personally, who had expressed interest in any correspondence between us. It has always been my desire to express to you the warmth and friendship that we feel for you and your efforts to communicate and share ideas with us; I was concerned that I might have been too strong or have been critical, and I sought their ideas and advice. Although I received a great deal of "feedback" from everyone, the letter remains essentially the same as my original draft.

The one predominating theme that kept coming up in all of the comments that I received was that all of us had shared the same experience: we had studied these things as you are now doing, and yet each of us felt compelled to humble ourselves and seek for guidance from the Lord. We all received the same witness from the Holy Ghost: that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and that in order to receive of the blessings that he received that we have to receive, obey and fulfill the same covenants, commandments, ordinances and priesthood that he has.

I mention this, because of those whom I consulted only two others besides me were born in "fundamentalism" and the other five had followed exactly the same process of investigation that has so far led you to the point where you find yourself. Many of them served missions for the church, all were active members and had followed all the direction and instruction that the church had given them, until they found and studied the teachings of Joseph Smith and studied the Lord's revelations through him. This led all of them to seek after a greater portion of Joseph's teachings and priesthood than the church was administering.

We are all aware that you are intent on writing a book about what you perceive to be the weaknesses and errors of our 'fundamentalist' position. We hope that you do continue, complete and publish your work.

Sincerely,

Vance L. Allred
Dear Brother Brian:

April 1, 1991

Thank you for your letter and the information that you enclosed with it. I appreciate your interest in wanting to gain as correct an insight into the "fundamentalist perspective" as you can. I was not surprised to read that your purpose for writing was not to seek more information to guide you on a spiritual quest, but that instead, you have already drawn your conclusions and want to gather more precise information for a book that you are writing. You raise some very valid questions. I hope that should my response be a disappointment to you that you would still continue to communicate with me as I have enjoyed my brief association with you and I look forward to further exchanges.

I have contemplated the course of our "debate" on March 17 at great length. If you would allow me to say so, I feel that you are not grasping the central or focal point of "fundamentalism." Consequently, I anticipate that you will judge all of my responses as evasive. Please try to understand, however, that rather than evading the letter of your questions, I am trying to answer the spirit of your inquiry.

The Lord tells us that eternal life is to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. In other words, that it is his will and pleasure that we approach him, fulfill his laws and ordinances and qualify to enter into his presence as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Of course, I am confident that you recognize that the exact references would be in Sections 131, 132, 84 and 93. I especially enjoyed your reference to the Revelation of 1880, as I had just been reading it this morning, before I opened your letter. I agree completely with you in your observation of the holding of the Apostolic keys. I, however, also ask that you read again that part of the revelation in which the Lord states:

"And I say again, woe unto that nation or house or people who seek to hinder my people from obeying the Patriarchal Law of Abraham, which leadeth to Celestial Glory, which has been revealed unto my saints through the mouth of my servant Joseph, for whosoever doeth these things shall be damned saith the Lord of Hosts, and shall be broken up and wasted away from under heaven by the judgments which I have sent forth, and which shall not return unto me void."

I must admit that I perceive that you and I continue to see the heart of the matter from totally different perspectives. You are offering the line of reasoning that has been offered by many others who represent the same position that you are taking: you feel that if the fundamentalists' claims of authority can be discredited that their position will fall. And I, of course, am offering the same line of reasoning that has been offered by many others who represent the same position that I am taking: only through obedience to the law of Celestial Marriage, which of necessity requires a plurality of wives, can we qualify to receive the fullness of the covenant that God made with our fathers from the foundation of the world—to enter into his glory, receive a blessing at his hands, and have eternal increase as co-equals with Jesus Christ.

We are operating from totally different bases of reasoning. Your position requires that you accept the dictates and teachings of the living prophets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Our position requires that we
accept the dictates and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. That, Brother Brian, is where the difference lies. The questions of the veracity of Lorin Wooley's statement, or the validity of the concept of "High Priest Apostle" become academic when compared to the real question. And I offer it to you: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? If we could agree to that point, then we would be able to move on to an understanding.

In response to your inquiries of the difficulties in supporting the thin thread that ties Lorin Wooley to John Taylor, or any other and every explanation of the descent and perpetuation of the fullness of the priesthood to the present day administrator, no one is more aware than we are. I could agree with every challenge that you would produce, and it would not change the one basic question: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? Perhaps you might understand my mindset, and possibly the mentality of the "fundamentalist mind," in the following explanation that my father gave me.

What I am asking you to understand, Brother Brian, whether you accept our position or not, is that each and everyone one of us who aligns himself with the successors of Joseph Musser and Rulon Allred has had to follow exactly the same path that you are following. The reason that we understand your queries, is because we ourselves have all had them. I was faced with mine at the young age of 19 years. I hope that you do not err in assuming that just because Rulon Allred was my father that I automatically accepted his calling. Not hardly. My father made sure that I followed the same search and pursued the same answers that he followed, and that each and everyone of us who has arrived here followed. I remember, as vividly as though it were today.

As I told you, I had fallen in love with a beautiful young woman in the church. Her father was a stake high councilman in the stake over which Henry W. Richards presided. She and her father challenged me, challenged my support of my father's position. I had to honestly admit to her that I did not have a testimony myself as to what was right or wrong. Because of my acquaintance with her family, I had access to all of the information that Henry Richards and Max Anderson had accumulated to that point. As it happened, my closest friend had also come into contact with Max Anderson that same year. We both had to follow the same path and investigate for ourselves.

What I am trying to impress upon you, is that rather than trying to bolster his position to me, my father simply asked that I study the revelations, sermons and writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I did. I received an incontrovertible testimony of the validity and necessity of Joseph Smith's teachings. Here again, do you have that same testimony? I recognized the awesome opportunity that the Lord promises to us if we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ through his servant the Prophet Joseph Smith, and at the same time the difficulty that the church's challenges to the validity of the Lorin Wooley statement presented. I was trying to understand, praying and studying, seeking for the tangible, physical proof that would provide the indisputable proof that the Lord had preserved the fullness of the keys of the Priesthood through Lorin Wooley. Every time that I saw my dad I grilled him with a whole battery of questions: I believe that I pressed him with every question that you have presented to me so far. One day I was driving him in my car, and I was trying to understand who held what keys at what time, and his response to me was that I was having difficulty understanding the whole question, because I was seeking specific answers to minute questions rather that attempting to grasp the
significance of the question itself.

His response to me is what I will offer to you. He said that rather than trying to understand what person had held what key at what time, that I should instead be grateful to God and glorify his name because He had preserved the fullness of His priesthood and made certain that there was always at least one man on the earth at a time who had been willing to receive and accept all the laws and ordinances of the gospel, who had obeyed and fulfilled all the covenants of the holy priesthood through the righteous living of all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel, and who had qualified to perpetuate that same fullness of the priesthood to others who were willing to receive, accept, obey, fulfill and perpetuate those same laws and ordinances and keys themselves. That conversation changed my life. I knew then that that was the answer to my queries and prayers. Please try to understand why his explanation would be so strong as to provide the basis and motivation of every fundamentalist's testimony.

You see, Brother Brian, it all comes back to the same question: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? If you would agree that he was, then we would agree then that in order to receive the same reward, to dwell in the same kingdom and to receive the same blessings as he has, then reason, and Section 130:20 also, tell us that we have to receive, obey, fulfill and perpetuate every single law, ordinance, commandment, and key that he did. Is there a man alive in the church today, Brother Brian who will claim, or admit, that he has done everything and received everything established by the Prophet Joseph Smith? I would like to know. I am sure that you anticipate where I am leading: once we accept that Joseph found the way to approach God as his co-equal, and that he himself followed that same pattern, and that he perpetuated that in others to follow after him, then the only question that remains is where is that man who has received, accepted, obeyed and fulfilled all the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Please do not feel that I am evading or trying to circumvent your questions; in all honesty, this is the answer.

As I read through all of your observations and the accompanying documents, I kept wondering why you never addressed the question that I offered to you as to what was the basis of Section 132, or the necessity of living and obeying the teachings of Joseph Smith. Of course, this reflects the differences in our perceptions as to the very nature of the dialogue in the first place. If you enclosed the article by Elden J. Watson as a counter-response to my reading of Section 132, I would simply offer the following observations. Did Joseph Smith have an angel appear to him with a flaming sword telling him that he had to live, obey and implement the law of a plurality of wives or not? I am assuming that you have read the works of Orson F. Whitney. I was compelled to smile over the list of brethren that you cited as references on the fullness of the Apostolic keys: all of them were polygamists, who had received a fullness of the ordinances. They all knew how Joseph Smith "interpreted" Section 132; I am confident that should you study their diaries, journals or teachings that you would find that my "careful interpretation" of Section 132 is entirely consistent with the teachings of the Nineteenth Century Mormon leadership.

While I was reading Mr. Watson's analysis of Celestial Marriage being in reality "Temple Marriage" my mind raced over the thoughts of those brethren like Rudger Clawson, George Reynolds, Lorenzo Snow, Abraham Cannon and hundreds of
others who "interpreted" Section 132 the same way that I did the other night—so much so that each of those men was willing to go to prison, and as Abraham Cannon said, willing to give his life for that principle. I am wondering if Brother Watson has read Brigham Young's discourses on the necessity of practicing and fulfilling the law of Celestial Marriage, which Brigham interpreted to mean a plurality of wives. Why did President Young teach these doctrines? Would you agree that he knew Joseph Smith better than anyone? Would you agree that Brigham Young understood the meaning and interpretation of Joseph Smith's revelations, teachings and endowment ceremonies better than anyone? Do you consider Elden Watson to be better informed of the correct interpretation of Section 132 than Brigham Young, John Taylor or Joseph F. Smith? Or even Joseph Smith himself? Can you see why I might feel that you have evaded the central issue?

To get to the specifics of some of your questions let me offer the following observations. What Brother Joseph Musser taught, and my father also, was that it was possible for men and women to receive a fullness of what the Prophet had established. In what may appear to be an evasion, or an intellectual "cop-out" to you, neither of them wished to challenge the church or to place the church in an embarrassing situation. What I feel you are still struggling to comprehend, is that I can agree with everything that you might say in support of the church's position, because we accept the validity of the church's position, while at the same time seeing no contradiction to our own. We honor and uphold the church in its administration and perpetuation of the primary principles of the gospel. But we want more. We want what Joseph Smith established; the church does not offer that. Let me offer to you the following hypothetical situation.

What would result, if I were to produce irrefutable, incontrovertible evidence of the validity of the Lorin Wooley statement? Would it convince you? Would it strengthen your testimony? Would it enforce and bolster the church's ability to perform and carry out its vital purpose and role if we could prove, physically by means recognizable to the academically minded, the validity of the "fundamentalist" position? I think not. I doubt that one soul would be moved to accept more of the ordinances or obey more of the laws. Would it not totally discredit the church and throw their hierarchy in disarray? Would not the general membership of the church fall into confusion? Have you ever considered the possibility that we would guard the existence of such irrefutable proof more zealously than you would, because we do love, honor and support the church and we have always sought to spare the church any difficulty or embarrassment.

As you no doubt are aware, A. Milton Musser, the father of Joseph W. Musser, was the assistant church historian for years. In that position he had access to the unaltered, unedited, uncensored journals and diaries of Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Abraham Cannon, and numerous others of the brethren, that did provide just that type of incontrovertible evidence. Before the advent of the photocopy machine, Brother Joseph, with the consent and approval of his father poured over those diaries and preserved that information.

Where is it, you might ask? Perhaps you could explain to me, why whole pages are missing, paragraphs blotted out in many of these manuscripts. Perhaps you could explain to me why today, none of us has ever been permitted to gain access to the archives of the L. D. S. church historical records? Is it perhaps that some one fears that we might find such documentation? But to us, it is all
lightly, we agree with John Taylor completely: Brother Joseph Musser was using "Patriarch" as a euphemism for one who had received a fullness of all the ordinances, in contrast to an individual who might have held the office of the presidency of the church without having received a fullness. What does the Revelation of 1882 say about the incorrectness of one who is not obeying the "law" presiding over one who is obeying the "law?" Of course, you and I are not in agreement that the "law" means the plurality of wives.

Let me introduce another point of divergence, if I may. You made reference to Brigham Young's teachings of the identity of God, and unless I misunderstood you, you inferred that he was wrong. This question is to us part and parcel of the central question: was Joseph Smith a prophet of God, or not? I am sure that you have read the account in the History of the Church, by Joseph Smith where he taught that Adam holds the keys of the presidency of this world. In a footnote to that discourse (D. H. C. 3:388), B. H. Roberts offers:

"It is generally supposed that Brigham Young was the author of the doctrine which places Adam as the patriarchal head of the human race, and ascribes to him the dignity of future presidency over this earth and its inhabitants, when the work of redemption shall have been completed. Those who read the Prophet's treatise on the Priesthood in the text above will have their opinions corrected upon this subject; for clearly it is the word of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith which established that doctrine. The utterances of President Brigham Young but repeat and expound the doctrine which the Prophet here sets forth."

I could take several other doctrines taught by the Prophet and President Brigham Young which run counter to the teachings of the living prophets of the church. Whose ideas would you accept, Brother Brian? Those of Joseph Smith? Or of James E. Talmage or John A. Widtsoe or Mark E. Peterson or Bruce R. McConkie, Max Anderson or Elden Watson -- I could name several. The point that I am trying to make here, is not to discredit the teachings of the current leadership of the church, but to try to help you understand the appeal of "fundamentalism." Perhaps you can see, that it is not the Lorin Wooley statement, but the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith that are the basis of our convictions. It is not the teachings of Joseph Musser or Rulon Allred that draw and hold us, but the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith. I hope that I am not sounding sterile or repetitious to you. What I am trying to express in my weakness, is that you can present reams of papers discrediting Lorin Wooley, Joseph Musser or Rulon Allred, and it will not change or alter our testimonies, because what we looked for, found and now support, is that man who today has accepted, lived, obeyed, fulfilled, received and is qualified to perpetuate a fullness of everything that the Lord restored through his servant the Prophet Joseph Smith.

You asked me who he is. I honor and reverence his calling, and I will do anything I can to protect him. We are not out to vindicate him, or prove his calling--the Lord has done that. As I offered to you in my talk on March 17, there is one who stands in the same position as did Mosiah. I appreciated your efforts to refute my explanation of the separation of the callings of Mosiah and Alma. As to there being no church among the people of King Mosiah, prior to Alma's arrival, I was not the one who developed that idea: I would have to give much of the credit one of the church's greatest scholars, whom I will not
a curiosity, or a passing interest, because, as I have tried to explain to you, it was not that physical evidence that convinced any of us, but the witness of the Holy Ghost that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. We want what he has.

Your question about the calling of "High Priest Apostle" is one that I also pursued. For years, Brother Musser, and my father struggled with the question of how to say something, or convey the idea or message of a principle without compromising the sacredness of an ordinance of the holy priesthood. Just in the past ten years, numerous historical analyses by historians have revealed to the world the concepts and terminology that the priesthood itself has guarded and preserved. The works of Michael Quinn, Andrew Ehat, the Toscanos, David Buerger and Marty Martin have placed before the world the concepts of the "fullness of the priesthood," the "holy order," that we have been taught quietly, sacredly once we had progressed to a point to which the priesthood had the confidence in us that we would not divulge those sacred things. Just as you pondered, yes, the term "High Priest Apostle," is a euphemism for one's being a member of the holy order, or having received a fullness of the priesthood, or having accepted and received a fullness of the keys.

I would agree with you in your interpretation of the Revelation of 1880, that all of the Apostles, who hold a fullness of the keys, hold that authority in common. I would also agree, that those Apostles, who do NOT hold a fullness of the keys, also hold that authority in common. Yes, I am offering that there are two types of Apostles: ones who have received a fullness of the priesthood, and those who have not. Look at that list of sources, and cross reference them with temple ordinances received, both endowments and sealing ordinances, particularly the dates of when these men received the "second endowment": you might find that your list supports our position more than you realized.

I am sure that you are aware of numerous instances in which there were both kinds of Apostles in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism. Just one example: Brigham Young Jr., and his younger brother John W. Young, were ordained Apostles by Brigham Young in 1855. In 1866 Brigham Young ordained Joseph F. Smith to the Apostleship. In 1867 Joseph F. Smith was called and ordained to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles; the following year, Brigham Young, Jr. was called to the Quorum of Twelve. In 1901 which one succeeded Lorenzo Snow? Which had been an Apostle longer? The point that my father explained to me is that the Apostleship is a calling that men receive which enables them to receive and perpetuate as many of the gospel principles and keys as they themselves are willing to accept. How do we distinguish between those who accept some? And those who accept all? Brother Musser chose to use a phrase, while not totally accurate from the church's point of view, would at the same time, make that distinction without belittling or denying the action and position that those presiding brethren in the church had chosen to assume.

On the point of which is highest, Patriarch or church president, here again I am sorry, as I do feel that you are laboring at a disadvantage. Please understand, I am not making light of your question, but referring to the fact that there is more information on the point than that which you have had access to. There is far more involved in this concept than what you would have been able to find in printed media. I anticipate that you would refer me to John Taylor’s editorial in the Times and Seasons in response to William Smith’s claim as Patriarch to be higher than the president? Just to touch on the question
mention, as he explained it in one of his discourses on the Book of Mormon. I feel that you would be surprised to find that your position on this point is in complete opposition to one of the leading scholars and teachers of the church. I will not mention his name in this letter, but should you be interested to see some of his teachings, I would be glad to show you: I leave his name out because I feel that it would be unfair to him to mention him as a source and have him involved in this exchange.

The only reason that I stress this here is that I get the impression, perhaps incorrectly, that you feel that I would just offer unsubstantiated doctrine, developing new concepts and ideas as I need them to support my case. Not so, I assure you, I offered that analysis of the relationship of Alma to Mosiah, Alma's calling, and the division of the two offices only after careful study and prayerful thought, to be sure that it, like everything else we teach, is well founded in the teachings of Joseph Smith. I would suggest that you consult the Journal of Discourses, Volume 19:345 and read the teachings of President Lorenzo Snow on Alma the older. I could have gone into greater length on March 17, but, here again, my purpose was not to convince you, as I expected you to respond essentially as you did. My appeal, as you would no doubt anticipate, was to use the teaching opportunity to explain the principle to our youth.

Whether you accept the division of the two offices or not, it is important that you understand that we ascribe the same loyalty and devotion to that man as Ammon expressed to King Limhi about King Mosiah. We have not sought to publish his position, or his name, but rather, we instead await upon the Lord to lead those who are ready to receive, in righteousness, through His servants, more of the laws and ordinance of the gospel than the church is able to administer to them. Once again, I wish to quote the words of Joseph Smith, (D. H. C.: 5: 424)

All men who become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ will have to receive the fullness of the ordinances of his kingdom; and those who will not receive all of the ordinances will come short of the fullness of that glory, if they do not lose the whole.

I am sure that you would anticipate my next question: as the church no longer teaches the necessity of the fullness of the ordinances, and no longer teaches the necessity of obedience to the fullness of all the laws upon which those ordinances are predicated, then where are we, or from whom are we to seek the fullness of the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Not just part-- but all of them? Whom would you have us choose: Joseph Smith, who knew God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, or one of the living prophets who preaches a different doctrine? As Joseph also said in Volume 6, page 184, "House here named should have been translated kingdom; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too."

Here again, we return to the differences in our basic premises: you offer that no authority exists outside of the church; I offer that authority has to exist outside the church, as otherwise, it would not be possible to receive of the same fullness as Joseph instituted-- because I am sure that you will agree with me that the church makes no claim that it has either the right or the need
to administer the fullness of the laws of the priesthood today as they were established by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is there any man in the church today who can say that he has received, obeyed, fulfilled and perpetuated all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith? If you answer "yes," then we would be interested in knowing who he is. If you answer "no," then you would begin to understand why we have diligently sought a testimony from God, and have received an answer from the Holy Ghost as to where to find a man who does represent Joseph Smith today.

I hope that this letter has not been a disappointment to you. Whether you will recognize them or accept them, I have offered answers to all of your questions. I have not intended to be argumentative or evasive with you. Rather, I have tried to the best of my ability to place before you the basis of our position. I pray that you will receive what I am about to offer you. You referred to my statement that fundamentalists are paranoid. Although I feel that you took my statement out of context I will not take exception to what you offered. We are ever ready to consider new information. I believe that our invitation to you, and my having my own children present to hear you was indicative of that willingness to hear new information. I am waiting for you to demonstrate that same degree of willingness on your part, or the part of your ward, or stake. Would they be willing to hear one of us come bear our testimony of the necessity of living and obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith? I think not.

What I meant by paranoid is this. I can remember as a small child being swept from my home and transported on a moments notice to keep from being arrested. I can remember living in the constant fear of being "found-out." I can remember having to change schools, move to new cities, and go weeks upon end without seeing my father or my brothers or sisters, because of the practice of this sacred principle of Celestial Marriage. I can remember being distrustful of anyone who was not one of us. You probably can not understand why. Neither, I doubt, could you ever begin to understand what level of commitment that we have to the preservation and continuance of the fullness of the priesthood. You see, I feel, Brother Brian, that you have missed the whole issue. When someone like Joseph Smith would give his life for the priesthood, Rudger Clawson would go to prison for the practice of this principle, and when my own father would pay that same price, I have difficulty in accepting such a view of Section 132 as you offered to me. I also sense that you feel that we simply have never considered what it is that you have presented to us, because if we had, or so I feel you believe, we would obviously see things your way.

As I told my uncle today, I hope that you will present something new for our consideration. I want to be able to present something to my children, to sit down with them and say, "read the ideas that Brother Brian has presented, go to the scriptures, search the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and we will search and pray about these things." But so far, Brother Brian, you have presented the same perspective that we have heard before. I hope that you will not take offense, but I perceive in you an attitude which says, "O.k. You guys are wrong. Tell me what you believe so that I can explain why it is wrong." Perhaps I am wrong, but that is how several of us have read your position. What I am hoping to help you do is to try to view things from our perspective so that you might understand why we are committed to our course. I am not saying that you will have to become converted; not hardly. I am asking you that you present a viewpoint more analytical of the full scope of the fundamentalist appeal. So
far, you have concentrated on what appears to you to be the central issue, but I hope that you are beginning to grasp that there is something far deeper here.

Although I do not know your sister well, I am sure that she, like everyone else that has accepted the calling of obeying and fulfilling all of the laws would tell you the same thing. It was the teachings of Joseph Smith, Section 132 and all the other revelations of Jesus Christ through his appointed and anointed Prophet, Seer and Revelator Joseph Smith that drew us to seek after the Lord and find his answer to our prayers. We were not converted by the Lorin Wooley statement, the teachings of Joseph Musser or Ruion Allred--- you keep missing this very important point--- we follow the same teachings and accept the same ordinances and receive the same priesthood that Joseph Smith received from Jesus Christ. Can you say the same? Can anyone in the church say the same? I think not.

We are not just a group of people tied to the traditions of some fundamentalist creed. We have a testimony of the Lord's purposes for us, we respect you in your decision to pursue your course, and we honor and respect the church in its position today. You might wish to take the time to converse with others, who were not born into this work; there are several brethren who followed the same path that has brought you to investigate this work. All of them, just like those of us born into this group, were converted by the scriptures, the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and most importantly, the witness of the Holy Ghost. Any incidental information such as what you continue to dwell on never was, is not now, nor ever will be more than just that--- incidental information.

I hope that you would be interested in continuing our communications. I particularly would appreciate any new insights you might be able to present concerning what appears to be your feelings that one does not have to follow the teachings or receive the ordinances instituted by the Prophet Joseph Smith. We all have sought the words of Jesus Christ, as revealed through his holy, anointed seer, Joseph Smith. We have all received that testimony and witness of who Joseph Smith is. Do you have a testimony of him as well?

I am confident that there would be several who would enjoy hearing from both you, and Max Anderson and others in the future. Every time that we have exchanges like this it causes all of us to return to the scriptures and to study the teachings of Joseph Smith more carefully than before. I have enjoyed the pondering and examination that your inquiry has prompted me to do. Thank you. As I mentioned to you, we are always interested in new information and insights, and we encourage our young people to investigate these things for themselves. We invite you to do the same.

Sincerely,

Vance L. Allred
Dear Brother Brian:

I received your letter of April 23. Thank you for your invitation to meet with you to discuss the points that you presented in the draft of your Sunstone symposium paper. I was in the process of preparing some suggestions for you. I am now unclear, however, as to what you desire from me. The attitude in your letter so discouraged me that for these past weeks I have been pondering whether even to respond to you. After much thought and consultation with my uncle, and in response to his request, I have decided to try to express some concepts you may not accept, but which might at least give you pause for thought.

You had given me the impression that you were seeking an understanding of our position in order to portray it as accurately as possible; your latest letter perplexed me in that I have perceived, perhaps incorrectly, that you feel compelled to respond to your request. I do not know exactly what you expect or want from me. I was more than willing to answer your questions regarding our beliefs, not expecting to debate every point with you.

You requested an opportunity to present a message to us. Do you not feel that we were responsive to your request? We provided you a forum to express your views and I honestly feel that we were open minded in receiving and considering the message that you offered to us. As you mentioned, you came to present what you believe is the issue: the validity or fallacy of Lorin Wooley's testimony of the 1868 eight hour meeting and the accompanying conferral of authority. Yes, you are right, I never did respond directly to the topic you chose. When accepting the offer to talk, I made it clear that there was only one topic that I would address, and that was my testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith; notwithstanding your protestations, that was, and still is, the correct response to your challenges.

I am sorry if you feel that I treated you unfairly by not accepting your ground rules. Having taught speech and debate for years, however, I felt comfortable in assuming the response that I made. My experience as a debate coach and tournament director led me to follow basic rules:

1) the host chooses the topic (I chose the topic)
2) the host establishes the parameters, and time restrictions.

When you want to have a debate in your ward or stake house, invite your congregation and have your stake authorities there, we shall gladly come and debate with you on your topic and follow your rules.

My main confusion, Brian, lies in the fact that you came to me after our exchange and told me that you would appreciate my help because you wanted to make your book and your Sunstone symposium presentation as accurate as possible. When you made that request, and followed up with it in the letters you sent me, you led me to assume you were serious. I took great deal of time to present our views to you, not in the form of a paper, but as an explanation of our beliefs. In the past, we have provided several researchers and reporters with that type of help. None of them has ever before responded by taking your posture of arguing with everything that we offered to them. You had presented yourself as an historical researcher, honestly in the pursuit of gaining a correct viewpoint of our perspective.

I admire your bravery in wishing to enter the public forum with your ideas. As an historian, I value the exchange of ideas that has developed in the past ten years, and welcome anyone who has the desire to present an idea and ask for input. From my own experience and work, and through my observations of the performance of other historians, both Mormon and non-Mormon, I categorize all of us into two groups:

1) those who pursue a topic for the purpose of gaining a correct insight, then honestly reporting what they have found in an objective and informative manner.
2) those who have a particular, predetermined mission to accomplish.

After reading your last letter, I have to tell you that I place you in the second. You are an anesthesiologist, and I am sure, a very good one. Were I to come to you for advice on anesthesiology, I would expect that you would simply inform me of your opinion, and offer a brief explanation of why you would give the advice you have; I doubt you would feel compelled to bolster and support every explanation. And I expect that you would feel me very foolish if I went to an anesthesiologist and asked for a viewpoint on a Sunday school. I am sorry if I offend you, but as an historian I honestly cringe when I think of you presenting your paper before an audience like the Sunstone symposium. If you are going to present the "fundamentalist" viewpoint as a part of your lecture, then it must be their perspective, and not your interpretation of it.

There are several concepts that I know to be incorrect in your papers. Of course, you may totally discount everything that I would say, but I know that there are many historians who understand correct historical analysis, and they will see your work for what it is: a faithful recapitulation of Max Anderson's work. I am enclosing a copy of some of Sam Taylor's letters from his papers which show his perspectives of Brother Max's work. You also may discount his ideas, as they do not support your position.

In my historical training I have deliberately chosen to study under non-Mormon professors, because I want my work to be as consistent with correct historical analysis as possible. The basics of my training stressed the following:

1) an historian gathers as much information from as wide a sample as possible.
2) the historian does not argue with his sources, but reports things as he finds them expressed.
3) an historian's inability to find evidence supporting a claim does not prove that something did not happen.
4) an historian makes no decisions, and draws no conclusions before he has weighed all his information.
5) the historian offers an objective view of what he finds.

I acknowledge that when it comes to my religious views that I am not as professional as I would want to be. I suggest that neither you nor Max Anderson has been as professional as you should be. The difference between you and me is that I would not presume to present a paper at a symposium to professional and amateur historians who would see right through me.
I am sure that your presentation to the Sunstone Symposium will be interesting and informative, both for you and for those who are unacquainted with our position. But for those who do understand our position, I believe they will see what I have perceived: a desire not to understand, but to refute. It is interesting that on several points you have asked me for my understanding, yet you have rejected every response as unacceptable.

If I am not mistaken, the main purpose of your desire to correspond with me is to have an audience through which you could somehow influence your sister. I am sorry that I did not recognize that earlier. In writing to you, I was never so foolish as to presume that any correspondence between us would lead to you accepting our beliefs. It would seem to me that my purpose in inviting you to study Joseph Smith and the writings and talks of the other brethren reflected my effort to help you understand our views. You say that you already understood them, but then you turn around and write things that prove to me that you only think you do.

It seemed from your initial request, that you were interested in gaining an insight to our perspective. I was agreeable to that, as there have been several reporters, sociologists, anthropologists and historians who have sought information from us. At every point, however, when I gave you a response to your question, you have treated it as though were a challenge that you felt compelled to discount, discredit or disprove. At our first meeting you told me that you wanted my help in preparing a paper that would be as accurate as possible. Apparently my help has so far been of no value to you, except as an opportunity for debate.

Although you have not accepted my views and suggestions, it is interesting that you would challenge them and try to refute them from your understanding of fundamentalism; at times I have sensed that you feel that you understand our position better than we do. I have been a fundamentalist all my life; my background, my association with my father, and my own studies do provide me with a rudimentary understanding of what our position is. It has been curious that although we have opened our hall to you, brought our children to hear you, that you still feel that we are not willing to understand what you are offering to us. We were open minded in considering what you offered to us; to my knowledge, neither you nor anyone in the church has ever opened your homes or meeting halls and invited your friends and brought your children to hear our testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We don't expect that you would become converted, but we would expect the same type of courtesy and respect that previous researchers have given us. If you are going to pose as an historical researcher perhaps you should consider behaving as one.

For example, you might have used my material in presenting your information with an attitude something like this:

"Today's fundamentalists pledge a deep loyalty to the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. Although they admit there are challenges to their claims of religious authority to practice their beliefs, they do feel confident that their position is consistent with Joseph Smith, and live with the assurance that were he to be among them today that he would recognize them as the only people who are living his style of Mormonism."

That type of analysis is neither judgmental, defaming, discrediting nor unethical. The information I provided you could be used in such a way as to strengthen and bolster your book. On the other hand, should you choose to present your interpretation of our beliefs, rather than reporting our own, perhaps you could make it clear to your audience that you are doing just that.

As you have no interest in using any explanations that I have offered let me offer the following sources to you. Your brother-in-law, Todd Johnson, tells me that you are very well read. Perhaps, you have already read these:

David John Buenger's papers, especially his copies of George F. Richards' writings on the Second Endowment.

The works of Hyrum Andrus, Ken Driggs, Paul and Margaret Toscano, D. Michael Quinn, and Andrew Ehat. Perhaps some of their ideas will temper yours a little. The Adam God Maze, by Culley K. Christensen, M. D. May increase your understanding as well.

I will admit that in writing to you I did have an ulterior motive. Every time someone writes a book, or prints an article on our position, or examines the practice of plural marriage or the changes that the church has made, many people are moved to study and begin to search for themselves. I wanted to help you gain an understanding as possible, so that more people would pay attention to you. You gave me the impression that you wanted to write an historical analysis of the 'Fundamentalist movement.' Instead you have written a caustic polemic. As your work now stands, there is nothing particularly noteworthy that would draw an audience whose position is as insidiously loyal to the church's current leadership as you are. From our meeting, I had felt a willingness on your part to report our position accurately, yet what has developed is a confrontation of the original differences that caused our paths to diverge almost a century ago.

Our position is based on a continuity of teachings, doctrines and ordinances with those established by the Lord through Joseph Smith; we feel no necessity to prove" a succession of authority, although we know, despite all that you have offered us, that there has been that succession. Your position is based on a succession of authority from Joseph Smith to the present leadership; you feel no necessity to prove a continuity of teachings, doctrines, or ordinances with those established through the Prophet Joseph Smith, because you feel that any changes made by the church leadership will only be by revelation or inspiration from God. Therefore, you would feel that those changes would be consistent with Joseph Smith's teachings because the concept of continuing revelation. As a result of this basic and fundamental difference, no matter what either of us offers to the other, the other will not feel an obligation to respond. It has been an awakening to realize how far apart we have become.

You profess the concept that one must follow the teachings and leadership of the living prophet, and you have based all your other observations and
beliefs on that premise. You interpret the scriptures and revelations to authorize the present leadership to reinterpret, alter or change any part of the doctrines, ordinances, revelations and commandments that Joseph Smith revealed as the Lord directs them to do so.

Consequently, our differences in approach, perspective and perception preclude us coming to any common ground, and our discussion is becoming very sterile. Yes, we grant, there are many difficulties and challenges to the Lorin Wooley statement that cannot be answered in the information available in the church archives; but as I explained to you but you do not accept, the logic of our premise does not require that we do so, because we will always prefer to follow and fulfill the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith. Please do not assume, however, that we do not have the sources to justify our support of Lorin Wooley’s statements.

At the same time, you must know that the teachings of the present church leadership digress from or completely disagree with the teachings of Joseph Smith; yet, the logic of your position would not require you to reconcile the two, because you would place your credence on the present leaders, and God’s ability always to reveal new direction that might be a different set of conditions, ordinances or laws for different peoples at different times, according to their needs. You accept the concept of a gospel that is ever responsive and sensitive to the needs of the people; we hold to the concept that the gospel is the same, now, yesterday, always and forever.

You have the right to doubt that any of us has done the amount or type of study that you are pursuing. It is intriguing that we can all study the same things, yet because of our predispositions, we continue to come to different conclusions. Perhaps you have never read The Most Holy Principle, a four-volume compendium of historical documents, discourses and articles which my father edited. Most of us have read the information in them, and we are familiar with the interpretations and views that you proffer. In your writings I do not perceive an effort to find truth, but instead a desire to prove us wrong. Paul described that type of attitude in 2 Timothy 2:

“EVER LEARNING, AND NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH” (INSPIRED VERSION)

You also have the freedom of arguing with and rejecting every explanation offered to you. If your desire is to prove us wrong, which appears to have been your true purpose from the beginning, then you will have to go to the scriptures, writings, revelations, ordinances and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith in order to get our attention. You have expressed a desire to speak to us again. When you can show us where we are inconsistent with his teachings and doctrines we will pack our hall to listen to you, as he is the foundation of everything that we believe. Until you do search through the Prophet’s Teachings and find those discrepancies, there will not be much of an audience, because, although you may not accept it, we have already seen and heard everything that you have offered.

Evidently, you have a low opinion of our knowledge of our own history, but there are several of us who have found, read, discussed and studied among ourselves and with our children everything that you have presented to us. As mentioned in my letter, you can offer us reams to discredit the eight-hour meeting or the 1888 revelation and conferral, but you will fail to cause us to be the least disturbed, because we know our position is consistent with Joseph Smith. Although we absolutely do have the historical and intellectual justification for the course that we are pursuing, it was the witness from the Holy Ghost confirming our testimonies of the Prophet Joseph Smith that convinced each of us to embark on our path and which gives us the strength and the peace to continue it.

Let me offer this to you: the night that we both spoke, I made reference to sources that you have not been able to see. As you should be aware, much of the history of any people is based on the credibility of those who represent it. I did not know either of the Wooleys, but I have known people who did know the Wooleys; I have total confidence in the veracity of those who bore their testimonies to me that both John and Lorin made every claim that you assure me is false. Pardon me if I do not place much confidence in your assurances, because I have heard the testimonies of people whose integrity I know to be as pure as anyone on the earth today bear me exactly the opposite assurance. Your assurances are based on your ability to find evidence sustaining Lorin Woolley’s ordination; their assurances are based on their lives of dedication to the calling of Lorin Woolley as witnessed to them by the Holy Ghost.

While none of those I knew bore first-hand witness, let me remind you that neither did anyone else besides Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith bear any first-hand witness of Joseph’s ordinations. In fact, there is no record in Joseph Smith’s history of the Church that the ordinations to the Melchizedek Priesthood ever occurred. It is only because of the detailed and methodical efforts of B. H. Roberts, that we find reference to their ordinations by Peter, James and John in the footnotes, even though he could not determine an exact date. You deny any validity to a comparison of the “problems” with which the Tanners have challenged Joseph Smith, and the “problems” with which you have challenged Lorin Woolley. Is your “logic” consistent, Brother Brian? Yet, although the Tanners do not concede Brigham Young’s testimony that Joseph’s ordinations did occur, I place great value in his testimony. Although it is apparent that you do not respect Brigham Young, I strongly value his testimony of the same relationship to Lorin Woolley and the truth of his calling as I do Brigham Young to Joseph’s.

Not only did Brother Joseph Musser bear testimony of the validity of the callings of the Wooleys, but so did Daniel R. Bateman, who was present at the eight-hour meeting, and who bore his testimony to many of my relatives whose integrity is unimpeachable. Of course, you would probably treat the testimony of my friends and family and question their integrity in exactly the same way that Max Anderson treated Daniel Bateman, Lorin Woolley or anyone else whose views did not support Brother Max’s pre-determined conclusions.

Obviously, you are very well acquainted with Max Anderson’s Polygamy Story. Fiction and Fact, as you faithfully follow and restate his ideas. It is amazing, however, how much evidence that his original draft contained which he chose not to place in his final offering. Of course, as an historian, I do not care for the tanner style of historical “analysis” that both you and Max
It is doubtful that either of you has served the interests of posterity or of the church very well: sooner or later, the full contents of the church historian's office files will be made available; every word more and more non-biased historians are gaining more and more access, and offering more and more understanding. You state that you wish that the L. John Nuttall diary for September 1888 were available. Do you really honestly? If that diary proved that William Woodruff, don't you think that Heber J. Grant and his successors would have published it to the world long ago? Instead they have carefully hidden these and several other things away, just as Brother Musser told my father they had. Where do I get that idea? From what my father told me that Joseph Musser told him. You don't believe me?

Brother Musser's position, as was my father's also, whether you believe they agreed or not, was not that the members of the church had chosen to reject the fullness of God's laws, that it was and still is His church. We don't want to see the church in the compromising positions that you and others like you have placed the church. You make these sweeping statements and assuming assertions that are later disproved when more evidence comes out. Just think how much those who support the position that you have so lightly followed have had to yield, because of the information that historians like Quinn, Huerger, Christensen, the Tocasans and Ken Briggs have found. These historians present a problem to you which forces you and other apologists to constantly keep redefining your position. - Anonymous

You used to solemnly deny the existence of the revelation of 1866--well now, yes, it does exist, o.k., you admit that you did have it all along, but it doesn't give the fundamentalists any authority. For years you maintained that the Manifesto of 1859 ended the practice of plural marriage--well now, yes, you have admitted that you didn't admit that the church did continue to support, perpetuate, encourage, sanction and perform plural marriages. The only 'revelation' ever offered to justify its practice was Brigham Young's, and you insist that that doesn't mean that anyone has the right to practice it now, even though there has never been a revelation to justify the church having rejected a law of God--not in 1870 or 1904 or 1937 or at any other time. And yes by the way, you claim that plural marriage was never valid anyway. Brigham was wrong, Heber was wrong; all of them who lived it were wrong, all the way through and to including Heber J. Grant himself.

Be assured, our attitude is very different. We relish, we welcome, we anxiously anticipate every new historical analysis, and we have expanded our views as more complete information is offered to us. We are no longer ashamed of our history or any of God's revelations through his servants, and we are constantly accepting new light. All this new knowledge has reinforced, bolstered, augmented and strengthened our basic premises that Joseph Smith is a Prophet. We are always looking for new ideas, the very fact that we opened our hall and brough our children to hear you should prove to you that we are always willing to receive new information, but quite frankly, you have not offered any. We have already read Max Anderson's book.

You question us on semantics, taking one word here, and another there, trying to beat those words into submission. You offer me analogies; some of these are interesting, but I do very much disagree with your assertion that we are a shoot that has sprung forth from a sick branch, and I will not again endeavor to explain how we perceive ourselves, as you have already drawn your own conclusions, but I can tell you that do recognize a "smooth transition" which you are not willing to see. Your perceptions of our origins, and many of the lines of descent were interesting. For example, why did so many of the Kindt's come to my father for their ordinances? What caused you to deduce that we do not trace our priesthood authority through Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith? What promoted you to "conclude" that we claim the right to preside over the church? Or what led you to assume that my father did not have some of his calling in the same capacity as Mosiah? Who do you think taught me the concepts? You aver that we make claims that he did not teach; pardon me, Brian, but I don't remember you being there when my father so carefully taught me.

You have elevated yourself to be an expert on the teachings of Rulon Allred and Joseph Musser, stating in your book, your letters and in your oral presentation that we do not understand their teachings. Please forgive me for finding humor in this, but try to understand your position. If I knew my father for twenty-five years, I have had hundreds of hours of intense gospel discussions with him, attended scores of meetings where he taught me what I have offered to you; yet, because you have read those parts of his talks that you edited and selected, you feel that you know what he taught more correctly than I do. As an historian I find that puzzling; as his son I find it amusing. As a supporter and witness of his calling, and a believer of his teachings, I find it very sad. You have become committed to proving my father wrong, and you have made no effort to properly comprehend his message or his mission. Also, you have spent so much time looking and searching for contradictions in the writings of Joseph Musser, who you have missed the whole essence of that man's teachings and his life.

I did not know Joseph Musser, as he died when I was a small child, but I know my father very well, and I am confident that my father knew Joseph Musser as well as anyone did. My father's best friend, who married my father's sister, (making him my uncle), and whose daughter my father married, (making him the grandfather of many of my brothers and sisters), kept a faithful diary of his life in the 1920's with John and Lorin Woolley, Leslie Broadbent, John Barlow and Joseph Musser and there is ample evidence in his diaries to support every claim made by Lorin Woolley, or Joseph Musser. And we have the testimonies and diaries of others who knew them well. They knew all of those men, and their integrity and virtue is unimpeachable. I am not interested in giving you their names so that you can continue your style of "history" on them, too.

Of course, what it all comes to is credibility. I realize that there are many people who offer wild and incredible recollections of the Woolleys. I do not believe many of the things those individuals offer. However, I do not feel any necessity to try to explain or apologize for their ideas. I believe that the Nauvoo Nauvoo News sought to explain or apologize for the ideas of David Whitmer, William Marks or Emma Smith. Just as there were those, however, who did know Joseph Smith well, despite what his detractors, and Brigham's detractors claimed, there are those whom I have known--very closely--who bore
their testimonies to me of the calling and functioning of the men you try to
discredit and deny. Perhaps you can understand why none of us was moved by your
views of the 1886 occurrences. Many of the people who were present are the
descendants of those people who gained and bore that testimony of John W. and
Lorin C. Woolley. But more importantly, they are the descendants of those
people who gained and bore a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and lived
the commandments, revelations, teachings and ordinances revealed through Joseph
Smith.

I do not offer my uncle's names, or my aunt's names, or my mother's names,
as I choose not to offer the name of the man whom I support today, because I
know exactly what you would do, Brian. You tell me in your letter that you
would not attack him. After you had practiced character assassination on Joseph
Mussur, Lorin Woolley and most certainly endeavored to discredit my father by
telling me that you knew that he was inconsistent with Joseph Mussur. You
entered our meeting hall, and there you stood at the pulpit and told us that
Brigham Young was wrong. I don't care for that type of "history." It reminds
me of the works and attitude of Jerold and Sandra Tanner. As an historian, I
might feel challenged to refute your accusations, but as a supporter and witness
of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and every other
man who has held the fullness of the keys of the Priesthood, I feel no
obligation to defend our position.

Any honest historian would recognize that in order to refute the position
of any great teacher or any leader or founder of any movement, idea or religion,
that one has to weigh and analyze the principles, not the man himself. When I
studied Karl Marx, I studied his works so that I could find the strengths and
weaknesses of his position. I never stopped to attack his personal integrity,
or analyze whether he had absence of mind or mental lassies as you aver that
Lorin C. Woolley did. Just as Marx's appeal and historical power lies not in
his personal life but in his ideas, you are wasting your time trying to sway
us by attacking the credibility or integrity of the messengers who brought us
God's laws. You rejected the main point of my first letter: it is the power
and ideas of the gospel of Jesus Christ that convince us and give us strength
to pursue our course, not the personality of Lorin Woolley. Surely, you must
know that ideas and convictions are the most powerful motivators in the world.
Most important than my knowledge and study of history and the forces of men's
philosophies, is the testimony from the Holy Ghost of the gospel of Jesus
Christ.

We are determined to fulfill all his laws and ordinances exactly as He
revealed and restored them through His prophet Joseph Smith. It becomes obvious
that you do not care about the ideas that we believe, even though they are
exactly, completely and exclusively those ideas revealed and instituted through
the Prophet Joseph Smith. If you are going to discredit Lorin Woolley, or
Joseph Mussur or Rulon Allred or his successor today, you will have to go to
Joseph Smith's teachings and doctrines, as these men and their associates are
the only ones who have continued, perpetuated and maintained his teachings since
1830.

Heber J. Grant and many of his successors have denied the necessity
of continuing and perpetuating Joseph Smith's teachings; they have systematically
rejected, ridiculed, defamed and sought to obliterate every doctrine, principle
and ordinance of the gospel that would challenge their decisions to take it upon
themselves to deny the validity of Joseph Smith's calling. You take exception
to my statement that there has to be authority outside of the church. Is it not
plainly evident that no one in the church has been willing to function in Joseph
Smith's position? Lorin Woolley wins that contest by default. He was the only
one who claimed and admitted to having the same calling, the same authority, the
same ordination and the same fullness as his predecessors.

You do not see a smooth transition from Joseph F. Smith to John and Lorin
Woolley; I do not see a smooth transition from Joseph F. Smith to Heber J.
Grant, but instead the emergence of a rapidly increasing rejection of Joseph
Smith's teaching and the implementation of the ideas of men—and all of this
without one single revelation to justify these changes. The only claim that
any of them has made was to have been "inspired." I cannot accept that God
would only "inspire" his leaders today. I have looked for and found those men
who receive revelation— the kind that says, "Thus saith the Lord." Unfortunately,
there has not been that kind presented to the church since 1882. Not even the
Manifesto contains those words, and that is the last one that was
even purported to be a revelation. Of course, we believe that Wilford Woodruff,
Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith continued to receive revelation—but not as
president of the church, because they never offered any to the church.

I am embarrassed for you when you accused us of developing our theology
in retrospect. We have exactly the same theology that Joseph revealed. It is
you who supports a new theology developed and created after 1910, which was
developed in retrospect—not to Mormon origins, however, but to the
universities, theological seminars and languages of the world from where your
teleology comes. Please be honest, Brian; you prefer James Talmage to Joseph
Smith, John Hildreth to Brigham Young, Bruce R. McConkie to Heber C. Kimball;
Mark E. Peterson to George C. Cannon. Whose "theologies" came from God? Whose
do you accept? You know which ones we follow and obey. We accept Lorin
Woolley's testimony, because his calling proved a succession of doctrines and
ordinances that have remained pure and unchanged in their unbroken continuity
from Joseph Smith to the present. Conversely, we are not able to accept the
current direction of the church's leaders because they have told us that it is
impossible to accept and fulfill the teachings of Joseph Smith; in fact, they
tell us that his teachings are not essential, not important, but only incidental
superfluities that we don't need to believe and obey. Clearly, none of you
truly believes in his calling.

Lorin Woolley and his successors are the only men on the earth who have
had the courage to stand up before the world and still bear witness that Joseph
Smith and his successors were, and still are, and always will be prophets of
God. No one in the church is willing to make that stand to believe AND LIVE AND
FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD. So how could anyone in the church, regardless of their
ordination, position or calling, claim to have a fullness of the Priesthood, or
to be the successors of those men who did? Your reasoning baffles me.

My experience as a speech and debate coach did permit me to find pleasant
amusement at your use of provocative questions. My favorite event is the Lincoln
Douglas Debate, where we train the debaters to phrase questions in such a way
that either a yes or a no answer can be used against your opponents. You offered your query, "If the Lorim Wooley 1886 ordination never occurred, are we still justified before the Lord?" This is a fundamentally argumentative question, designed not to determine truth but to place an opponent on a defensive position. To answer the question, either way would force your opponent to admit that his position is illogical. It is similar to a query that I have heard in watching LDS-Douglas debates, "If God is all powerful, could He build a rock so large that He could not lift it?" or "If evolution is a fact, would you then admit that men were not created by God?" or "If students do not have the right to have prayers in school, do they have the right to freedom of speech?"

Your question has two components which do not logically hinge upon the other: your justification" is based on Joseph Smith, not Lorim Wooley; as Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, then there would have to have been a way prepared for God's children to obey His commandments. You, on the other hand, are linking two ideas together which you clearly do not believe to be true: you claim that Lorim Wooley did not receive a valid ordination; you maintain that it is not necessary, or acceptable, to live and obey all the laws and ordinances of the gospel today. Either of your premises would automatically invalidate the other. You have placed them together in such a way as to prove to yourself that you have correctly "deduced" truth, as you know that to answer your question with either a "yes" or a "no" would supposedly grant you your point. A "yes" would trap your opponent into accepting your assertion that Lorim Wooley's ordination was not valid; a "no" would force your adversary to validate your premise that the practice of a fullness of God's laws is not necessary. I could respond by asking you, "If the Lorim Wooley 1886 ordination did occur, are you still justified before the Lord?" Sophistry may have its use in training lawyers, theologians, doctrinal theologians and church apologists, but my testimony is based on the witness of the Holy Ghost does not require me to engage in it with you.

Additionally assure [me] that those ordinations never did occur... because the evidence against the ordinances is rather significant. [Page 1 of your letter of April 23, 1991] Have you read the original, uncouth version of Max Anderson's book? You might ask him to let you read it. You might not feel so assured in your conclusion after finding more information that would challenge your position in it, however, you still may make your assurances to me that these ordinances never occurred. On course, you would probably assure me that my testimony from the Holy Ghost never occurred, but it assures me that these ordinances did occur. I will not debate that issue with you, any more than I would debate with people like Jerold and Sandra Tanner who make the same kind of accusations and challenges against Joseph Smith. All of you who take that kind of attitude try to prove that something did not happen, simply because you cannot find proof of it; but how could you when you determined before you even began your investigation that the Lorim Wooley statement was false. Your methodology of "history is identical to the Tannare."

The inconsistency of your logic is obvious. You have made sweeping assertions and assumptions based on an absence of information. Is that how they taught you medical or scientific research; do you make those kinds of assurances to your patients? Are you really willing to assure me that something did not occur simply because you have not found sufficient proof to satisfy you? Are you willing to stake your eternal salvation and exaltation on your ability to find evidence in sources that you recognize? Are you willing to accept everything that the present leaders of the church tell you notwithstanding the numerous contradictions in the laws of God that their doctrines contain? Are you ready to reject the whole mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith simply because there is no proof among the carefully selected documents in the Church historian's office that a legal, lawful, valid ordination occurred in 1886?

Read the trial of Abinadi before King Noah's priests again. Were not Noah's priests all properly ordained to their callings? Where did Abinadi receive his authority? Were there any witnesses? Was his calling recognized by the leadership of his day? Was there a record of Abinadi's ordination in King Noah's historian's office? Did they listen to his message and obey the prophecies of the Holy Spirit? Or did they reject him because he did not have control of the legal and lawful religious organization that had been founded by Zemiff? Does ordination in an office in the church fulfill a man? Or does one actually have to live and obey and receive and fulfill all the laws and ordinances of the gospel EXACTLY as they have been lived by others who have gone before? Please read the sixth and seventh Lectures on Faith again. I hope that you would believe that they are of God. To offer, as you did, that God has a different law for different people at different times might make you and other church apologists feel better, but there is nothing in the scriptures to justify such an attitude.

There has never been a time when God had a different law for people who were willing to abide a fullness than for people of another time who were also willing to abide a fullness. To offer, as you do, that God requires different things at different times is to accuse God of being a liar. Have you never read the numerous citations in which He tells us that He never changes? That He is the same, yesterday, today, forever, and always? That there is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are promised, and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated? To support your claim is to state that God is a capricious and cruel God; that He might change His mind at any time. Do you not find it ironic that He would be constant, from eternity to eternity, never change from that which He has said; that He would irrevocably decree eternal, immutable principles that His prophets would always agree, would correlate, interconnect and dovetail together in every time, among every people—but that He would change all of His laws and promises only for the Mormons since 1830? Or in 1904? Or in 1910? Or in 1927? Or in 1978? When might He change His unchangeable mind again?

The only instance that would justify your assertions was when God instructed Moses to give the children of Israel what we call the law of Moses. Hopefully, you would acknowledge that the law of Moses was a lower law, given because the offender of Israel refused to receive the fullness; in consequence of their rejection, God removed the fullness of the Priesthood from them as a people. But still, someone had it. If that is the type of relationship that you are describing to justify the church's position of today, then I would agree
with you: you are living by the lower laws which do not have the power to exalt to a fullness. Perhaps you would agree that this could not be considered progression— but rather, that it reflects a rejection of the fullness, and a retrogression.

It is amazing: the only thing that you have been able to find in your challenge is the absence of proof to support Lorin Woolley's position. You have no scriptural basis on which to challenge us. You came into our hall and used inference, innuendo, presumption and recently developed re-interpretations of God's word in defiance of the Prophet Joseph Smith who received those very revelutations that you use to build your case. You never offered any evidence from the scriptures or even the new 'revelations' which the recent leaders of the church are supposed to have received to bolster your position and assertions. You say that we are unwilling to accept any of the recent revelations; where are they? If they prove us wrong, why don't you produce them for us?

Please consider a few observations.

Yes, Joseph Musser did associate with John T. Clark from 1921 to 1923, just as Gordon B. Hinckley associated with George P. Lee until 1900. But I believe that you will find that John T. Clark did not make his extraordinary claims until 1925. Joseph Smith associated with John C. Bennett in 1841; with William and Wilson Law from 1840 to 1843. Do you feel required to justify Gordon B. Hinckley's associations, or Joseph Smith's friendships? Enough said.

You infer that we do not know our history as well as you do, because you have taken the time to read the diary of Samuel Bateman and we have not. Presumably, if one of your colleagues were to tell you that you would not find much information on anesthesiology in the diary of an anesthesiologist, would you feel weakened as a practitioner or advocate of that man's profession even though his diary contained nothing of relevance to his field of endeavor? Or, would you seek for information on anesthesiology from his diary after your colleagues told you that it contained nothing of relevance to your profession? At the same time, why should I feel a compelling need to read Samuel Bateman's diary, when my father told me that there is nothing in Samuel Bateman's diary of any particular interest relative to his priesthood calling? As a supporter of Lorin Woolley's position, I feel no need to read the diary: as an historian I am perplexed that you feel that I should waste my efforts in pursuing a line of research which others have already told me bears no relevance. I can only presume what anesthesiologists would do: but I know that trained historians would—or would not do. The Samuel Bateman diary is not an integral component of our studies, for those very reasons which you yourself offer. Then why would you feel to judge me as incompetent or ignorant for not reading it?

At the same time, it is intriguing that you would feel qualified to pass judgment on Samuel Bateman and proclaim that he did not act or behave like an Apostle. What exactly does one have to do in order to qualify for your approval? By what criteria do you judge men to assess the value of their lives? By what authority do you determine that he did not receive a fullness? Just because you cannot find definitive proof from his diaries that he did receive the same calling as Lorin Woolley did, neither can you logically deduce that he did not. Perhaps you should consider the following concept when you do your research, particularly before you make your sweeping conclusions. This excerpt is from BYU Studies, 76:216:

"The absence of evidence may narrow possibility but does not rule it out. Unless something can be positively ruled out for other reasons, there always remains the possibility that it occurred even though it is not noted in the documentation at hand." That is the type of historical research methodology that I was taught at the University of Montana. You and Max Anderson might consider following it yourselves.

If you study the last year of Joseph Smith's life, you will find reference to the fact that not all of his Apostles received a fullness of what he wanted to offer and confer upon them: John E. Page, William Smith and Lyman Wight did not receive the fullness of the ordinances. It appears that you still think that you know what "High Priest Apostles" means more correctly than I do, but consider those men and how they differed from Brigham Young, John Taylor and the others. Also, I have known four of the men ordained to the Council or Apostleship by Joseph Musser, and none of them was ordained to be a High Priest Apostle. They all received the charge, however, to attain a fullness of their Apostleship, just as the original Twelve received Oliver Cowdery's challenge to complete their calling and election and never cease striving until they had seen the face of the Savior themselves.

Whether you like it or not, that is what the term "High Priest Apostle" means— to qualify to receive the second anointing and one's calling and election made sure. As my wife said after having read your letter, "he sure is hung up on that thing about High Priest Apostle. I guess he's just trying to make an issue of it." I would agree with her. It appears that you think you have finally found something in our position that is different from EXACTLY what Joseph Smith taught, and you want to make an issue of it. Sorry, but there is no issue there at all. David Buergers, Andrew Ehat and the Toscanos have been able to understand the concept quite well. Perhaps you could read their ideas again as you have no interest in my understanding. You may discount the necessity of the second anointing, or of the necessity of one's calling and election being made sure, as according to the papers of George F. Richards, these ordinances have all but died out in the church, just like so many others. Just because no one in the church is willing to obey God's laws and accept or perpetuate those ordinances, however, this does not mean that God no longer offers them, or requires men to qualify for and receive them. Just because no one in the church has qualified for or has received them does not mean that there are not others outside the church who have done so.

The part of your letter that interested me most is where you tell me that you perceive an inability for Fundamentalists to receive all that the Lord has sent to us from heaven through His prophets. I couldn't disagree more. We have accepted everything that has ever been revealed. So you! The truth of the matter is that there is no revelation from God to justify all the changes that have been made by the church since 1918. You listed the names of Wilford
Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith and Lorenzo Snow recommending that we study their teachings too. We do! We accept everything they've ever taught. Do you? What teachings are you talking about?

We do not, however, accept many of the teachings of the current leadership. All your bold and sweeping assertions notwithstanding, the church has not practiced one revelation. Since 1823 to explain or justify any new policy implemented since 1818; no revelation exists to command or justify the numerous rejections of God's laws and commandments or the changing of His sacred, holy ordinances. You must have read the testimony of Joseph F. Smith in the Reed Smoot investigation? I would agree that the Lord did direct and instruct Wilford Woodruff to issue the Manifesto, and I support him 100%. But I also am aware that no more than a week passed after he had issued it before he directed my great-grandfather to go to Mexico, and gave him a recommendation to marry a plural wife there. "LORD INSTRUCT US TO OPENLY TEACH FALSE DOCTRINE."

My father has a letter written by Heber J. Grant to my father in which President Grant acknowledged to my father that his parents, B. Harvey Allred, Jr., and Mary Evelyn Clark, had been sealed in Old Mexico, by Anthony W. Ivins, in 1963, with the express consent, direction and permission of Joseph F. Smith. You must know that B. Michael Quinn has proven that the church perpetuated plural marriage up until Joseph F. Smith's 1904 "second" manifesto. Yet, President Smith never claimed to have received a revelation to justify it; he was too honest to make such a claim. Section 58:30-33 so poignantly sums it all up. "Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeyeth not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing." 

Your analysis of the Manifesto, and the whole history of the principle of Celestial Marriage amazes me: as an historian, I am amused by your creative revisions, sweeping assertions, selective interpretations and embarrassing denials; as a witness of the Prophet Joseph, I am saddened that you could so belittle his mission, and his dedication to the very principle that you so casually cast aside as inconsequential. If you are going to pose as an expert on the history of plural marriage perhaps you should consider learning something about it. I have difficulty agreeing with your brief and sweeping conclusions and assertions of the Manifesto. Yes, it is true that the Lord directed President Woodruff to issue the Manifesto—just as he describes that process in Section 58. It is not possible for me to accept the watered down views that you, Eldon Watson, James Talmage and others have offered on the necessity of plural marriage.

It was highly intriguing to witness your use of Max Anderson's methodology to select just a handful of dates from interviews which might be construed to "justify" men who choose not to live the law of plurality of wives, while you must surely know that there are HUNDREDS that prove the contrary. This type of "historical analysis" takes a few ideas here, one there, one over here, constructing a whole new history to justify the church's refusal to stand true to God and the exalting principles of the gospel in the 1800's. Mormonism's fundamentalists say not, and God revoked his law from the church and they will receive not the blessing. How evident does something have to be?

When I read how you all perceive the sacred principle of Celestial PLURAL marriage as an inconsequential, discredited, superfluous, incidental, optional, principle that never was necessary, it makes me wonder how foolish you must think those thousands of brethren and sisters were who gave up everything in the 1800's to be true to the commandments and obey that law. I am embarrassed for you that you would judge them so harshly. You are asserting that they were stupid because they could not see things as clearly as you are able to do so. All I claim that it was not necessary to obey that law! It is unfortunate that not only were those brethren so foolish as to believe that the revelation promised exaltation only to those who lived in the covenant of a plurality of wives, but all of the presiding leaders of the church also shared that same uninformd misconception and gave up everything themselves: John Taylor went into hiding for two and a half years, never to return to the love of his family and comfort of his home (It is sad that he was unaware of Section 132:19);

Woodruff and numerous others followed President Taylor into hiding; some like Joseph F. Smith even left the country; hundreds, like Lorenzo Snow, George Q. Cannon, Rugger Clason and Abraham Cannon were so uninformed that they mistakenly and needlessly went to prison. Thousands of women had to struggle for as many as six years without the love, solace, comfort and support of their husbands.

It is unfortunate for them that they could not have understood the intricacies of creative reinterpretation and linguistic analysis to catch and appreciate the subtle nuances of Section 132 to be able to extract such an interpretation of that revelation as has been offered by the church's learned theologians fortunate enough to have been educated in the theological schools of the best universities of America; instead those unlearned brethren and sisters had to rely on the Holy Spirit and follow the direction of humble men who followed the dictates of the Holy Ghost and remained true to the teachings of God's prophets, and had the courage and fortitude to perpetuate His priesthood in its fullness.

Do you really hold all of them in such low esteem that you truly feel that none of them was able to read Section 132 and understand what it "really" means? Do you really feel that John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith or Rugger Clason or Orson F. Whitney—HUNDREDS of others, were not able to read verse 19 of Section 132? Can you really feel comfortable in judging them as the unwitting followers of a non-essential, superfluous, incidental law which has no reward? Are you really suggesting that none of them needed to have practiced a plurality of wives, as you aver that you and others like you will receive a fullness of every blessing offered in that revelation without having to pay the same price, obey the same laws, accept the same ordinances, receive the same fullness that they did? You fascinate me! You really do.

In my first letter you referred to my "careful interpretation" of Section 132. The whole history of Nineteenth Century Mormonism teems with discourses and discussions of the "correct" interpretation of Section 132; it is fascinating how you and those who support your position can ignore the whole history behind the origins of that revelation, its reception, its recording, its first declaration, its promulgation— and yet you can so distort and torture a plain and simple revelation from the mind and will of Jesus Christ to get what
you want to receive out of it, despite of and in opposition to everything that our progenitors dedicated and lived their whole lives for: If you would be interested in using the methodology of professional historians and studying the origins of “Temple Monogamy Marriage,” you might be quite surprised to find that it developed in opposition to and in defiance of the teachings and testimonies of the people who preserved and perpetuated the Priesthood at a phenomenal price for us. Unfortunately, it appears you do not highly esteem those Saints of the 1880’s. Instead, you simply dismiss the value of their lives with a few sentences that God simply changed his mind, no longer requiring that law.

You probably have strong feelings about amateur healers who practice” their healing processes without training, without license and without conscience— and you should, because they bring all of you into disrepute. I feel the same way about my profession. There is, however, no law that would allow people to be sued for malpractice of history. History is a discipline; it is not a science. History is not the study of “absolute” truth as that would be impossible for the human mind to absolutely deduce; rather, history is an interpretation of the past based on evidence. I have heard that sentence uttered by history professors probably twenty different times. You seem to want to take history and “deduce” absolute truth when you want to, as when you try to invalidate Lorin Woolley’s claims by reading or surveying one small sampling of evidence; and yet you want to avoid reality by refusing to become immersed in the events, occurrences, writings, proceedings and daily lives of the Latter-day Saints in the 1880’s, as that would severely challenge your predetermined position.

I have spent more time studying Nineteenth Century Mormonism than any other thing in this world. I am probably more aware of what happened in Utah in the 1880’s than I am of what occurred in Utah in the 2000’s; your sweeping assertions and incredible assumptions absolutely fascinate me! Where did you get your information from? Why don’t you use the same careful, critical, & cautious analysis of the church’s origins of the concept of “Temple Monogamy” as you have used to analyze Lorin Woolley’s claims? Please be consistent. How can you view the Manifesto as a revolution revoking an eternal law, when it is a law that you cannot see that the Lord promised deliverance to all of Israel had they stood true to Him rather than subjecting themselves to Babylon?

Consider the prophecies made by Joseph Smith concerning the coming of Christ in 1890 or 1891. First, Section 130:14-17 where he stated that the Lord would not come before he was eighty five, (December 23, 1850 + 85 = December 1890 or 1891). Secondly, Documentary History of the Church, Volume 5:326, where he stated “I prophecy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written, the Son of Man will not come in the clouds of heaven till I am eighty five years old... And Moses, 6th chapter, After two years, etc. ——2520 years, which brings it to 1890. The coming of the Son of Man never will be— never can be till the judgments spoken of for this hour are poured out. Third, Documentary History of the Church, Volume 2:182: “Even 55 years shall wind up the scene.” [uttered February 14, 1835, the same day as the calling of the first Twelve. 1835 + 56 = 1891]

Of course, you may argue away the significance of these utterances and the year of 1890 and the Manifesto. But I know differently. The history is there.

Read about the constitutional convention of 1887 where the Mormon monogamist majority assembled and made the most sacred and exalting principle of the gospel a crime. They outlawed the eternal Celestial Law by which the leaders were living, and then the rank and file members went to the polls and voted for this constitution, making their prophets, seers, and revelators criminals. The Mormon monogamists approved this constitution by a vote of ten to one! That vote is where the concept of Temple Monogamy, using verse 19, Section 132 as its only scriptural basis, emerged. It developed from rebellion, not revelation! And yet, you tell me that the Saints had stood faithful! By whose standards? And then what about the Idaho Test Oath, for which thousands of the Saints withdrew fellowship from the church in order to vote? And then what about the Cullom Struble bill which would have made the Idaho Test Oath a national standard, after that oath had been upheld by the Supreme Court?

With the whole nation arrayed against him, his fellow members of the Holy Order in hiding, the church in the control of the monogamists as all those who were living “the law” were in hiding— and the rank and file membership in the church in open rebellion— of course Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, in accordance to the Lord’s direction. But could it have been otherwise had the Saints remained faithful? Go read these things for yourself. I have probably read all of the church’s apologies for it, but nothing can change the fact that in rejecting the laws and ordinances of the gospel— in fact voting to make their leaders criminals— that the church made a covenant with death and hell, and that is when the pressure came for a changing of the ordinances as well. Only because Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith held all of the keys did those changes not occur until after 1918. Does history support the position of present day church apologists? I think not.

You have never expressed an interest in any of my works or studies, but let me give you one insight to you. In 1983 I took a class entitled “Nineteenth Century European Intellectual History” at the University of Montana. One of the readings was from the Selections from the Prison Notes, by Antonio Gramsci, in which he analyzed the sociological, cultural, and political implications of harmony in Italy. Although Gramsci was analyzing the events of Italy’s Risorgimento (Italy’s war of political unification in the 1860’s) his evaluation and analysis struck me so hard, because he might just as well have been discussing the conflict in Nineteenth Century Utah between the Mormon Polygamous leaders, the Mormon Monogamous majority, the non-Mormons in Utah, and the Federal Government. I became fascinated, and from that developed my first thesis, “Mormon Polygamy and the Manifesto of 1890: A Study of Hegemony and Social Conflict.” What I found first in Gramsci and later in Karl Marx was an explanation of how social groups resolve their conflicts; from that I could see very clearly what my father had taught me all my life. I went to the university, never thinking that I would find the ideas of men a validation of the fundamentalist perspective. If you care to be real esoteric for a moment please allow me to make the following sociological illustration.

Whenever any group of people forms an association, all their laws, rules, social controls and norms are dictated by the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. Whenever any of that social group’s laws or rules come in opposition or conflict with opposing social groups, either that society must remain true to that law or rule in conflict and pay the consequences, or that
society must yield that law or rule to obtain a peaceful resolution to that conflict. Whenever any of that social group's laws or rules is yielded in order to obtain a peaceful resolution, then that change will be in direct conflict with the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. The social structure must validate all rules and laws of the social order; all rules and laws of the social order must validate the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. As there has been a conflict emerge because the social order elected to alter one of the laws or rules of the order, then the social order must alter the basic premise or foundation of their social structure.

I suggest to you, that what happened in Mormonism, which I call the Zion model, stood as the antithesis of middle class America, which I call the Babylon model. The two came into conflict many times. New York, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois: each time the Mormons moved rather than yielding or changing. Then to Utah: for forty years, 1847 to 1887, the Saints refused to yield any of their rules or laws. Finally, with the Constitutional Convention of 1897 and with the ratifying election, Utah's monogamist majority surrendered one of the most important laws of Mormonism, in opposition to and defiance of their polygamist leaders. Having yielded one of the laws which was part of their superstructure, they then had to begin to alter the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. What emerged was a new religion—based not on Joseph Smith's religion which required that all men who presided in the church practice polygamy, but on the concept of the living prophet, which would enable all monogamist Mormons the comfort of being able to justify and explain why they had yielded an integral, eternal part of an eternal everlasting gospel: they simply changed the everlasting gospel into an ever-changing gospel. And all is well in Zion.

Original Mormon Model

Superstructure:
- plurality of wives
- united order
- covenant people
- law of gathering
- unalterable ordinances
- foundation: Joseph Smith is a prophet

Current Mormon Model

Superstructure:
- temple monogamous marriage
- corporate capitalism
- universal church, all races
- universal church, all nations
- church office ordination
- unalterable ordinances changed as needed
- foundation: all is well in Zion

Seed of Cain is cursed

Foundation:
- Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.
- one must follow all of his teachings exactly as he gave or received them. In order to receive a fullness of the Savior's glory, one must obey all of the laws and ordinances he revealed through Joseph Smith.

But No Authority

You didn't ask for the lesson in history. You might not find it valid or acceptable. But it might explain to you why you have not found a receptive ear to your message. We have found the model that we want to follow—Joseph Smith. You choose to follow the other model—you obey a changing doctrine, observe altered commandments, receive changed ordinances, and support any one who has contributed to the church today, tomorrow or next year. Consequently, you have an historical problem.

And yet, you accuse us of not knowing or understanding our history. You claim to have found "problems" in our viewpoints and position, maintaining that we cannot support our position because of our inability to document to your satisfaction one occurrence. And yet history provides you with numerous "problems" which threaten and challenge the position of the current leadership of the church. As history does not support your position you turn to nonexistent revelations to justify yourselves. Surely you must recognize that the church has implemented remarkable changes in ordinances, principles, doctrines—yet none of these changes was ever justified by revelation. I am reminded of your interpretation of our position as being either:

I Understand and Believe or
It isn't Important

Do you not see any irony in your own position?

I have appreciated this exchange of ideas with you. Brian. It has caused me to realize, quite vividly, just how far apart our positions are. I have often thought of the plight of my grandfather, B. Harvey Alred, Jr., who in 1903 received a dispensation from Joseph F. Smith to live and practice the fullness of the gospel in Mexico. During the administration of Joseph F. Smith, my grandfather was well known and respected among the presiding authorities of the church. He continued to live exactly the same gospel, obey exactly the same ordinances, worship in the same church, in the same church buildings as the rest of the church. He was eventually excommunicated for not bringing his life, his beliefs, his covenants and the identity of his God into harmony with church policy.

You have reminded me of what I term the "Mormon paradox": how does one believe in and support the Prophet Joseph Smith and obey his teachings, and at the same time, support the present church leadership of the church? Obviously, it is impossible, as the two are mutually exclusive.

As an historian I am perplexed that you would accept all of these changes without any qualms. Your ability to point out our "problem" while validating your own "problems" confuses and bewilders me. The present church position requires a great deal of faith in the living prophets, yet requires that you reject the calling and mission of Joseph the Prophet. Perhaps you will tell me that you understand the discrepancies between the present direction of the church and the teachings of Joseph Smith but still "understand and believe," or will you...
you tell me that "it isn’t important?" As a witness of the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, I am heartbroken at the incredible renunciations of the teachings and revelations of Jesus Christ through that man. And yet, there has never been a revelation stating "thus saith the Lord," ever received to justify these changes.

The only support offered for the change in the policy toward the Negro in 1978 was that President Kimball felt "inspired." Where was the "revelation" to justify a policy which placed the church in direct opposition to every prophet in the world’s history since the very foundations of this creation? Surely you must know that the Prophet Brigham Young stated definitively, positively and without equivocation that the Negro could not have the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood or the blessings of the House of the Lord, until after all the seed of Abel received that opportunity. Please read the Manuscript Addresses of Brigham Young. The prophet Joseph was most clear upon this question.

Most certainly, President Kimball’s being "inspired" was a very convenient and widely accepted change, as it served to salve the consciences of those "politically correct" saints who were embarrassed by the medieval attitude of Mormonism’s founders about such a socially and politically delicate issue. It is remarkable that for me to accept, believe, and champion the teachings of Joseph and Brigham, once again I am running the gauntlet of those socially aware Latter-day Saints who will surely accuse me of bigotry, racism and prejudice. If so, I feel fortunate to be included in such good company as Brigham and Joseph, not to mention father Abraham who wrote: (Abraham chapter 1)

21. Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

22. From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

23. The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden.

24. When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it: and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

25. Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

26. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

Of course, church apologists have written numerous contorted explanations observing that there is no link between the curse and the Negroes, no correlation between the Canaanites and the Black skin. I remember Marty Martin’s observations in Mormonism and America, that the church considered any link between this scripture in Abraham 1 and the Negroes of today as a "non sequitur" (a word taken from Latin "sequitur" a form of the word from which the English word "sequence" derives). In observing that there was no direct link between the black skin and the curse of Cain, and no direct correlation connecting the Canaanites with the Negro, Martin reasoned that modern church apologists had once again concluded, just as you do, that "Brigham was wrong.

Consider the words of Enoch in the seventh chapter of Moses:

8. For behold the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.

12. And it came to pass that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent.

22. And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam, and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black and had not place among them.

Realizing that every prophet from the foundation of the world has understood the significance and importance of the mark and curse placed upon the seed of Cain, it becomes very interesting to me that the church would accept an "inspiration" to contradict the scriptures and establish new doctrine. And yet you accuse us of formulating our doctrine in retrospect, even if that is the church’s decision to implement the policy of admitting the Negro to the "blessings" of the "priesthood" was within their rights, as the church is a democratic institution. The absolute tragedy is that each year hundreds of the daughters of Israel enter the temple, at all places, where they are "sealed" by the "priesthood" to the sons of Cain. What do you think the flood was all about, Brother Brian? As in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the last days.

But the church does have the right to reject scriptures, the teachings of the prophets and their revelations. They proved that point in 1887; and their action in 1978 did make possible the fulfillment of prophecy. Consider the second chapter of II Thessalonians: (Inspired Version, by Joseph Smith)

1. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.

2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled by letter, except ye receive it from us: neither by spirit, nor by word, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for there shall come
a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5. Remember ye not, that, when I was with you, I told you these things?

6. And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, and he it is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way.

8. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

9. Yea, the Lord, even Jesus, whose coming is not until after there cometh a falling away, by the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders.

10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

One could assume that Paul was referring to the "falling away" of the Catholic church. But then, how could the son of perdition sit "in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," except that this would have to be fulfilled after Joseph Smith's calling? As there was not a temple of God at the time of the building of the Kirtland Temple, can one not see that this is in reference to the fact that the "son of perdition" has been allowed—invited—into the "temple of God"? Yes, we recognize that the church's decision had to happen in order for that prophecy to be fulfilled, but that is a decision that would be consistent with what Paul offers in verses 7 through 12 above. Does that decision not reflect a "falling away" as Paul prophesied?

At the same time, one could compare Paul's admonition, "[r]emember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things," to the warnings of Joseph Smith that if any man teach any doctrine other than what he had taught, he would be accursed. I would not want to be in the position of teaching a doctrine that is contrary to the revelations of God through His prophet Joseph Smith. Perhaps you feel comfortable in that situation, but we prefer to follow the teachings and revelations of the prophets, and we will allow others to accept the strong delusions, or "inspirations." Where was the revelation, Brother Brian?

Where was the revelation to make the numerous changes in the temple endowment? No longer are people instructed or taught how to approach God; no longer are sisters blessed to enter into the covenant of obedience to the law of their husbands, thus precluding their approaching God in the true order of prayer. No longer are the penalties given; consequently, the signs for them, which are absolutely necessary to approach God, are no longer given either. The leadership has completely cut off their fellow church members from the ability to embrace at the veil in order to enter into the presence of God. It is no longer possible to enter into the presence of God. Where is that? The Celestial glory. Apparently that is no longer a necessary place to go, but is an inconsequential, superfluous, optional, incidental and permissible existence to obtain. But where was the revelation?

Yeg you tell me to accept these revelations. Where are they?

The development of a world-wide church, with corporate structures closely patterned after the leading law firms of Wall Street—probably brings great pride to you, Brother Brian, it brings great concern to us. The church has become highly respected and accepted around the world. But what ever happened to the concept that there were only two forces in the world, good and evil? (I Nephi 14:10, 2 Nephi 2) That whatsoever is good comes from God and whatsoever is evil comes from Lucifer. (Alma 5) That there must needs be opposition in all things; that there are things that act, and those which are acted upon. (2 Nephi 2) That there are only two churches in the world: the church of Lucifer and the church of the Lamb. (I Nephi 14:10) Then why would the church need to be inspired to take out the part of the preacher in the temple endowment because it was offensive to the feelings of other churches? Of course it was offensive to the other churches; whose churches are they? (It is interesting that the only people or religion in the world that you publicly denounce are the fundamentalists who follow Joseph Smith's teachings) But where was the revelation commanding or directing the leaders of the church to make these changes in God's temples, Brother Brian?

While I understand the necessity of being the church "upon all the face of the earth," which Nephi saw in his vision (I Nephi 14:12), whatever happened to the concept of gathering to Zion? The church used to have a saying to the effect that:

"We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisical glory," Joseph Smith, Wentworth Letter. History of the Church, Volume 4:531.

Surprisingly, this is still in the Pearl of Great Price as well. I assume from this that some members of the church still believe in the concept of the gathering. We do. But where was the revelation that changed this basic
doctrines? The immigration quotas of the Immigration and Naturalization Acts? Does that mean that whatever act or bill that Congress passes will immediately have a direct effect on the teachings, laws, doctrines and "inspirations" of the church? But where was the revelation that we are not accepting?

While I would agree wholeheartedly that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which Ezra Taft Benson is president, is that church of which the angel in Nephi's vision spoke, I also do look forward to the setting in order by the one mighty and strong. (Section 85). While James Talmage put some minds at rest with one of his creative reinterpretations in which he claimed that the one mighty and strong was Edward Partridge, there are many of us who do have the ability to read and understand the scriptures ourselves. The concept of the setting in order by the one mighty and strong most certainly used to be an integral part of Mormon Doctrine. I remember asking my father why the church no longer teaches it. He told me that they could not accept it because to believe in the setting in order would require that they admit that the church and House of God need to be set in order. That would admit to the possibility that perhaps not all is well in Zion.

Clearly, Joseph Smith's work is not finished: he will return as a resurrected being, standing once more upon the earth in the flesh to set in order the House of God. Please read a letter that Joseph wrote to Orson Hyde and John E. Page when they were called to dedicate the Holy Land for the gathering of the Jews. There is one important line in there that he writes to them.

"brethren, ye are in the way to eternal fame, and immortal glory, and inasmuch as you feel interested for the covenant people of the Lord, the God of their fathers shall bless you. Do not be discouraged of account of the greatness of the work; only be humble and faithful and then you can say, "What art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel shall thou be brought down."

Who was Zerubbabel? Is it not apparent to all who have eyes to see that this is Joseph Smith? Consider the words of the prophet Zechariah in chapter 4 of his prophecy:

6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

8. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.

10. For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven: they are the servants of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

There are four very good reasons to believe that this prophecy will be fulfilled by Joseph Smith.

First, the Zerubbabel of the Bible, who is the "type" of this prophecy did not finish the work of building the Lord's house that he began, therefore, the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet to be accomplished. I am assuming that you are familiar with the realization that all of the Hebrew prophets used types and shadows.

Secondly, Joseph Smith was promised in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 90:16:

And this shall be your business and mission is all your lives to preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom.

Now, of course, one could argue that the word "lives" refers to all the members of the First Presidency, indicating that they would all hold this authority for the remainder of their mortal lives. Yet a more "careful" reading (which type you noted that I made in your previous letter) would lead one to observe the following: this revelation is to Joseph himself; all the pronouns of the previous verses demonstrate that Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were not recipients of this revelation with him. He, Joseph alone, is the one to whom the Lord is speaking. Note in verse 6 He says: "[verty] I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams." And lastly, verse 19 states: "...for the family of thy counselor and scribe, Frederick G. Williams." In Joseph's lives, he will preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom. A logical deduction, you must surely admit, would be that to "set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom" would necessitate that it is out of order.

The third reason is a very beautiful and touching prophecy from The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt. Although "I perceive an inability for current church apologists to receive all that the Lord has sent to us from heaven through His prophets," (compare your sentence from your page 5) I will offer this revelation received by Parley P. Pratt. This was when he was walking back to Nauvoo after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum. From page 333 of The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt:

The Spirit said unto me: "Lift up your head and rejoice; for behold! it is well with my servants Joseph and Hyrum. My servant Joseph still holds the keys of my kingdom in this dispensation, and he shall stand in due time on the earth, in the flesh, and fulfil (sic) that to which he is appointed......"

And the fourth reason is Joseph's patriarchal blessing that he received from his own father. In the History of the Church, Volume 2:380 by Joseph Smith, Jr., he tells us:
"And in my turn, my father anointed me, and sealed upon me the blessings of Moses, to lead Israel in the latter days, even as Moses led him in days of old; also the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

This blessing invites four serious inquiries.

First, how did Moses lead Israel? Was it not with a cloud and smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, freeing them out of bondage and leading them to the "promised land"? Surely, you would acknowledge that this was not fulfilled by Zion's camp but must require a complete fulfillment by Joseph in his lives here upon the earth in the flesh. Yes, a resurrected being.

Secondly, did not Joseph later receive a "fullness" of this sealing when Moses appeared unto him in the Kirtland Temple as recorded in Section 110:11:

After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

As this has not yet been fulfilled, we must also recognize that Joseph's mission is yet to be completed.

Thirdly, did not Moses number and organize—setting in order—all of Israel.

Lastly, although this is a peripheral observation, what are the "blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?" Read Section 132: all of it, not just verse 19.

I have presented all of this in order to lay the footing for the following scripture: Doctrine and Covenants, Section 86:7:

And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God.

This verse presents incontrovertible proof that Joseph Smith is the one mighty and strong who will yet, as Moses, lead Israel, who will yet, as Ezra number the children of Israel, and as is pointed out in Ezra 2:61 and 62, discover those of "Israel" who have mixed with the seed of the Canaanites, and declare them for ever polluted, put from the priesthood. If you chance to read this revelation in the History of the Church, you will find that it comes from a letter written by Joseph the Prophet to William Phelps, and that the date coincides exactly with the Prophet's translation of the Book of Ezra by the power of the Urim and Thummim. It is evident that Joseph had this revealed to him by the power of the Holy Ghost through the holy medium of the seer stones.

What did he perceive? Himself, as a resurrected being, "clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth," for what purpose? "To set in order the house of God!" Why? Because as in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, the children of Israel would be restored to their land of inheritance, many of them would have been polluted by the cursed blood, and the House of God would have fallen into an out of order condition. How out of order? What did Isaiah say in his prophecy? Isaiah 24:5

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

I wouldn't expect that you would believe that this scripture would describe the church in her out of order condition today, but please consider the following: what "earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof." How can the "earth" be defiled, except that this refers to a spot or place that has been consecrated unto God, and given to the children of the covenant. Would Utah qualify for that? Which "inhabitants" can transgress the laws? Only those people who have had them revealed unto them. Which inhabitants of the earth can change the ordinance? Only those who received it in its fulness and yet decided of their own free will by the common consent of the people to change it. And equally tragic: what inhabitants can break the everlasting covenant? Only those who have made and entered into it. And where was the revelation that told or commanded them to transgress those laws, change the ordinance, break the everlasting covenant? Where are those revelations that you say we are not willing to receive, Brother Brian? Could it be that they don't exist?

One must admit that the church in its present condition has fulfilled this scripture to a great degree. President Joseph Fielding Smith referred to that very scripture in Isaiah 24:5 when he stated:

"Are we not too much inclined to blame the generation that are past for the breaking of the new and everlasting covenant, and to think it is because of the great apostasy which followed... the Apostles in primitive time...? Perhaps we should wake up to the realization that it is because of the breaking of covenants, especially the new and everlasting covenant which is the fulness of the gospel that the world is to be consumed by fire and few men left. Since this punishment is to come at the time of the cleansing of the earth when Christ comes again, should not the Latter-day Saints take heed unto themselves? We have been given the new and everlasting covenant, and many among us have broken it." (Deseret News, October 17, 1936)

Could we not agree that Latter-day Saints have broken the "New and Everlasting Covenant which is the fulness of the gospel" because they are the only ones on earth who have it?

By your own reasoning, you cannot accuse us of any of these, because according to your sweeping assertions none of us has had or received any of these, because you claim we don't have authority to perform any of these
ordinances or covenants in the first place. In contrast, the attitude that we have been taught by God's servants all of our lives, and which I was most assuredly raised, is that we should live our lives in constant preparation for this very day. We take this scripture very personally, because we know that the Lord will hold us more accountable than most. And yet we do know that we have not mixed our blood with the Canaanite, and we hope that our names will be found in the book of the law of God. How does one have his name recorded there? By living and obeying all the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

The promise of Section 85 could have been fulfilled in 1890 and 1891, as the citations I listed before demonstrated. Jesus Christ would have come then, had the Saints remained faithful. The one mighty and strong could have come then, had they been willing to receive him. How much closer is the church to receiving the Prophet Joseph again today? Do you even believe in him? But I can promise you, because the Lord's servants have prophesied it, that he will come and set the house of God in order. Why or how is the house of God out of order? Because they have drawn closer and closer to Babylon, or the world, and further and further away from Zion. And through whom did all of the revelations on Zion come to us? Joseph Smith. Would you agree that it is probable that he would understand those revelations more than those who have reinterpreted them?

If you read Section 85 very carefully, you will see that it not only refers to a setting in order at the beginning of the millennium, but it also refers to the day of judgment and resurrection when the whole earth will be celestialized, and only those who have obeyed Celestial law will receive a lot of inheritance there. Zion is the pure in heart. Zion will be redeemed in the mortal sense, as promised in Section 103, 104 and 105, yet it will also be redeemed in the immortal sense when the earth is presented to God the Father, by his Son. And where will that take place? Read Daniel chapter 7:13-14. How will His kingdom be presented to him? As a result of an accounting or a setting in order of His House. And by whom? Who is the head of this dispensation, the dispensation of the fullness of times, unto whom a fullness of keys are given for the last time? Joseph Smith and his true successors—those who fulfill his teachings and receive the revelations of God through him.

I understand that the church prefers the King James version to the Inspired Version. Is it because Joseph Smith was involved with the latter and several of his teachings are not in harmony with current church doctrines? Even though the Prophet Joseph would be excommunicated for his behavior were he a member today, perhaps I could direct your attention to the vision of Joseph of old in Genesis chapter 50 (Inspired Version):

30. And again, a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins: and not to the bringing forth of my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them in the last days.

31. Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write, and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentations, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.

32. And out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my Spirit shall go forth among all my people, which shall restore them, who are of the House of Israel, in the last days.

33. And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation.

It would appear that Joseph of old thought quite highly of Joseph Smith, the Prophet. Joseph of old was under the impression, and apparently the Lord was also when He gave this revelation to him, that Joseph Smith, the Seer, would bring His people unto salvation. The words "my people" would lead a logical mind to deduce that this would mean the children of the covenant of the house of Israel. As the Lord mentioned that covenant in verse 31, and mentioned Israel in verse 32, and in verse 33 mentioned the seed of Joseph, generation to generation, how would they all be brought to a remembrance of God's covenants except—through whom? Joseph Smith! Perhaps his work was significant after all. Of course, since the church no longer sees a distinction between the seed of Israel and the seed of Cain, then the significance of these covenants might not seem important to you. They are, however, significant to us. But we believe in and accept revelation. Read Genesis 50 and 2 Nephi 3. You might also consider 3 Nephi, chapters 14 through 28, where the concepts of the covenant people are discussed.

Another thought which might be of interest to you is mentioned in Section 84:34-42. How do we get back in the presence of God? Through Joseph Smith. His work is still not done. The magnitude of his mission is not yet complete. Not only Joseph of old received revelation about him, but Lehi also, who said the following to his son Joseph in 2 Nephi chapter 3:

8. And I will give unto him a commandment that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work.

Also, in the Book of Isaiah, in many places, he refers to Joseph Smith. Consider for example: Isaiah 11:1.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

In Section 113 the Prophet Joseph Smith answered some inquiries about these concepts. The stem is Christ (verse 2); the rod is Joseph Smith (verse 1 and 3); the branch is the king of the house of David who will be raised up to preside over the government and officiate at the temple in Jerusalem. Abraham
Gilead's analysis of this verse adds understanding as well.

I mention all of this to pose one question to you, Brother Brian. As the Prophet Joseph Smith was prophesied of and promised from the foundations of the world to come and do this work, how can you or any thinking person who claims to believe in his mission possibly proffer that I should accept the teachings of the present leadership of the church as equal to if not superior to those of Joseph Smith? You tell me that I must study the writings and teachings of other prophets, not just Joseph Smith. With all due respect, I have never read mention of the divine calling and mission of Gordon B. Hinckley, James E. Talmage, Mark E. Peterson, Bruce R. McConkie, Charles Darwin, John Widtsoe, and the other "prophets" and leaders of the church who have elevated themselves to the position of changing, denying, defiling, polluting, perverting, transgressing, breaking and disobeying the laws, ordinances, covenants and revelations of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And yet, you seem to prefer all of them, any of them, to Joseph Smith.

Yes, even Charles Darwin, because you would prefer that a brother in the Church believed that he was a descendant of natural selection and the survival of the fittest rather than believe that he was a descendant of Michael, our Father and our God. Instead of living by the same laws by which Abraham lived, you would rather that he pollute his blood by mixing with the seed of Cain. In fact, the church teaches that it is alright to do that, even though he will not find an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom, only because Spencer Kimball was "inspired" to give those blessings to the seed of Cain, thus nullifying the prophecies and writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Abraham and all of God's true prophets. I am sorry, Brother Brian, but I cannot accept being "inspired," any more than I can accept the theory of evolution; and yes, your whole theology is based on that premise. Yes, the church has "evolved" from one of revelation to one of inspiration. But is that progress?

You claim that you are constantly progressing, constantly receiving line upon line, precept on precept. But what is the scriptural purpose of that? Read Section 93, or 2 Nephi 3, and you will find that it refers to "ordaining" the Lord's servants accepting all that was given them until and so that they could receive a fullness. Christ did receive a fullness, and perpetuate it, before He made the atonement and was crucified. Joseph did receive a fullness, and perpetuate it, before he was martyred. Your position, and the position offered by all of your prophets of change, maintains that Joseph Smith only laid the base and you are now building the grand model. I am sorry, but you are not Zerubbabel who will finish his work. You have exalted yourself to sit in judgment upon him, offering that many of God's prophets have instituted a different law for a different time. Where? When? To whom? Where was the revelation for that?

And where was the revelation disallowing the calling of Joseph Smith? Your whole theology was developed out of your need to justify why you will not accept the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and do his work. You have borrowed from the author of Darwin's theories to proffer that God can change, that He can create a new species of the gospel; you generate new doctrines all the time. Your necessity to modify and improve the temple endowment to make it "less harsh, less threatening" represents a case of natural selection and survival of the fittest. Your "inspiration" to give the Canaanite, Priesthood and pollute the temple of God did make possible a prophecy that Paul made almost 2,000 years ago: it did enable the church to be "selected" as one with the world, and to "survive among the fittest." It is doubt whether that would justify making a decision based on American middle class values in preference to the will of God as revealed through His prophets. In fact, with all of the changes, can you really honestly state you truly feel these changes have been "progress"? Have they really brought the church closer to God, or further away?

Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Mormon and Moroni taught us at great length that there are only two forces, good and evil: good personified or represented by Zion; evil personified or represented by Babylon. Joseph Smith's whole mission was to prepare a people who would qualify to be "Zion," which Section 97:21 tells us is the "pure in heart," to be gathered out of Babylon and prepared to meet the Savior. (Hopefully, this is not new information to you.) That would prove the existence of only two sets of mutually exclusive alternatives for God's covenant people: which do you prefer?

Babylon
Lucifer
the Abominable church
of the Harlot
the world
Isaiah's "Egypt"
the Canaanites
false prophets

Zion
Jesus Christ
the church of the Lamb
the priesthood of Jesus Christ
Israel
Isaiah's Zion, or Judea
the seed of Abel
true prophets.

Please allow me to examine only a few of the "inspired" changes made since the Manifesto, and especially since 1918. I am hoping that you know and recognize that each and every one of the doctrines, principles and ordinances of salvation and exaltation has been eliminated, modified or restricted.

1. Baptism: now only given once, no rebaptism.
2. Mother's blessings: no longer given.
3. Women performing ordinances with consecrated oil: no longer permitted.
4. Sacrament: the sign of the Aaronic priesthood no longer given. The word "administer" redefined in all Mormon dictionaries only to mean "bless," as deacons take the bread and water to the members who pass it to each other.
5. Dedication of baptismal water: no longer done.
7. United Order: faded into obscurity.
8. Temple endowment: wow, my heart breaks over this one.
10. Traveling without purse or scrip: no longer permitted.
11. Presentation of graves by the sign of the Melchizedek Priesthood: no longer done.
12. Second Anointing: no longer done, or at least greatly restricted.
15. Covenant people: does the church even teach this concept anymore, Brian?
16. Anything you want to put here: there are over 100 of them.

Daniel
But where was the revelation that justified one of them, all of them, any of them, most of them, some of them? You say that we are not willing to accept these revelations. How can we, when they have never been presented, never been announced, never been printed, never been read—never been received? I would agree, these changes were "inspired"—but by which source? To which of the following models, Zion or Babylon, have all of these changes been drawn the church? To be a revelation from God, these changes would have to have added to the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith. You accuse us of not being willing to accept other than what Joseph or Brigham received: that is not true! We expect and anticipate many more revelations and added truth and light. That is what the millennium is all about, isn’t it? The whole gospel is based on the premise of continual revelation.

We accept and receive all that He has revealed (do you?) all that He does now reveal (as in “thus saith the Lord” which you do not have) and that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, which is immutable, unchanging, unvarying and unalterable, unlike your position. Yes, we are not willing to accept any of these “revelations” that support your position, because they TAKE AWAY from Joseph Smith; in fact they deny him—indeed, however, they do not even exist! Yet, you accuse us of developing our theology in retrospect. Perhaps we err in not being willing to accept more: perhaps the church errs in not being willing to keep even that which they still have left.

As the Lord revealed and established a fullness of His laws and ordinances through Joseph Smith, which the scriptures all verify, then to add to them would mean that nothing is taken away. You justify the church’s actions by implying that the Lord has added, line upon line, peremptorily on precedent. We know that Joseph did not receive such institutes and the truth that there is. That would deny the basic precept of Mormonism that we will always be receiving more. But your methodology doesn’t add, it takes away. Most importantly, every change has taken the church closer to Babylon and further from Zion. If moving toward, and embracing, Babylon is what you mean by “progress,” then I would sure agree with you, the church has made remarkable progress since 1918.

Consider my confusion! Mormonism started out with the perfect situation. We had a man who actually saw God, heard His voice, translated sacred records by the power of the interpreters, had numerous visions from angels. In fact, this vision was of such high caliber and integrity, that many of God’s prophets prophesied of him. Some by his name. Exactly, precisely who he would be. From the foundation of the world. And yet, you and many others would think to change the prophesies, reject the revelations, change the ordinances, break the covenants and transgress the laws that were revealed through him is “progression”? I am confused. I never could accept the concepts taught by “science” on the origin of the species, but I must say that they are more consistent than you are. Darwin, at least, never claimed to have started out with the perfect model, and then retrogressed, or digressed—o degenerated from there. The church was restored on Zion’s plan in 1830; yet how far has the church “progressed”?

The church has become one of the most ardent supporters of the Babylonian (American) capitalistic corporate structure, forgetting the true economic pattern of Zion. Where was the revelation disallowing or suspending the law of consecration? The church has missionaries all over the world, yet you don’t seem to have much embarrassment over the fact that the doctrine on which there is the most revelation is not practiced today. Interesting. Does one want to live the economic laws of the Celestial Kingdom? Isn’t it necessary anymore, but only an incidental, superficial commandment? What would happen if the people would live it? Did the Lord not promise that He would redeem the church and send the one mighty and strong to redeem Jackson County and free us from Babylon? Is Babylon that comfortable? Consider Section 105, all of it: I will offer only a few verses.

3. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

4. And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

5. And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

6. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer.

There seems a tendency among church lobbyists never to apply revelations and scriptures to themselves or the church during their day; but for the Lord’s servants in all times, in all ages, it has been plainly taught that all prophecies have come to pass, do come to pass, and will come to pass. If Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, then when do you propose that we start? Could it have been wise never to have stopped? Some, outside the church, have never given up practicing that law! Where was the revelation suspending it? If it wasn’t suspended, then why don’t you live it? Those who choose not to live this law, have chosen to experience the results of their actions. What does verse 6 read: those who will not obey this covenant “must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer.”

Where are all of these revelations we are not willing to accept, Brother Brian? You claim to be motivated by the spirit of God to call us to repentance. Would not that same spirit prompt you to show us these revelations that you claim to have? Where are they? Could it be that they do not exist? Then all you would have to stand on is “follow the living prophet.” Isn’t that what the Catholic Church teaches? Why should we follow your position rather than the Vatican’s? If “proof” of ordination is the only criterion that you can produce to justify your position, why wouldn’t you want to recognize a far older, far larger and grander claim than your own? Your logic would require you to give up any pretense of supporting Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, and become a Catholic.
One of the most intriguing comments in your letter was your offering on page 3. You referred to my recommendation that you study Joseph Smith’s teaching. You offered that my challenge to gain a testimony of fundamentalism by studying the teachings of Joseph Smith is something akin to challenging someone to gain a testimony of Catholicism by studying the teachings of the apostle Peter. It is like challenging someone to study the authority held by Christ to gain a testimony of the Pope’s authority and having an investigator study the keys held by Joseph Smith to understand modern fundamentalist sealing priesthood authority.

I have tried to deduce the logical premises of your analogies. Although I have never been one to appreciate analogies, preferring simple and plain language, I believe your comparisons would follow these lines:

You posit that:
1. Lorin Woolley is in the same position as the pope.
2. The Catholic church is in the same position as fundamentalism.
3. You offer that Christ is the author of authority (notice how those words are somewhat similar) that the authority held by Joseph Smith is not the same authority held by the fundamentalists. Therefore, the authority held by the pope is similar to that held by the fundamentalists.

Your analogy presents some interesting comparisons. Perhaps I do not understand Catholic theology and history as well as you, but are not they the ones who claim that it doesn’t matter what previous prophets (or do they call them popes) did or taught, but it is only necessary to study the teachings of the current or recent ones, or those teachings since 325 (the Nicaean Council)? Are not they the ones who make no effort to reconcile the teachings of the current church leadership with previous leaders, or even the scriptures? Are not they the ones who excommunicate people for believing in the teachings of the founders of their church? Aren’t they the ones who excommunicate people for being out of harmony with the present leaders of the church? Aren’t they the ones who have followed their living prophets, transgressed all the laws, changed all of the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant, eliminated plain and precious parts of the gospel, implemented a series of changes that would be more acceptable to the world, striven to obey all the laws of the church? And all the time claimed to have been “inspired” even though they have never received a revelation justifying their changes?

In fact, don’t they justify their existence by pointing out that they are the ones who control their historian’s office; they are the ones who control all of the buildings; they are the ones who have a church that has world recognition; they are the ones who are so numerous that any others would be insignificant? Aren’t they the ones who would discount the claims of Joseph Smith, because he could not prove his conferral of Priesthood, while they have a “smooth transition of succession” from pope to pope, for nearly 2,000 years? Of course, they admit that they have been wrong a couple of times. There really were those records that Lorenzo Valla found in the Vatican archives that they denied that they had for centuries which proved that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. But, they argued, it doesn’t prove that anyone else would have authority, because they don’t have proof of those other people’s claims in their archives. Aren’t they the ones who have had to yield on countless points because historians like Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus, Thomas More, and Calvin proved their positions to be historically inaccurate? But they do have a clear succession of authority, and a valid record of witnessed ordinations. They just don’t have a fullness of Priesthood. They just don’t have or receive revelations to justify all the “progress” that they have made.

Perhaps you might feel this is somewhat harsh in pointing out that every authority you have used to defend the church’s continual slide away from its AUTHORITY Joseph Smith, is exactly the same argument the Catholic church argues—every single one. How could you compare Lorin Woolley to the pope, unless you are agreeing that Lorin Woolley did have a valid ordination. Just as did the pope? That premise would actually contradict the validity of your whole position, as succession and control of the legal corporate church entity is the only claim that you have to authenticity, as you have denied the truth of the calling of your founder.

How could you assert that the fundamentalists are in opposition to Joseph Smith when we are the only people on the face of the earth who really believe in his teachings? How could you argue that the fundamentalists don’t have the same authority as Joseph Smith when you admit that there is no one in the church that holds that authority? Lives the same laws, accepts the same ordinances, or perpetuates the same priesthood? Clearly, you do not want to be associated with him, Brian, so why do you take umbrage with us for at least trying to do his work? Yes, I find your analogy interesting, but not enlightening.

Where is this revelation that we are unwilling to accept, Brother Brian? More, it is annoying that you would accuse us of that. You suggest that not all of God’s prophets agree; isn’t that what every false prophet has claimed? This concept that different prophets can disagree perplexes me. Consider Paul’s statement in I Corinthians chapter 14: (King James Version)

32. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the Saints.

And then you accuse Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith of having two different sets of positions before and after the Manifesto. On what? You cannot produce one shred of evidence to prove that those holy men ever profaned the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith or his successor Brigham Young. You even accuse the Prophet himself of being a false prophet because you maintain that God has changed the commandments and teachings that he revealed through that most holy prophet, when and after the prophet told us beyond a shadow of a doubt that his works would stand until the millennium, unchanged in their fullness! He said, “if any man preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, he shall be cursed.” (The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph
Do you feel comfortable being in that position, Brother Brian?

I cannot express how ironic that it is that you would try to hammer us so hard. On what? One point—your inability to find proof of the Lorin Woolley statement among the carefully guarded secrets in the Church Historian's office. Of course, you have to take that position, because that is the only weakness in the perpetuation of the priesthood that you can perceive to have found. You, and the others who follow your position, accuse Lorin Woolley of deceit and dishonesty simply because you cannot find incontrovertible proof of his claims. You refuse to approach God and ask Him. Instead, you turn to your own wisdom, refer to revelations that never have been received: you make sweeping and incredible assertions to justify your refusal to obey God's law, and yet in order to do so, you follow the very methods that you accuse Lorin Woolley of using.

You cannot fault us on our doctrines, as they are all identical to those established and perpetuated by all of God's prophets, all of them, from the foundation of the world. I am sorry if your leaders do not fit in that category.

You cannot challenge us on our ordinances, as they are all identical to those established and perpetuated by all of God's prophets, all of them, from the foundation of the world; I am sorry if your leaders have chosen not to accept and perpetuate them, but rather have chosen to change them.

You cannot challenge us on our covenants, as the are all identical to those established and perpetuated by all of God's prophets, all of them, from the foundation of the world; I am sorry if your leaders have preferred to break them.

You have no scriptural basis to challenge us on, except that you use the creative interpretations and positions of the present leadership of the church, and you apparently feel no compulsion to reify the teachings and predictions of recent church leaders with those who preceded them. You examine the writings of Joseph Musser to find one word here and one sentence there, when you surely must know that every revisionist theologian in the last 50 years could not possibly withstand a comparative analysis referencing their works with the teachings of Joseph Smith. Once again, I cannot understand how you refuse to recognize that Joseph Musser, and his predecessors and successors, are the only ones in the church, inside the church or outside the church who agree with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow or Joseph F. Smith, Jesus Christ, Isaiah, Zechariah, Moroni, Mormon, Nephi, and a few others.

By what criteria do you assess valid success? Those who support Joseph Smith; or those who deny him. Those who continue his work; or those who oppose it. Those who preside over the ordinances and laws that he instituted; or those who have the control of the legal institution that he organized according to the laws of the land. The Catholic church has an earlier right to everyone of those claims, Brother Brian. I do not understand why you even bother to claim Joseph Smith was a prophet, when you deny his teachings. You even spend your efforts challenging the only people who do support, claim and perpetuate his teachings.

On only one point! Perhaps we have been unfair in not placing all of our diaries and journals in the church historian's office. We have withheld information from you. We have not allowed you to read them in order to solve your whole dilemma. But we are not now, nor have we ever been, obligated to prove our position. Those who are looking for truth have always been able to find their way through the maze. Those who are looking to confound and argue have been able to find justification for their decisions not to live all the laws of the gospel. The Jews did it, the Lamanites did it, the Catholics did it, and others today have done it as well. Denying the necessity of living the laws, however, would also deny the blessings attainable only through living them as well.

I was amazed that you would claim that you understand Joseph Smith's teachings on plural marriage. Then why don't you accept them? Why don't you follow and practice them? Why don't you live them? Why don't you do his works? You wonder why you are not able to reach us, to convince us, to convert us. Could it be because we are looking to men and women who do the works of Joseph Smith? You tell us that you have a testimony of Joseph Smith, but you deny the necessity of doing his works. You bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet, but you do not bear witness to the laws and ordinances of the gospel that were restored through him. You tell us that you have a testimony that Brigham Young was a prophet of God, but then you tell us that Brigham didn't know who God was—that he was wrong. Interesting; how could a man be a prophet of God, and yet be wrong as to who God was. You tell us that you represent the only true source of authority, using verse 18 of Section 132 to construct your whole theology, and then you deny the very men through whom you claim your authority derived? That is curious. In twenty or thirty years will you or someone else be saying, Joseph F. Smith was wrong. Or, how about this one, Spencer Kimball was wrong. Is that what you mean by an unchangeable, unalterable, eternal gospel?

Then you call us to repentance. To whose repentance? You assume that you are the same "side" as Joseph and Brigham, only because you are a member of the same legal corporate entity over which they once presided; but then you also assume that although you have the same legal entity that you are excused from living and obeying the same laws and receiving the same ordinances that they revealed, received, obeyed, fulfilled and perpetuated. And then you assume that those who are doing the works of Joseph, Brigham, Heber, John, Wilford, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph— are committing sin, because your leaders have changed the ordinances that were instituted from before the foundations of the world. You have based your whole revised, retrospective theology on one assumption: you, and other church lobbyists, assume that God can, or would, change or alter His laws and ordinances to fit the needs of His people at different times. Not even the Catholics would accept that assumption.

You support your assumption by quoting from Jacob chapter 2. Have you forgotten that this particular passage was the reason why Joseph Smith sought the word of the Lord on the question of a plurality of wives? How then could you assume that the very scriptures that would lead Joseph to receive a revelation commanding all who receive the law of Celestial PLURAL Marriage to live it, would also prohibit or forbid it? You are not the first one to use Jacob 2 to justify rejection of that holy law. Vice President Schuyler Colfax used it in 1869. You can read John Taylor's analysis of Jacob 2 and his
responses to in the Deseret News. October 20, 1869. I will offer only a brief part of his response after a few citations from Jacob 2:

28. For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

29. Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes.

30. For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people, otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.

31. For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

32. And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which have been led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.

33. For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts.

34. And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before; and ye have come unto great condemnation; for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done.

Then continue in the third chapter of Jacob 3:

5. Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursing which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers— that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them.

As President Taylor pointed out, the laws and commandments which Lehi was given included not just the proscription against concubinage, but against all ungodliness. Verse 30 of Jacob 2 makes it very clear that the Lord placed the law of Celestial PLURAL marriage on a much higher plane than the sin of taking concubines. The phrase, “for if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things,” shows us two things: that in order to “raise up seed unto” Him, He will command His people— to do what? Obviously to live a plurality of wives, as that is what they are prohibited from doing— EXCEPT HE SHALL COMMAND; secondly, unless He calls and commands people to live that holy law, then they surely must not do so.

Most certainly, the Lord did “raise up seed unto” Himself among the RIGHTEOUS children of Lehi— to state otherwise you would have to argue that none of the children of Lehi were “seed unto” the Lord. Therefore, if follows that He did command it to those who were worthy. Those to whom this law was not specifically revealed, were commanded to have but one wife, and concubines none. This is entirely consistent with the gospel in all ages. Hopefully you know that I could cite dozens of quotes specifying just that. If you are as familiar with Mormon history as you claim to be, you must certainly see a direct parallel among the saints in the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young; in fact, it was not until 1852, as you yourself stated, that the law of eternal marriage, of which a plurality was, is, and always will be an integral component, was first revealed— yet it never was a law of the church.

The teachings of Jacob provide a tragic insight into some of the problems in the church today. You may not consider these problems, but they weigh heavily on us. Consider verse 33, “they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people;” what is occurring when the daughters of Israel are being betrayed in bondage through marriage to the seed of Cain in the Temple? What is happening when thousands and thousands of righteous, capable women are forced either to remain in single barraniness, or to marry men unworthy of them— because their leaders have exalted themselves to deny the blessing of holy matrimony in Celestial marriage to them?

Or “they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts;” is abortion absent from the church? Is it a “sin” of equal magnitude to the most heinous of all— “polygamy”? Are righteous women being seduced into adulterous association because there are no righteous men available? Perhaps you might answer that all of this will be “straightened out in the millennium” as other church lobbyists have suggested. But where is the doctrinal basis of that idea? There is a doctrinal basis for the practice, in righteousness, of the law which would reduce, if not eliminate these tragedies: read Section 132, all of it, and you will find that this was the law given before the foundations of the world for the raising up of a righteous seed.

For those to whom this law is not commanded and authorization not given, the law of God to the Priesthood and the church is to have but one wife, and concubines none. It has always been so. Now, in 1890, in 1952, in 1961, in Jacob’s day, in Mormon’s day, in Jesus’ day. What, however, would lead you to assume that neither Jacob, nor any of the other Nephite prophets were polygamists? Only because the Book of Mormon doesn’t say they were? What about the Lord blessing Amulek’s women? (Alma 10:14) Clearly, Amulek was among those “seed unto” the Lord who had been commanded to have more than one wife. Or what of Nahum having many sons (Helaman 1:4)?

The Book of Mormon does not say many things. Consider just a few basic gospel doctrines of which there is no mention: the eternity of marriage; the nature and personality of God as being a man enthroned in yonder heavens who once was as we are now, and is as we may not become; a multiplicity of gods, (does the church even teach that any more?), three separate kingdoms of glory; temple endowments; work or baptism for the dead; Aaronic Priesthood; the existence of
Eloheinu, Jehovah, Michael (does the church teach those any more?); the office of Apostle (the Nephite Twelve are referred to as 'disciples'), the office of Bishop; the office of Patriarch; sealing keys of Elijah; washings and anointings; rebaptism; the war in heaven—just to name a few.

Would the absence of these being mentioned also lead you to assume that these were not taught then, or believed then, or practiced then? Or that the children of Lehi had a different law, as you maintain in your letter? If they did not practice the law of a plurality of wives to "raise up seed unto the Lord," as you assume they did not, then we would also have to assume, that as a result of these being "seed unto the Lord," that there was no one worthy to receive or participate in temple work? Did the Nephites not have Bishops, Patriarchs, Apostles? Was there no temple work for the dead? Could the dead only go to heaven or hell, but not the Celestial, Terrestrial and Telestial Kingdoms? Was God not a "man enthroned in yonder heaven" then, but only a spirit as Mosiah chapters 15 and 16 might lead one to assume He was. Was God Michael/Adam in Jacob's time as He was from 1852-1877, but someone else today, or was He someone else?

The Bible doesn't tell us that Isaac practiced plural marriage, either, but Section 132 does. Just because you don't find mention of something, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. Any good historian knows that is poor history. Consider this: as you admitted in your book, it is now uncomfortable for the church to have to admit that they had a copy of the Revelation of 1886 all along after vehemently denying its existence for so many years. Just because Joseph Smith's history never mentions his marriage to any of his plural wives, nor the birth of any of his children by them, I hope that you would agree that he did practice the principle.

Please don't be offended, Brian, but you make all kinds of sweeping assumptions about things only because they are not mentioned; Jacob having more than one wife, Lorrin Woolley's ordination—what other things that you cannot find must we eliminate simply because they are not clearly, simply stated to your satisfaction or as false, or not being true according to the scriptures? As we are told that Jesus Christ was married—either once or many times; but Brigham teaches us that Joseph Smith was a descendant of Christ. A silence about something doesn't prove that it doesn't exist. Remember what I stated earlier about historical malpractice?

More important then what the Book of Mormon doesn't say, however, is what it does say. Consider how much older that Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi were than their younger brothers Jacob and Joseph. Let's theorize that Nephi might have been extremely mature at say age 15 when he killed Laban; as he was the youngest of the four brothers, and based on the average distance of two years between each brother, that would make Laman 21. Jacob and Joseph were both born during their years in the wilderness before they built their ship. Yes, I suppose that it is possible for Sarai to have children who were 25 years difference in age, but consider Nephi's statement in I Nephi 18:17-19:

17. Now my Father, Lehi, had said many things unto them, and also unto the sons of Ishmael; but, behold, they did breathen much threatenings against anyone that should speak for me; and my parents being striken in years, and having suffered much grief because of their children, they were brought down, yea, even upon their sick-beds.

18. Because of their grief and much sorrow, and the iniquity of my brethren, they were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their God; yea, their gray hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.

19. And Jacob, and Joseph, being young, having need of much nourishment, were grieved because of the afflictions of their mother: 

Of course, this doesn't prove anything, but if Jacob and Joseph had the same mother as Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi, would Nephi say "my mother" or "our mother," or "our parents," instead of "their mother"? Notice that in verse 17 he said "my parents" when he was talking about Laman and Lemuel's parents rather than their parents. The Book of Mormon tells us the names of only three women: Sarai, Ishmael, Abish; by your line of reasoning, there were no important women among the Nephites, because none other than Nephi's wife, Laman's wife and the mothers of Helaman's 2,000 Lamanite warriors, and a few others, were even mentioned. Although Alma, 2 Nephi, and 3 Nephi never mentioned their wives, I hope that you would agree that it is obvious that they had some—if not many.

Nephi does not tell us the names of his sisters, or how young they were when he states in 2 Nephi 5:8: "....I, Nephi, did take my family,....and Jacob and Joseph, my sisters,...." How many did he have? Who was their mother? Or were they born? Of course, this doesn't prove that Lehi had more than one wife, but if he did not, Sarai would have been having children over a very long period of time—a length of time extremely unusual for women of that time. Anthropologists would find that extremely interesting. This is what you like to call a "problem," Brother Brian.

I feel bound to bring this to your attention. In your lengthy analysis of the "problem" of the separation of the calling of the head of Priesthood from the calling of the head of the church, you went through scriptural gymnastics to try to prove that Alma was not the head of the church but only of those branches that he founded. My first thought was to let you leave that idea in your book and symposium paper, as it would have caused people to go and investigate for themselves. I do hope that you will still leave it there, but you might want to reconsider your insistence that Mosiah was indeed the head of the church. You offered that you doubted that Hyrum Andrus would have supported the position of our "church. Just in making that statement you confirmed my feeling that you still don't understand what our position is. Once more: please re-read the following scriptures:

Mosiah 28:20: And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters,
and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.

Notice that these things were "conferred" upon Alma. What does that mean? What does it mean when a man receives and has the "interpreters"? Does that not make him a seer? Was Alma called and confirmed and appointed and appointed to be Mosiah's successor or not? Next, consider the following:

Mosiah 29:42: And it came to pass that Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church.

Unless I misunderstood what you wrote, you claim that Alma the elder only had a limited calling within the church which you claim was presided over by Mosiah, to organize a limited number of branches. Is that what you meant? First, please note that had that been the case, as you suggest, that Alma was not the high priest over the whole church, your assumption would mean that Alma would only have given his son, Alma, a limited appointment to act in the capacity as high priest only to those branches that he had organized. If so, then how could he have given his son, "charge concerning all the affairs of the church"?

And, what does "the high priest" mean? Doesn't it mean over all the church?

Lastly:

Mosiah 29:47: And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of Alma, who was the founder of their church.

I am beginning to understand the type of methodology that church apologists use, having read how Eldon Watson analyzed Section 132 and the revelation of 1886. But as a teacher, maybe I could offer a few insights on some basic rules in grammar. Notice the "words" their church. As this is one sentence, with two related but independent clauses, we must assume that the pronoun "their" refers to a plural noun: there are only two—kings and people. Now, of course, one of you could argue that because people can be made plural to become "peoples" that "their" would have to describe "kings." Such an interpretation would indicate that Alma was the founder of the kings' church. Or one could be a little more reasonable and honestly deduce that Alma was the founder of the "people's church." In either case, brother Brian, you might want to have to modify your position, because there was no church among the people of Nephi before Alma founded their church at the Waters of Mormon, or else he would not have been the founder.

Now you could argue that he founded only the church of the people at the Waters of Mormon, but they had no king; in fact, he refused to be their king. Therefore, it would have to refer to the "people of Nephi," over whom the kings reigned and that would include all of the people of Nephi, otherwise Mormon would not have put these two ideas together in the same sentence. They stand as a couplet together, showing that the people of Nephi lost both their last king, and their first high priest over their church. Clearly, it is obvious that Alma, the younger, received the callings of both Mosiah, as prophet, seer and revelator, and the older Alma's office of high priest over the whole church of all the people of Nephi. Whether you accept it or not, the calling of president or "high priest" over the church, and the calling of God's prophet, seer and revelator, CAN and HAVE been divided between two separate men: I am sorry if I embellished that a little, but I am weary of having to deal with the type of contortions that would allow one to justify himself in twisting the scriptures to make them read as he pleases, rather than in accepting the plain, simple and direct words of God through his prophets.

Your whole challenge to us is based on these two premises: your inability to find proof of the Lorin Woolley statement; your unwillingness to accept the necessity of living and obeying all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel. All of your efforts to discredit Lorin Woolley have not changed the basic premises; does God require that we live all of the laws today, as He has in all ages, in all times, to all peoples? If so, has He kept His word and preserved His Priesthood in its fullness? You maintain that He has not. Perhaps you still do not understand that it is impossible for you to have credibility with us when you claim to have a testimony of God, His gospel, and His servants, and yet you continually deny their teachings; or how can we give you credence when you tell us that we have to accept the teachings of the present leaders of the church as the only true authority, even when they contradict ALL of the men, in all dispensations, whom they claim to succeed?

You keep coming back to that "authority question." You are right! That IS the real question! One of my father's associates wrote me a letter to emphasize that all of your arguments are just a "smoke screen." The real issue is, always has been and always will be authority. You have to live your testimony of the calling of Joseph Smith, but you do not accept, follow or believe his teachings. You have your testimony of Brigham Young, yet you do not follow his teachings— in fact, you stand at our pulpit, and you said, "HE WAS WRONG." Where? I wonder if Brother Young would find your views in harmony with his. You have your testimony of John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith all as being prophets of God. We could not agree more. Why don't you agree with yourself? Do you not see any irony in the fact that we agree with you more than you do?

We agree with you so much that we accept their teachings, we follow their teachings, and we believe their teachings—and even more remarkably, we even live and obey them. All of them. Every one of them. "IN FACT, WE ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH WHO DO." None of the leaders in today's church does; in fact, they deny the necessity to do so. It is interesting that you would walk into our hall and direct and adjudice us to do exactly what we were already doing and what you refuse to do. Why is it that you will not accept your own advice? You are very consistent with the current position; you preach for doctrines to the commandments of men, having a form of Godliness, but denying the power of them, and denying the very nature and identity of God himself. If you can't see a glaring difference staring you right in the face, I don't know what else I could say. I believe that Mormon's has a word for those who teach, preach or advocate one thing, but do another.
I was very soft with you that night when you exalted yourself to be a judge of Brigham Young; I was soft with you in my response to your early letters and your symposium paper. But authority is the question. Section 132:7 states that no contracts...are of efficacy— you have read. In fact, you quoted it many times. We agree with you. You offered the necessity to be sure that we understand the implied warning in verse 16; we agree with you. The question is, is he that man? Is he someone who teaches, follows, practices, obeys, fulfills and perpetuates the same teachings as Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith and maintains the purity and continuity of the same laws and ordinances of the gospel that God revealed and instituted and perpetuated through those holy prophets? Or is it someone who presides over an organization which, although its size and grandeur be impressive, has not received one revelation since 1892—or even 1890? Has changed the ordinances of the House of God? Revoked and denounced the teachings of His prophets concerning the very nature and character of His being? Has corrupted the House of God by opening the doors of the temple to the Canaanites?

Of course, you see no problems in any of the things that I have offered, simply because on your trips to the church historian’s office when you reviewed those items which that office has very carefully selected, you were unable to find evidence supporting Lorrin Wooley’s testimony, even though there has not yet been evidence produced to disprove it. And you have created an entirely new religion around verses 18 and 19 of Section 132. If you would study the whole revelation, verse 7 would take on a whole new meaning for you.

You have a testimony of Ezra T. Benson, and I share the same testimony that he is indeed God’s prophet, seer, and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; I do not, however, share the testimony that he is qualified to sit in the position occupied, and so carefully preserved and perpetuated in its fullness by those first six men who sat in that calling. Our family has always honored, revered and respected President Benson. One of my father’s brothers married his niece. President Benson spoke at my aunt’s funeral. He has spoken with my Uncle Owen and extended his regards to all of us. He is a wonderful and righteous man; but has he done the works of Abraham? Wouldn’t the holder of the authority described in Section 132:7 do as Abraham did? Or Joseph Smith, Brigham Young or their successors? Does he even claim to do so? Why does he remain silent, when he sees the church in its condition today? Is it because he has experienced the same heartbreak as Mormon?

And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity. (Mormon 1:16)

Yes, it is the authority thing again. The whole question devolves to one very brief and powerful set of queries:

1. In order to be God’s mouthpiece, as described in Section 132:7 or Helaman 10:5, would a man have to receive a fullness of all the authority that Joseph Smith received?

2. In order to receive a fullness of authority, would one have to receive and hold all of the keys of the Priesthood?

3. In order to hold all the keys of the Priesthood, would one have to hold the keys to all the ordinances?

4. In order to hold a key to an ordinance, would one have to have received that ordinance first?

5. In order to receive an ordinance, would one have to fulfill and obey all the laws necessary to qualify for that ordinance first?

Now, please be careful in your answers. If you answer “no” to any of these questions, then you will have to deny that Joseph Smith was indeed that prophet of whom God’s servants prophesied from the foundations of the world; I honestly do hope, for your sake, that you don’t deny him. If you answer yes to all of these questions, then you will have to accept the statement to which you took exception—authority must exist outside the church today, as clearly, no one in the church today can satisfy all the criteria offered above. Use dialectic or analytical reasoning: be inductive or deductive: use Newtonian or Cartesian methodology— it is all the same. In order to be Joseph Smith’s successor one would have to receive, fulfill, obey and perpetuate every law, ordinance and key that the Lord revealed through Joseph the Prophet. Lorrin C. Wooley does fit those criteria; none of the church leaders during his life could or would— or even wanted to.

You assure me that Lorrin Wooley’s ordination never occurred. Well, I assure you that the Lorrin Wooley statement is not the issue. The Joseph Smith statement is the issue. I could respond to your questions by asking you this one: “If the Joseph Smith first vision of 1820 and the conferrals of 1829 and 1839 did take place, are you justified before the Lord in your position of not following and living his teachings?” No one that I know was converted to the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Lorrin Wooley statement. Rather, they have been brought from all over the world by their testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lorrin Wooley statement is only the explanation of how the teachings and authority of Joseph Smith have been preserved. You keep wanting to attack the result of our dedication and commitment, never having understood the cause.

As my father used to say, you can’t cure the disease simply by treating the symptoms. To borrow your penchant for analogies, our acceptance of the Lorrin Wooley statement is only the “symptom” of fundamentalism; the “disease” which affects all of us is our testimony of Jesus Christ as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Yes, Brother Brian, I am thinking that you have missed the point. And yes, there I go with the authority question again. I have some more questions for you: why do you not accept the authority of Joseph Smith? Why do you not live his teachings, and do his works? Why do you not accept his calling? Why do you not accept his revelations? Why do you not seek for those who have the authority, the desire and the willingness to fulfill and administer those very ordinances and laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ that were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, which the church has chosen to reject— despite the fact that there has never been a revelation to justify that...
position? Why do you not seek for those keys which Joseph Smith received?

In 1921, President Heber J. Grant stated, "no man upon the face of the earth has any right or any authority to perform a plural marriage, and there are no plural marriages today in the Church of Christ, because no human being has the right to perform them." (Gospel Standards, p. 159, excerpt quoted from the 1921 April Conference Report.)

We know that there is not that authority in the church. You have all admitted that you don't have it; unfortunately, we must agree with you. You have all chosen not to follow some of the steps listed in the previous paragraph. But someone else? You took exception with my statement that authority has to exist outside of the church. Of course you did. Otherwise you would have had to agree with me— and the Prophet Joseph. I am sure you have read Section 112:30:

"For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in which is the dispensation of the fulness of times."

Either Joseph Smith was a false prophet, or Heber J. Grant was not his successor! It is clear that President Grant was speaking only for the church, over which he did preside, and not for all of Israel, over which he did not, or else, he was calling Joseph Smith a false prophet, and denying the truth of Section 112. Of course, being a faithful church position supporter, you might come to with some fancy interpretation to a simple scripture to make it serve your purposes. But for the rest of Israel, it is very obvious for us to read that the Lord promised that this authority, the power of the priesthood, was given for the last time. Since President Grant admitted that he didn't have it, then someone had it too. If you deny that, then you will have to deny Joseph Smith. But maybe that will be the next step, as you have denied Brigham Young and the very nature and character of our Father in Heaven.

As I mentioned on March 17, the Adam-God Doctrine is an integral aspect of the gospel, going hand in hand with the plurality of wives and united order in the sacred core and heart of Mormonism. I offered you a soft reproof in my first letter, quoting B. H. Roberts. Of course, you replied that President Robert's statement does not prove that Michael was the Father of Adam, or that he was Elohim of the Old Testament. First, I must admit that I was not aware that Brigham Young ever claimed that He was Elohim. Secondly, there are reasons of evidence on the fact that Joseph Smith taught the Adam God Doctrine and that Michael, who was Adam, did indeed sire Jesus Christ.

I remember asking my father why the church refused to accept the teachings of the Prophets on the nature and character of Jesus Christ. Having been raised in my father's home and being taught the true concept from my earliest recollections, it always made so much sense that I couldn't understand how anyone could not accept it. My father's response has since been proven many times, by every one who refused to accept the revelations and teachings of the Prophets Joseph and Brigham.

He told me that the church refused to accept the Adam God Doctrine, because the very identity and nature of God proved the necessity to receive an eternal increase through the plurality of wives throughout all eternity. They would also have to acknowledge that God is indeed our Father, easily approachable to those who are humble enough to receive the ordinances necessary to receive Him. He is our Father, both of our spirit bodies, and of our mortal bodies, having personally begun and directed both creations.

I know you won't accept this. Of course, you won't. You would be excommunicated from the church if you did. I find it fascinating that Mormons are allowed to believe the teachings and ideas of Charles Darwin; but to dare to be so rebellious as to accept and believe the word of Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, the men who knew Him is grounds for disfellowship and excommunication. How ironic! You prefer Charles Darwin to Brigham Young. Interesting. And yet you implore us to follow and accept the revelations of God. Perhaps you should consider the same advice.

If you haven't already read it, Brother Brian, please read Culley K. Christiansen's The Adam God Maze. He presents incontrovertible evidence by anyone willing to view things objectively, that Brigham Young taught the Adam God Doctrine at least 800 different times, of which Culley Christiansen has manuscript proof. He also documents in one chapter that Michael was indeed the father of Christ, that Joseph Smith taught it, and in another chapter that Brigham Young did not create or invent any of the concept— he got it ALL from Joseph Smith the Prophet.

When you stood there at our pulpit and you pronounced from your learned perception that Brigham was wrong, you must have realized that hundreds of people have said the very same thing, and that you would deny the prophetic calling of that man. And moreover, this was right after you had told us that you had a testimony of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Of all the positions that you have taken and offered, this one distresses me the most. Please reconsider your position.

Can you not recognize that to deny that validity of a doctrine on which Brigham Young taught so many times is very dangerous? Please read Christiansen's book. It follows all the lines of reasoning and quotes all of Joseph's teachings. You must realize that to deny that doctrine is to accuse Brigham Young of being a false prophet, and to deny the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed through Joseph Smith. You can't take just part of the gospel and reject the most important doctrines and teachings of Jesus Christ. I know you have read Section 132:24: "This is eternal law— to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. I am He. Receive ye, therefore, my law." You are rejecting God. You are denying His identity, you are refusing to know Him, Brother Brian. You are rejecting not only our Father, but you are refusing to accept His Son. Joseph Smith saw them both. He knew them. Please study these things out for yourself, reading only the teachings of Joseph Smith, and stop consulting the words of the university trained theologians who obviously have so much influence over you. Right in the church are those who have so isolated themselves that they have created new views— reject them and their teachings and return to the teachings of the man who knew God, talked to him face to face— the Prophet Joseph.
If you don't like Brigham Young and you are convinced that he was wrong, then read only the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. They are loaded with his teachings on the Adam God doctrine and paternity of Jesus Christ. Read them. Brother Chanters has done a marvelous job of coalescing all of these sources. If nothing else out of our communication touches you, I hope that this will. Can you not see that to accuse Brigham Young of being wrong is to deny that he knew who God was? That would mean that he was not receiving revelation from the correct source. Since Brigham Young was the founder of the whole Utah experience and the successor of Joseph Smith, that would mean that the whole era would be shrouded in false teachings, as that was one of the most common topics of his addresses and sermons. For thirty years three gods entrusted His people to the direction and guidance of Brigham Young and gave him constant revelation. If he was wrong, then all of the Mormons in Utah were deceived. That would mean that all of the men that he called to the Apostleship were called to bear witness of a strange God. That would mean that he did not have the authority to lead the church out to Utah, or accept the leadership of the church in 1844. Can't you see that you can't have it both ways?

If Brigham Young was wrong, then he brought the children of Israel into disfavor for teaching them a false God. It plainly would make Brigham Young a liar, because he told us that Joseph taught these doctrines to him. If he was wrong in his knowledge and understanding of the true and living God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, then that would mean that all of his teachings and revelations would have come from a false source. That would make all of the temple ordinances performed during his administration and those of Presidents Taylor, Woodruff and Snow invalid, because those very ordinances were part of the instruction given to endowment recipients in the lecture at the veil, before they entered the Celestial room. When church apologists and revisionists reach back over 120 years and simply say, "he was wrong, they place themselves in a terrible predicament, as you all claim to be his successors, even though you do believe him, obey his teachings or do his works. If Brigham Young was wrong, then the whole church is wrong. No one in the church today could have any authority—in fact you are fueling the Tanner's fire of accusations against you. If he was right, then maybe the whole church should redefine its position again. And maybe you should rethink yours.

Consider Isaiah 3:12 (Avraham Gilad’s translation)

As for my people, babes subject them;
O my people, your leaders mislead you,
abolishing your traditional ways.

Of course, you could say that this does not apply to the church today; isn't that what people have always said? Or you could interpret that to mean that it was Brigham Young who misled the people of God and abolished their traditional ways. If so, then indeed no one who claims to receive any ordinances or authority from him will be exalted at the last day; that would include everyone in the whole church. If you would answer that Brigham Young is not one of the leaders who misleads Israel, then surely you would have to admit, by any degree of logic or fairness, that this scripture would have to refer to those people who, in any time, or in any dispensation, arrogate to themselves the authority to presume to abolish the ways of God and reject His holy prophets. As my Dad used to say, "you can't have it both ways. If Joseph Smith was a prophet, then why don't you accept him? If Brigham Young was a prophet, then by what right or authority do you exalt yourself to stand in judgment upon him and say, "he was wrong?"

I am thinking of the efforts of my old friends who have been so eager to have their views on Brigham Young, Joseph Smith and the very identity of our Father and God. I am simply, honestly and frankly asking you to reexamine the attitude that would cause you to hold back before any of God's children and say, "Well, Brother Brigham was wrong." When was he right? When was Joseph wrong? What times? What sects? Frankly, that spirit frightens me. Either the whole gospel fabric is true or all of it is a tapestry of lies. No part is more integral or essential than the necessity that we come to know who our Father in Heaven is. Isn't that the whole purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ? To introduce us to the Father? Isn't that what Section 84:34-42 is all about?

I marvel that anyone who professes to be a Mormon would claim to believe that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were prophets, knowing that these men knew God, but who deny them the same access to these truths that we have. Please reconsider your attitude. I know that the learned philosophers and sophists of the church have sought to bury this true doctrine and erect an identity more acceptable to the sectarian mindset. But hopefully, you would be able to study these things out for yourself. You claim to believe in the Prophet Joseph Smith. Maybe you should consider studying his writings and teachings instead Max Anderson's or Eldon Watson's.

I realize that this is a dangerous thing that I am asking you to do. I know that the doctrines and teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young are associated with apostate doctrines. To reject the teachings of Joseph and Brigham would place you in much more comfortable position among your brethren, as you could then accept the teachings of the living prophets without qualms. Please consider, however, the messages of God's servants about those who will be sent strong delusions in the last days. Just to name a few, 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Timothy 4:3-4, and Isaiah 66:4, which I will offer here:

4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear; but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.
5. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, “Let the Lord be glorified.” But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

On that night that I spoke, I referred to us as being paranoid, and you inferred that this was because we were insecure in our position. Not hardly. We are, however, wary of receiving the same kind of treatment and persecution that Brother Musser, my uncle, my father and other members of the Priesthood endured in the 1940’s and 50’s. You could never know what that was like. Never. Although each of them willingly went to prison as a testimony of his commitment to fulfill and perpetuate the laws and ordinances of the gospel exactly as the Lord restored them through Joseph Smith, it was still very tragic for our families to have to endure. The sad thing was that it was the church leaders themselves who instigated and brought about all of that persecution upon them. Perhaps I am wrong, but I sense that same spirit in your letter.

As prophesied in Isaiah 66:5 which I quoted before, it is not a new thing for those who obey the commandments of Jesus Christ to be persecuted by the presiding “church” officials. Paul related in Acts 24:14 and also in 2 Timothy, chapter 3:

12. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

As we know that persecution will come from those who deny Him, we have faith that He will claim us even though those who presided over the legal entity which bore His name have rejected, scorned, and persecuted us. Yet, we will feel ourselves in good company as that is the same treatment received by Jeremiah, Levi, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter, James, John, and Abinadi all the way up to our own brother Joseph Smith, who was burned at the stake.

You offered your apologies for offending me in your last letter. I am not offended; but I am saddened that you would reject the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and deny the calling and testimony of Brigham Young. And I am sorrowful that you choose to attack the credibility, honor and integrity of the people that I love. My father was the most honorable, honest, saintly, Christ-like man I have ever met. I have total confidence in him, total confidence in his successor and in his predecessors. You suggest that we will not last in the heat of the day. Perhaps I will not because of my own weaknesses; rather than feeling to exalt ourselves because we have a knowledge and testimony of the fullness of the gospel, we are constantly humbled to recognize the significance of the covenants that we have entered. For those of us who do last in the heat of the day, it will only be through the grace of our Savior that we are saved, after all that we can do. Isn’t that what Nephi, in 1 Nephi 25:23, tells us? But at least we will have made and entered into those covenants that the Savior has commanded us to fulfill.

Although every member of this work recognize and acknowledge his weaknesses, each of us strives to be the type of men that my father, my uncle, and Brother Musser were. Even though you have chosen not to respect them, they stand as a beacon of hope to us, in that they have shown us through their examples that it is possible, notwithstanding our failings, to obtain God’s promised blessings if we will live and obey all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Even though you have chosen not to honor and respect the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and have chosen to reject the testimony of Brigham Young, we hope to follow after them and several other wonderful men and women of our time and the previous century who dedicated their lives to the service of God and willingly sacrificed everything for Him. Many of them went to prison, and suffered more than you could ever know because of their testimony of the Prophet Joseph and their commitment to perpetuate His work here upon the earth. You see, Brian, we do not claim (as you infer that we do) to be any more worthy than those Saints in the 1880’s who gave up everything in order to remain true to the commandments; but we, at least, are trying to do as they did.

Despite our doctrinal differences, I would still be willing to help you gain a correct insight into our perspectives. If you would be an objective historical researcher and receive what I tell you without argument, I will answer any question relative to our views that you wish to ask. I would do my best to explain it to you from an historian’s point of view. If, however, you would rather debate every point, then perhaps we should do that in front of your congregation, in your ward house, with your presiding authorities there. I would prefer, however, that you simply allow us to have our views, to follow our own consciences and to fulfill our covenants without further argument. All we have ever asked is that we be granted the same privilege by the church which they have always claimed for themselves:

We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may.

I do appreciate your efforts to have us examine our position again, more carefully and prayerfully. It has been a good experience for all of us.

Sincerely,

Vance L. Palfrey
Mr. J. Max Anderson
Publishers Press
1818 West 2300 South
Salt Lake City 84105

Dear Sir,

I have your book, "The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact." Perhaps you know that I have published several books on the subject. My last three, "Nightfall at Nauvoo," "The Kingdom or Nothing," and "Rocky Mountain Empire," trace plural marriage both above-ground and underground from its inception until its final abandonment.

Our positions are so far apart that I am sure we have no common meeting ground, so I won't try to quibble. However, in deriding the entire story of the John Taylor revelation of September 1886, I wonder if you are aware of a talk delivered during conference, April 1978, by President Spencer W. Kimball? It was published in "The Ensign," May 1978, pp 45-46. The final paragraph is as follows:

"I know that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives," said John Taylor, my predecessor, "for I have seen him." I bear this testimony to you brethren in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Inasmuch as to my knowledge President John Taylor claimed to have been visited by Jesus Christ on only one occasion, the night of 26-27 September 1886, I wonder if you include President Kimball among those deputed by the story of events of that night?

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Dear Brother Brian:

I received your letter of April 23. Thank you for your invitation to meet with you to discuss the points that you presented in the draft of your Sunstone symposium paper: I was in the process of preparing some suggestions for you. I am now unclear, however, as to what you desire from me. The attitude in your letter so discouraged me that for these past weeks I have been pondering whether even to respond to you. After much thought and consultation with my uncle, and in response to his request, I have decided to try to express some concepts you may not accept, but which might at least give you pause for thought.

You had given me the impression that you were seeking an understanding of our position in order to portray it as accurately as possible; your latest letter perplexed me in that I have perceived, perhaps incorrectly, that you feel compelled to rebut every explanation that I have offered to you. I do not know exactly what you expect or want from me. I was more than willing to answer your questions regarding our beliefs, not expecting to debate every point with you.

You requested an opportunity to present a message to us. Do you not feel that we were responsive to your request? We provided you a forum to express your views and I honestly feel that we were open minded in receiving and considering the message that you offered to us. As you mentioned, you came to present what you feel is the issue: the validity or fallacy of Lorin Woolley’s testimony of the 1886 eight hour meeting and the accompanying conferral of authority. Yes, you are right, I never did respond directly to the topic that you chose that night. When accepting the offer to talk, I made it clear that there was only one topic that I would address, and that was my testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith; notwithstanding your protestations, that was, and still is, the correct response to your challenges.

I am sorry if you feel that I treated you unfairly by not accepting your ground rules. Having taught speech and debate for years, however, I felt comfortable in assuming the response that I made. My experience as a debate coach and a tournament director, led me to follow basic rules:

1) the host chooses the topic;
2) the host establishes the parameters, and time restrictions.

When you want to have a debate in your ward or stake house, invite your congregation and have your stake authorities there, we will gladly come and debate with you on your topic and follow your rules.

My main confusion, Brian, lies in the fact that you came to me after our exchange and told me that you would appreciate my help because you wanted to make your book and your Sunstone symposium presentation as accurate as possible. When you made that request, and followed up with it in the letters you sent me, you led me to assume you were serious. I took a great deal of time to present our views to you, not in the form of a position paper, but as an explanation of our beliefs. In the past, we have provided several researchers and reporters with that type of help. None of them has ever before responded by taking your posture of arguing with everything that we offered to them. You had presented yourself as an historical researcher, honestly in the pursuit of gaining a correct viewpoint of our perspective.
I admire your bravery in wishing to enter the public forum with your ideas. As an historian, I value the exchange of ideas that has developed in the past ten years, and welcome anyone who has the desire to present an idea and ask for input. From my own experience and work, and through my observations of the performance of other historians, both Mormon and non-Mormon, I categorize all of us into two groups:

1) those who pursue a topic for the purpose of gaining a correct insight, then honestly reporting what they have found in an objective and informative manner.

2) those who have a particular, predetermined mission to accomplish.

After reading your last letter, I have to tell you that I place you in the second. You are an anesthesiologist, and I am sure, a very good one. Were I to come to you on advice for anesthesiology, I would expect that you would simply inform me of your opinion, and offer a brief explanation of why you would give the advice you have; I doubt you would feel compelled to bolster and support every explanation. And I expect that you would feel me very foolish if I went and administered anesthesiology my own way. I am sorry if I offend you, but as an historian I honestly cringe when I think of you presenting your paper before an audience like the Sunstone symposium. If you are going to present the "fundamentalist" viewpoint as a part of your lecture, then it must be "their" perspective, and NOT your interpretation of it.

There are several concepts that I know to be incorrect in your papers. Of course, you may totally discount everything that I would say, but I know that there are many historians who understand correct historical analysis, and they will see your work for what it is: a faithful recapitulation of Max Anderson's work. I am enclosing a copy of some of Sam Taylor's letters from his papers which show his perspectives of Brother Max's work. You also may discount his ideas, as they do not support your position.

In my historical training I have deliberately chosen to study under non-Mormon professors, because I want my work to be as consistent with correct historical analysis as possible. The basics of my training stressed the following:

1) an historian gathers as much information from as wide a sample as possible.
2) the historian does not argue with his sources, but reports things as he finds them expressed.
3) an historian's inability to find evidence supporting a claim does not prove that something did not happen.
4) an historian makes no decisions, and draws no conclusions before he has weighed all his information.
5) the historian offers an objective view of what he finds.

I acknowledge that when it comes to my religious views that I am not as professional as I would want to be. I suggest that neither you nor Max Anderson has been as professional as you should be. The difference between you and me, is that I would not presume to present a paper at a symposium to professional and amateur historians who would see right through me.
I am sure that your presentation to the Sunstone Symposium will be interesting and informative, both for you and for those who are unacquainted with our position. But for those who do understand our position, I believe they will see what I have perceived: a desire not to understand, but to refute. It is interesting that on several points you have asked me for my understanding, yet you have rejected every response as unacceptable.

If I am not mistaken, the main purpose of your desire to correspond with me was to have an audience through which you could somehow influence your sister. I am sorry that I did not recognize that earlier. In writing to you, I was never so foolish as to presume that any correspondence between us would lead to you accepting our beliefs. It would seem to me that my purpose in inviting you to study Joseph Smith and the writings and talks of the other brethren reflected my effort to help you understand our views. You say that you already understood them, but then you turn around and write things that prove to me that you only think you do.

It seemed from your initial request, that you were interested in gaining an insight to our perspective. I was agreeable to that, as there have been several reporters, sociologists, anthropologists and historians who have sought information from us. At every point, however, when I gave you a response to your question, you have treated it as though it were a challenge that you felt compelled to discount, discredit or disprove. At our first meeting you told me that you wanted my help in preparing a paper that would be as accurate as possible: apparently my help has so far been of no value to you, except as an opportunity for debate.

Although you have not accepted my views and suggestions, it is interesting that you would challenge them and try to refute them from your understanding of fundamentalism; at times I have sensed that you feel that you understand our position better than we do. I have been a fundamentalist all my life; my background, my association with my father, and my own studies do provide me with a rudimentary understanding of what our position is. It has been curious that although we have opened our halls to you, brought our children to hear you, that you still feel that we are not willing to understand what you are offering to us. We were open minded in considering what you offered us; to my knowledge, neither you nor anyone in the church has ever opened your homes or meeting halls and invited your friends and brought your children to come to hear our testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We don’t expect that you would become converted, but we would expect the same type of courtesy and respect that previous researchers have given us. If you are going to pose as an historical researcher, perhaps you should consider behaving as one.

For example, you might have used my material in presenting your information with an attitude something like this:

"Today’s fundamentalists pledge a deep loyalty to the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. Although they admit there are challenges to their claims of religious authority to practice their beliefs, they do feel confident that their position is consistent with Joseph Smith, and live with the assurance that were he to be among them today that he would
recognize them as the only people who are living his style of Mormonism."

That type of analysis is neither judgmental, defaming, discrediting nor unethical. The information I provided you could be used in such a way as to strengthen and bolster your book. On the other hand, should you choose to present your interpretation of our beliefs, rather than reporting our own, perhaps you could make it clear to your audience that you are doing just that.

As you have no interest in using any explanations that I have offered let me offer the following sources to you. Your brother-in-law, Todd Johnson, tells me that you are very well read. Perhaps, you have already read these:

David John Buerger’s papers, especially his copies of George F. Richard’s writings on the Second Endowment.

The works of Hyrum Andrus, Ken Driggs, Paul and Margaret Toscano, D. Michael Quinn, and Andrew Ehat. Perhaps some of their ideas will temper yours a little. The Adam God Maze, by Culley K. Christensen, M. D. may increase your understanding as well.

I will admit that in writing to you I did have an ulterior motive. Every time someone writes a book, or prints an article on our position, or examines the practice of plural marriage or the changes that the church has made, many people are moved to study and begin to search for themselves. I had wanted to help you gain as correct an understanding as possible, so that more people would pay attention to you. You gave me the impression that you wanted to write an historical analysis of the "fundamentalist movement;" instead you have written a caustic polemic. As your work now stands, there is nothing particularly noteworthy that would draw an audience outside those who are as intensely loyal to the church’s current leadership as you are. From our meeting, I had felt a willingness on your part to report our position accurately, yet what has developed is a confrontation of the original differences that caused our paths to diverge almost a century ago.

Our position is based on a continuity of teachings, doctrines and ordinances with those established by the Lord through Joseph Smith; we feel no necessity to "prove" a succession of authority, although we know, despite all that you have offered us, that there has been that succession. Your position is based on a succession of authority from Joseph Smith to the present leadership; you feel no necessity to prove a continuity of teachings, doctrines or ordinances with those established through the Prophet Joseph Smith, because you feel that any changes made by the church leadership will only be by revelation or inspiration from God; therefor, you would feel that those changes would be consistent with Joseph Smith’s teachings because of the concept of continuing revelation. As a result of this basic and fundamental difference, no matter what either of us offers to the other, the other will not feel an obligation to respond. It has been an awakening to realize how far apart we have become.

You proffer the concept that one must follow the teachings and leadership of the living prophet, and you have based all your other observations and
beliefs on that premise. You interpret the scriptures and revelations to authorize the present leadership to reinterpret, alter or change any part of the doctrines, ordinances, revelations and commandments that Joseph Smith revealed as the Lord directs them to do so.

Consequently, our differences in approach, perspective and perception preclude us coming to any common ground, and our discussion is becoming very sterile. Yes, we grant, there are many difficulties and challenges to the Lorin Woolley statement that cannot be answered in the information available in the church archives; but as I explained to you but you do not accept, the logic of our premise does not require that we do so, because we will always prefer to follow and fulfill the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith. Please do not assume, however, that we do not have the sources to justify our support of Lorin Woolley's statements.

At the same time, you must know that the teachings of the present church leadership digress from or completely disagree with the teachings of Joseph Smith; yet, the logic of your position would not require you to reconcile the two, because you would place your credence on the present leaders, and God’s ability always to reveal new direction that might be a different set of conditions, ordinances or laws for different peoples at different times, according to their needs. You accept the concept of a gospel that is ever responsive and sensitive to the needs of the people; we hold to the concept that the gospel is the same, now, yesterday, always and forever.

You have the right to doubt that any of us has done the amount or type of study that you are pursuing; it is intriguing that we can all study the same things, yet because of our predispositions, we continue to come to different conclusions. Perhaps you have never seen The Most Holy Principle, a four volume compilation of historical documents, discourses and articles which my father had printed. Most of us have read the information in them, and we are familiar with the interpretations and views that you proffer. In your writings I do not perceive an effort to find truth, but instead a desire to prove us wrong. Paul described that type of attitude in 2 Timothy 3:7:

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (Inspired Version)

You also have the freedom of arguing with and rejecting every explanation offered to you. If your desire is to prove us wrong, which appears to have been your true purpose from the beginning, then you will have to go to the scriptures, writings, revelations, ordinances and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith in order to get our attention. You have expressed a desire to speak to us again. When you can show us where we are inconsistent with his teachings and doctrines we will pack our hall to listen to you, as he is the foundation of everything that we believe. Until you do search through the Prophet’s teachings and find those discrepancies, there will not be much of an audience, because, although you may not accept it, we have already seen and heard everything that you have offered.

Evidently, you have a low opinion of our knowledge of our own history, but there are several of us who have found, read, discussed and studied among
ourselves and with our children everything that you have presented to us. As mentioned in my letter, you can offer us reams to discredit the eight hour meeting or the 1886 revelation and conferral, but you will not cause us to be the least disturbed, because we know our position is consistent with Joseph Smith. Although we absolutely do have the historical and intellectual justification for the course that we are pursuing, it was the witness from the Holy Ghost confirming our testimonies of the Prophet Joseph Smith that convinced each of us to embark on our path and which gives us the strength and the peace to continue it.

Let me offer this to you: the night that we both spoke, I made reference to sources that you have not been able to see. As you should be aware, much of the history of any people is based on the credibility of those who represent it. I did not know either of the Woolleys, but I have known people who did know the Woolleys; I have total confidence in the veracity of those who bore their testimonies to me that both John and Lorin made every claim that you assure me is false. Pardon me if I do not place much confidence in your assurances, because I have heard the testimonies of people whose integrity I know to be as pure as anyone on the earth today bear me exactly the opposite assurance. Your assurances are based on your inability to find evidence sustaining Lorin Woolley’s ordination; their assurances are based on their lives of dedication to the calling of Lorin Woolley as witnessed to them by the Holy Ghost.

While none of those I knew bore first-hand witness, let me remind you that neither did anyone else besides Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith bear any first-hand witness of Joseph’s ordinations. In fact, there is no record in Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, that the ordinations to the Melchizedek Priesthood ever occurred. It is only because of the detailed and methodical efforts of B. H. Roberts, that we find reference to their ordinations by Peter, James and John in the footnotes, even though he could not determine an exact date. You deny any validity to a comparison of the “problems” with which the Tanners have challenged Joseph Smith, and the “problems” with which you have challenged Lorin Woolley. Is your “logic” consistent, Brother Brian? Yet, although the Tanners do not credence Brigham Young’s testimony that Joseph’s ordinations did occur, I place great value in his testimony. Although it is apparent that you do not respect Brigham Young, I strongly value his testimony of Joseph Smith, and I place Joseph Musser in the same relationship to Lorin Woolley and the truth of his calling as I do Brigham Young to Joseph’s.

Not only did Brother Joseph Musser bear testimony of the validity of the callings of the Woolleys, but so did Daniel R. Bateman, who was present at the eight hour meeting, and who bore his testimony to many of my relatives whose integrity is unimpeachable. Of course, you would probably treat the testimony of my friends and family and question their integrity in exactly the same way that Max Anderson treated Daniel Bateman, Lorin Woolley or anyone else whose views did not support Brother Max’s pre-determined conclusions.

Obviously, you are very well acquainted with Max Anderson’s Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, as you faithfully follow and restate his ideas. It is amazing, however, how much evidence that his original draft contained which he chose not to place in his final offering. Of course, as an historian, I do not care for the Tanner style of historical “analysis” that both you and Max
It is doubtful that either of you has served the interests of posterity or of the church very well: sooner or later, the full contents of the church historian's office files will be made available; every year more and more non-biased historians are gaining more and more access, and offering more and more understanding. You state that you wish that the L. John Nuttall diary for September 1886 were available. Do you really? Honestly? If that diary proved Lorin Woolley a liar, don't you think that Heber J. Grant and his successors would have published it to the world long ago? Instead they have carefully hidden these and several other things away, just as Brother Musser told my father they had. Where do I get that idea? From what my father told me that Joseph Musser told him. You don't believe me?

Brother Musser's position, as was my father's also, whether you believe they agreed or not, was that although the members of the church had chosen to reject the fullness of God's laws, that it was and still is His church. We don't want to see the church in the compromising positions that you and others like you have placed the church. You make these sweeping statements and assuming assertions that are later disproved when more evidence comes out. Just think how much those who support the position that you have so loyally followed have had to yield, because of the information that historians like Quinn, Buerger, Ehat, Christensen, the Toscanos and Ken Driggs have found. These historians present a problem to you which forces you and other apologists to constantly keep redefining your position.

You used to solemnly deny the existence of the revelation of 1886-- well now, yes, it does exist, o.k., you admit that you did have it all along, but it doesn't give the fundamentalists any authority. For years you maintained that Brigham Young was misquoted, and that he did not teach the Adam God doctrine-- well now, yes, he did teach it, so now you simply tell us he was wrong. For years you maintained that the Manifesto of 1890 ended the practice of plural marriage-- well now, yes, you have to admit that the church did continue to support, perpetuate, promulgate, encourage, sanction and perform plural marriages after the only "revelation" ever offered to justify its revocation, but you insist that doesn't mean that anyone has the right to practice it now, even though there has never been a revelation to justify why the church has rejected a law of God-- not in 1890 or 1904 or 1907 or at any other time. And yes by the way, you claim that plural marriage was never valid anyway, Brigham was wrong, Heber was wrong; all of them who lived it were wrong, all the way through to and including Heber J. Grant himself.

Be assured, our attitude is very different. We relish, we welcome, we anxiously anticipate every new historical analysis, and we have expanded our views as more complete information is offered to us, because we are not at all ashamed of our history or any of God's revelations through his servants, and we are constantly accepting new light. All this new knowledge has reinforced, bolstered, augmented and strengthened our basic premise-- that Joseph Smith is a Prophet. We are always looking for new ideas; the very fact that we opened our hall and brought our children to hear you should prove to you that we are always willing to receive new information-- but quite frankly, you haven't offered any. We have already read Max Anderson's book.

You question us on semantics, taking one word here, and another there,
trying to beat those words into submission. You offer me analogies; some of them are interesting, but I do very much disagree with your assertion that we are a shoot that has sprung forth from a sick branch. I will not again endeavor to explain how we perceive ourselves, as you have already drawn your own conclusions, but I can tell you that we do recognize a "smooth transition" which you are not willing to see. Your perceptions of our origins, and many of the lines of descent were interesting. For example, why did so many of the Kingstons come to my father for their ordinances? What caused you to "deduce" that we do not trace our priesthood authority through Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith? What prompted you to "conclude" that we claim the right to preside over the church? Or what led you to assume that my father did not perceive of his calling in the same capacity as Mosiah? Who do you think taught me the concept? You aver that we make claims that he did not teach; pardon me, Brian, but I don’t remember you being there when my father so carefully taught me.

You have elevated yourself to be an expert on the teachings of Rulon Allred and Joseph Musser, stating in your book, your letters and in your oral presentation that we do not understand their teachings. Please forgive me for finding humor in this, but try to understand your position: I knew my father for twenty five years, had hundreds of hours of intense gospel discussions with him, attended scores of meetings where he taught me what I have offered to you; yet, because you have read those parts of his talks that we edited and selected, you feel that you know what he taught more correctly than I do. As a historian I find that puzzling; as his son I find it amusing. As a supporter and witness of his calling, and a believer of his teachings, I find it very sad. You have been so committed to proving my father wrong that you have made no effort to comprehend his message or his mission. Also, you have spent so much time looking and searching for contradictions in the writings of Joseph Musser that you have missed the whole essence of that man’s teachings and his life.

I did not know Joseph Musser, as he died when I was a small child, but I knew my father very well, and I am confident that my father knew Joseph Musser as well as anyone did. My father’s best friend, who married my father’s sister, (making him my uncle), and whose daughter my father married, (making him the grandfather of many of my brothers and sisters), kept a faithful diary of his associations (beginning in the 1920’s) with John and Lorin Woolley, Leslie Broadbent, John Barlow and Joseph Musser and there is ample evidence in his diaries to support every claim made by Lorin Woolley, or Joseph Musser. And we have the testimonies and diaries of others who knew them well. They knew all of those men, and their integrity and virtue is unimpeachable. I am not interested in giving you their names so that you can commence your style of "history" on them, too.

Of course, what it all comes to is credibility. I realize that there are many people who offer wild and incredible recollections of the Woolleys. I do not believe many of the things those individuals offer. However, I do not feel any necessity to try to explain or apologize for their ideas and recollections anymore than the "Utah" Mormons sought to explain or apologize for the ideas of David Whitmer, William Marks or Emma Smith. Just as there were those, however, who did know Joseph Smith well, despite what his detractors, and Brigham’s detractors claimed, there are those whom I have known-- very closely-- who bore
their testimonies to me of the calling and functioning of the men you try to discredit and deny. Perhaps you can understand why none of us was moved by your views of the 1886 occurrences. Many of the people who were present are the descendants of those people who gained and bore that testimony of John W. and Lorin C. Woolley. But more importantly, they are the descendants of those people who gained and bore a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and lived the commandments, revelations, teachings and ordinances revealed through Joseph Smith.

I do not offer my uncles' names, or my aunts' names, or my mothers' names, as I choose not to offer the name of the man whom I support today, because I know exactly what you would do, Brian. You tell me in your letter that you would not attack him, after you had practiced character assassination on Joseph Musser, Lorin Woolley and most certainly endeavored to discredit my father by telling me that you knew that he was inconsistent with Joseph Musser. You entered our meeting hall, and there you stood at the pulpit and told us that Brigham Young was wrong. I don't care for that type of "history." It reminds me of the works and attitude of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. As an historian, I might feel challenged to refute your accusations, but as a supporter and witness of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and every other man who has held the fullness of the keys of the Priesthood, I feel no obligation to defend our position.

Any honest historian would recognize that in order to refute the position of any great teacher or any leader or founder of any movement, idea or religion, that one has to weigh and analyze the principles, not the man himself. When I studied Karl Marx, I studied his works so that I could find the strengths and weaknesses of his positions. I never stooped to attack his personal integrity, or analyze whether he had absence of mind or mental lapses as you aver that Lorin C. Woolley did. But just as Marx's appeal and historical power lies not in his personal life but in his ideas, you are wasting your time trying to sway us by attacking the credibility or integrity of the messengers who brought us God's laws. You rejected the main point of my first letter: it is the power and ideas of the gospel of Jesus Christ that convince us and give us strength to pursue our course, not the personality of Lorin Woolley. Surely, you must know that ideas and convictions are the most powerful motivators in the world. More important than my knowledge and study of history and the forces of men's philosophies, is the testimony from the Holy Ghost of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are determined to fulfill all His laws and ordinances exactly as He revealed and restored them through His prophet Joseph Smith. It becomes obvious that you do not care about the ideas that we believe, even though they are exactly, completely and exclusively those ideas revealed and instituted through the Prophet Joseph Smith. If you are going to discredit Lorin Woolley, or Joseph Musser or Rulon Allred or his successor today, you will have to go to Joseph Smith's teachings and doctrines, as these men and their associates are the only ones who have continued, perpetuated and maintained his teachings since 1918.

Heber J. Grant and many of his successors have denied the necessity of continuing and perpetuating Joseph Smith's teachings; they have systematically
rejected, ridiculed, defamed and sought to obliterate every doctrine, principle and ordinance of the gospel that would challenge their decisions to take it upon themselves to deny the validity of Joseph Smith's calling. You take exception to my statement that there has to be authority outside of the church. Is it not plainly evident that no one in the church has been willing to function in Joseph Smith's position? Lorin Woolley wins that contest by default. He was the only one who claimed and admitted to having the same calling, the same authority, the same ordination and the same fullness as his predecessors.

You do not see a smooth transition from Joseph F. Smith to John and Lorin Woolley; I do not see a smooth transition from Joseph F. Smith to Heber J. Grant, but instead the emergence of a rapidly increasing rejection of Joseph Smith's teaching and the implementation of the ideas of men-- and all of this without one single revelation to justify these changes. The only claims that any of them has made was to have been "inspired." I cannot accept that God would only "inspire" his leaders today. I have looked for and found those men who receive revelation-- the kind that says, "Thus saith the Lord." Unfortunately, there has not been that kind presented to the church since 1882. Not even the Manifesto contains those words, and that is the last one that was ever purported to be a revelation. Of course, we believe that Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith continued to receive revelation-- but not as president of the church, because they never offered any to the church.

I was embarrassed for you when you accused us of developing our theology in retrospect. We have exactly the same theology that Joseph revealed. It is you who supports a new theology developed and created after 1918, which was developed in retrospect-- not to Mormon origins, however, but to the universities, theological seminaries and lyceums of the world from where your theology comes. Please be honest, Brian: you prefer James Talmage to Joseph Smith; John Widtsoe to Brigham Young; Bruce R. McConkie to Heber C. Kimball; Mark E. Peterson to George Q. Cannon. Whose "theologies" came from God? Whose do you accept? You know which ones we follow and obey. We accept Lorin Woolley's testimony, because his calling proves a succession of doctrines and ordinances that have remained pure and unchanged in their unbroken continuity from Joseph Smith to the present. Conversely, we are not able to accept the current direction of the church's leaders because they have told us that it is impossible to accept and fulfill the teachings of Joseph Smith; in fact, they tell us that his teachings are not essential, not important, but only incidental superfluities that we don’t need to believe and obey. Clearly, none of you truly believes in his calling!

Lorin Woolley and his successors are the only men on the earth who have had the courage to stand up before the world and still bear witness that Joseph Smith and his successors were, and still are, and always will be prophets of God. No one in the church is willing to make that stand to believe AND LIVE AND FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD. So how could anyone in the church, regardless of their ordination, position or calling, claim to have a fullness of the Priesthood, or to be the successors of those men who did? Your reasoning baffles me.

My experience as a speech and debate coach did permit me to find pleasant amusement at your use of provocative questions. My favorite event is Lincoln-Douglas Debate, where we train the debaters to phrase questions in such a way
that either a yes or a no answer can be used against their opponents. You offered your query, "If the Lorin Woolley 1886 ordinations never occurred, are we still justified before the Lord?" This is a fundamentally argumentative question, designed not to determine truth, but to place an opponent on a defensive position. To answer the question either way would force your respondent to admit that his position is illogical. It is similar to ones that I have heard in watching Lincoln-Douglas debaters, "if God is all powerful, could he build a rock so large that he could not lift it?" or "if evolution is a fact, would you then admit that men were not created by God?" or "if students do not have the right to have prayers in school, do they have the right to freedom of speech?"

Your question has two components which do not logically hinge upon the other: our "justification" is based on Joseph Smith, not Lorin Woolley; as Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, then there would have to have been a way prepared for God's children to obey His commandments. You, on the other hand, are linking two ideas together which you clearly do not believe to be true: you claim that Lorin Woolley did not receive a valid ordination; you maintain that it is not necessary, or acceptable, to live and obey all the laws and ordinances of the gospel today. Either of your premises would automatically invalidate the other. You have placed them together in such a way as to "prove" to yourself that you have correctly "deduced" truth, as you know that to answer your question with either a "yes" or a "no" would supposedly grant you your point. A "yes" would trap your opponent into accepting your assertion that Lorin Woolley's ordination was not valid; a "no" would force your adversary to validate your premise that the practice of a fullness of God's laws is not necessary. I could respond by asking you, "If the Lorin Woolley 1886 ordination did occur, are you still justified before the Lord?" Sophistry may have its use in training lawyers, theologians, doctrinal theorists and church apologists, but my testimony based on the witness of the Holy Ghost does not require me to engage in it with you.

You "additionally assure [me] that those ordinations never did occur........[because] the evidence against the ordinations is rather significant."(page 1 of you letter of April 23, 1991) Have you read the original, uncut version of Max Anderson's book? You might ask him to let you read it some time. You might not feel so assured in your assurances. Even after finding more information that would challenge your position in it, however, you still may make your assurances to me that these ordinations never occurred. Of course, you would probably assure me that my testimony from the Holy Ghost never occurred, but it assures me that those ordinations did occur. I will not debate that issue with you, any more than I would debate with people like Jerald and Sandra Tanner who make the same kind of accusations and challenges against Joseph Smith. All of you who take that type of attitude try to prove that something did not happen, simply because you cannot find proof of it; but how could you when you determined before you even began your investigation that the Lorin Woolley statement was false. Your methodology of "history" is identical to the Tanners.

The inconsistency of your logic is obvious. You have made sweeping assertions and assumptions based on an absence of information. Is that how they taught you medical or scientific research; do you make those kinds of assurances
to your patients? Are you really willing to assure me that something did not occur simply because you have not found sufficient proof to satisfy you. Are you willing to stake your eternal salvation and exaltation on your inability to find evidence in sources that you recognize? Are you willing to accept everything that the present leaders of the church tell you notwithstanding the numerous contradictions to the laws of God that their doctrines contain? Are you ready to reject the whole mission and testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith simply because there is not proof among the carefully selected documents in the Church historian's office that a legal, lawful, valid ordination occurred in 1886?

Read the trial of Abinadi before King Noah's priests again. Were not Noah's priests all properly ordained to their callings? Where did Abinadi receive his authority? Were there any witnesses? Was his calling recognized by the leadership of his day? Was there a record of Abinadi's ordination in King Noah's historian's office? Did they listen to his message and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Or did they reject him because he did not have control of the legal and lawful religious organization that had been founded by Zeniff? Does ordination to an office in the church qualify a man? Or does one actually have to live and obey and receive and fulfill all the laws and ordinances of the gospel EXACTLY as they have been lived by others who have gone before? Please read the sixth and seventh Lectures on Faith again. I hope that you would believe that they are of God. To offer, as you did, that God has a different law for different people at different times might make you and other church apologists feel better, but there is nothing in the scriptures to justify such an attitude.

There has never been a time when God had a different law for people who were willing to abide a fullness than for people of another time who were also willing to abide a fullness. To offer, as you do, that God requires different things at different times is to accuse God of being a liar. Have you never read the numerous citations in which He tells us that He never changes? That He is the same, yesterday, today, forever, and always? That there is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated, and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated? To support your claim is to state that God is a very capricious and cruel God; that He might change His mind at any time. Do you not find it ironic that He would be constant, from eternity to eternity, never change from that which He has said; that He would irrevocably decree eternal, immutable laws; that His prophets would always agree, would correlate, interconnect and dovetail together in every time, among every people—but that He would change ALL of His laws and promises ONLY for the Mormons since 1890? Or in 1904? Or in 1918? Or in 1921? Or in 1978? When might He change His unchangeable mind again?

The only instance that would justify your assertions was when God instructed Moses to give the children of Israel what we call the law of Moses. Hopefully, you would acknowledge that the law of Moses was a lower law, given because the children of Israel refused to receive the fullness; in consequence of their rebellion, God removed the fullness of the Priesthood from them as a people. But still, someone had it. If that is the type of relationship that you are describing to justify the church's position of today, then I would agree
with you: you are living by the lower laws which do not have the power to exalt to a fullness. Perhaps you would agree that this could not be considered progression—but rather, that it reflects a rejection of the fullness, and a retrogression.

It is amazing: the only thing that you have been able to find to even challenge us on is the absence of proof to support Lorin Woolley’s position. You have no scriptural basis on which to challenge us. You came into our hall and used inference, innuendo, presumption and recently developed re-interpretations of God’s word in defiance of the Prophet Joseph Smith who received those very revelations that you use to build your case. You never offered any evidence from the scriptures or even the new "revelations" which the recent leaders of the church are supposed to have received to bolster your position and assertions. You say that we are unwilling to accept any of the recent revelations; where are they? If they prove us wrong, why don’t you produce them for us?

Please consider a few observations.

Yes, Joseph Musser did associate with John T. Clark from 1921 to 1923, just as Gordon B. Hinckley associated with George P. Lee until 1990. But I believe that you will find that John T. Clark did not make his extraordinary claims until 1925. Joseph Smith associated with John C. Bennett in 1841; with William and Wilson Law from 1840 to 1843. Do you feel required to justify Gordon B. Hinckley’s associations, or Joseph Smith’s friendships? Enough said.

You infer that we do not know our history as well as you do, because you have taken the time to read the diary of Samuel Bateman and we have not. Presumably, if one of your colleagues were to tell you that you would not find much information on anesthesiology in the diary of an anesthesiologist, would you feel weakened as a practitioner or advocate of that man’s profession even though his diaries contained no reference to his accomplishments in your field of endeavor? Or, would you seek for information on anesthesiology from his diary after your colleagues told you that it contained nothing of relevance to your profession? At the same time, why should I feel a compelling need to read Samuel Bateman’s diary, when my father told me that there is nothing in Samuel Bateman’s diary of any particular interest relative to his priesthood calling? As a supporter of Lorin Woolley’s position, I feel no need to read the diary; as an historian I am perplexed that you feel that I should waste my efforts in pursuing a line of research which others have already told me bears no relevance. I can only presume what anesthesiologists would do; but I know what trained historians would—or would not do. The Samuel Bateman diary is not an integral component of our studies, for those very reasons which you yourself offer. Then why would you feel to judge me as incompetent or ignorant for not reading it?

At the same time, it is intriguing that you would feel qualified to pass judgment on Samuel Bateman and proclaim that he did not act or behave like an Apostle. What exactly does one have to do in order to qualify for your approval? By what criteria do you judge men to assess the value of their lives? By what authority do you determine that he did not qualify to receive a fullness? Just because you cannot find definitive proof from his diaries that
he did receive the same calling as Lorin Woolley did, neither can you logically deduce that he did not. Perhaps you should consider the following concept when you do your research, particularly before you make your sweeping conclusions. This excerpt is from BYU Studies, 76:216:

"The absence of evidence may narrow possibility but does not rule it out. Unless something can be positively ruled out for other reasons, there always remains the possibility that it occurred even though it is not noted in the documentation at hand."

That is the type of historical research methodology that I was taught at the University of Montana. You and Max Anderson might consider following it yourselves.

If you study the last year of Joseph Smith's life, you will find reference to the fact that not all of his Apostles received a fullness of what he wanted to offer and confer upon them: John E. Page, William Smith and Lyman Wight did not receive the fullness of the ordinances. It appears that you still think that you know what "High Priest Apostle" means more correctly than I do, but consider those men and how they differed from Brigham Young, John Taylor and the others. Also, I have known four of the men ordained to the Council or Apostleship by Joseph Musser, and none of them was ordained to be a "High Priest Apostle." They all received the charge, however, to attain a fullness of their Apostleship, just as the original Twelve received Oliver Cowdery's challenge to complete their calling and election and never cease striving until they had seen the face of the Savior themselves.

Whether you like it or not, that is what the term "High Priest Apostle" means— to qualify to receive the second anointing and one's calling and election made sure. As my wife said after having read your letter, "he sure is hung up on that thing about High Priest Apostle. I guess he's just trying to make an issue of it." I would agree with her. It appears that you think you have finally found something in our position that is different from EXACTLY what Joseph Smith taught, and you want to make an issue of it. Sorry, but there is no issue there at all. David Buerger, Andrew Ehat and the Toscanos have been able to understand the concept quite well. Perhaps you could read their ideas again as you have no interest in my understanding. You may discount the necessity of the second anointing, or of the necessity of one's calling and election being made sure, as according to the papers of George F. Richards, those ordinances have all but died out in the church, just like so many others. Just because no one in the church is willing to obey God's laws and accept or perpetuate those ordinances, however, this does not mean that God no longer offers them, or requires men to qualify for and receive them. Just because no one in the church has qualified for or has received them does not mean that there are not others outside the church who have done so.

The part of your letter that interested me most is where you tell me that you "perceive an inability for Fundamentalists to receive all that the Lord has sent to us from heaven through His prophets." I couldn't disagree more. We have accepted everything that has ever been revealed. Do you? The truth of the matter is that there is no revelation from God to justify all the changes that have been made by the church since 1918. You listed the names of Wilford
Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith and Lorenzo Snow recommending that we study their teachings too. We do! We accept everything they ever taught. Do you? What teachings are you talking about?

We do not, however, accept many of the teachings of the current leadership. All your bold and sweeping assertions notwithstanding, the church has not produced one revelation since 1882 to explain or justify any new policy implemented since 1918; no revelation exists to command or justify the numerous rejections of God's laws and commandments or the changing of His sacred, holy ordinances. You must have read the testimony of Joseph F. Smith in the Reed Smoot investigation? I would agree that the Lord did direct and instruct Wilford Woodruff to issue the Manifesto, and I support him 100%. But I also am aware that no more than a week passed after he had issued it before he directed my great grandfather to go to Mexico, and gave him a recommend to marry a plural wife there.

My family has a letter written by Heber J. Grant to my father in which President Grant acknowledged to my father that his parents, B. Harvey Allred, Jr., and Mary Evelyn Clark, had been sealed in Old Mexico, by Anthony W. Ivins, in 1903, with the express consent, direction and permission of Joseph F. Smith. You must know that D. Michael Quinn has proven that the church perpetuated plural marriage up until Joseph F. Smith's 1904 "second" manifesto. Yet, President Smith never claimed to have received a revelation to justify it; he was too honest to make such a claim. Section 58:30-32 so poignantly sums it all up. "Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing."

Your "analysis" of the Manifesto, and the whole history of the principle of Celestial Marriage amazes me: as an historian, I am amused by your creative revisions, sweeping assertions, selective interpretations and embarrassing denials; as a witness of the Prophet Joseph, I am saddened that you could so belittle his mission, and his dedication to the very principle that you so casually cast aside as inconsequential. If you are going to pose as an expert on the history of plural marriage perhaps you should consider learning something about it. I have difficulty agreeing with your brief and sweeping conclusions and assertions of the Manifesto. Yes, it is true that the Lord directed President Woodruff to issue the Manifesto-- just as he describes that process in Section 58. It is not possible for me to accept the watered down views that you, Eldon Watson, James Talmage and others have offered on the necessity of plural marriage.

It was highly intriguing to witness your use of Max Anderson’s methodology to select just a handful of quotes from discourses which might be construed to "justify" men who choose not to live the law of plurality of wives, while you must surely know that there are HUNDREDS that prove the contrary. This type of "historical analysis" takes a few ideas here, one there, one over here, constructing a whole new history to justify the church's refusal to stand true to God and the exalting principles of the gospel in the 1880's. Mormonism's monogamist men obeyed not; and God revoked his law from the church and they will receive not the blessing. How evident does something have to be?
When I read how you all perceive the sacred principle of Celestial PLURAL marriage as an inconsequential, discredited, superfluous, incidental, optional principle that never was necessary, it makes me wonder how foolish you must think those thousands of brethren and sisters were who gave up everything in the 1880's to be true to the commandments and obey that law. I am embarrassed for you that you would judge them so harshly! You are asserting that they were stupid because they could not see things as clearly as you are able to do so. You all claim that it was not necessary to obey that law! It is unfortunate that not only were those brethren so foolish as to believe that the revelation promised exaltation only to those who lived in the covenant of a plurality of wives, but all of the presiding leaders of the church also shared that same uninformed misconception and gave up everything themselves: John Taylor went into hiding for two and a half years, never to return to the love of his family and comfort of his home (it is sad that he was unaware of Section 132:19); Wilford Woodruff and numerous others followed President Taylor into hiding; some like Joseph F. Smith even left the country; hundreds, like Lorenzo Snow, George Q. Cannon, Rudger Clawson and Abraham Cannon were so uninformed that they mistakenly and needlessly went to prison. Thousands of women had to struggle for as many as six years without the love, solace, comfort and support of their husbands.

It is unfortunate for them that they could not have understood the intricacies of creative reinterpretation and linguistic analysis to catch and appreciate the subtle nuances of Section 132 to be able to extract such an interpretation of that revelation as has been offered by the church’s learned theologians fortunate enough to have been educated in the theological schools of the best universities of America; instead those unlearned brethren and sisters had to rely on the Holy Spirit and follow the direction of humble men who followed the dictates of the Holy Ghost and remained true to the teachings of God’s prophets, and had the courage and fortitude to perpetuate His priesthood in its fullness.

Do you really hold all of them in such low esteem that you truly feel that none of them was able to read Section 132 and understand what it “really” means? Do you really feel that John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith or Rudger Clawson or Orson F. Whitney—HUNDREDS of others, were not able to read verse 19 of Section 132? Can you really feel comfortable in judging them as the unwitting followers of a non-essential, superfluous, incidental law which has no reward? Are you really suggesting that none of them needed to have practiced a plurality of wives, as you aver that you and others like you will receive a fullness of every blessing offered in that revelation without having to pay the same price, obey the same laws, accept the same ordinances, receive the same fullness that they did? You fascinate me! You really do.

In my first letter you referred to my “careful interpretation” of Section 132. The whole history of Nineteenth Century Mormonism teems with discourses and discussions of the “correct” interpretation of Section 132: it is fascinating how you and those who support your position can ignore the whole history behind the origins of that revelation, its reception, its recording, its first declaration, its promulgation—and yet you can so distort and torture a plain and simple revelation from the mind and will of Jesus Christ to get what
you want to receive out of it, despite of and in opposition to everything that our progenitors dedicated and lived their whole lives for! If you would be interested in using the methodology of professional historians and studying the origins of "Temple Monogamy Marriage," you might be quite surprised to find that it developed in opposition to and in defiance of the teachings and testimonies of the people who preserved and perpetuated the Priesthood at a phenomenal price for us. Unfortunately, it appears you do not highly esteem those Saints of the 1880's. Instead, you simply dismiss the value of their lives with a few sentences that God simply changed his mind, no longer requiring that law.

You probably have strong feelings about amateur healers who "practice" their healing processes without training, without license and without conscience— and you should, because they bring all of you into disrepute. I feel the same way about my profession. There is, however, no law that would allow people to be sued for malpractice of history. History is a discipline; it is not a science. History is not the study of "absolute" truth as that would be impossible for the human mind to absolutely deduce; rather, history is "an interpretation of the past based on evidence." I have heard that sentence uttered by history professors probably twenty different times. You seem to want to take history and "deduce" absolute truth when you want to, as when you try to invalidate Lorin Woolley's claims by reading or surveying only a small sampling of evidence; and yet you want to avoid reality by refusing to become immersed in the events, occurrences, writings, proceedings and daily lives of the Latter-day Saints in the 1880's, as that would severely challenge your predetermined position.

I have spent more time studying Nineteenth Century Mormonism than any other thing in this world. I am probably more aware of what happened in Utah in the 1880's than I am of what occurred in Utah in the 1980's; your sweeping assertions and incredible assumptions absolutely fascinate me! Where did you get your information from? Why don't you use the same careful, critical, caustic analysis of the church's origins of the concept of "Temple Monogamy" as you have used to analyze Lorin Woolley's claims? Please by consistent. How can you view the Manifesto as a revelation revoking an eternal law; how is it that you cannot see that the Lord promised deliverance to all of Israel had they stood true to Him rather than subjecting themselves to Babylon?

Consider the prophecies made by Joseph Smith concerning the coming of Christ in 1890 or 1891. First, Section 130:14-17 where he stated that the Lord would not come before he was eighty five, (December 23, 1805 + 85 = December 1890 or 1891). Secondly, Documentary History of the Church, Volume 5:336, where he stated "I prophecy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written, the Son of Man will not come in the clouds of heaven till I am eighty five years old..... And Hosea, 6th chapter, After two days, etc, ---2520 years; which brings it to 1890. The coming of the Son of Man never will be-- never can be till the judgments spoken of for this hour are poured out." Third, Documentary History of the Church, Volume 2:182: "Even 56 years shall wind up the scene." [uttered February 14, 1835, the same day as the calling of the first Twelve. 1835 + 56 = 1891]

Of course, you may argue away the significance of these utterances and the year of 1890 and the Manifesto. But I know differently. The history is there.
Read about the constitutional convention of 1887 where the Mormon monogamist majority assembled and made the most sacred and exalting principle of the gospel a "crime." They outlawed the eternal Celestial law by which their leaders were living. And then the rank and file members went to the polls and voted for this constitution, making their prophets, seers, and revelators criminals. The Mormon monogamists approved this constitution by a vote of ten to one! That vote is where the concept of Temple Monogamy, using verse 19, Section 132 as its only scriptural basis, emerged. It developed from rebellion, not revelation! And yet, you tell me that the Saints had stood faithful? By whose standards? And then what about the Idaho Test Oath, for which thousands of the Saints withdrew fellowship from the church in order to vote? And then what about the Cullom Struble bill which would have made the Idaho Test Oath a national standard, after that oath had been upheld by the Supreme Court?

With the whole nation arrayed against him, his fellow members of the Holy Order in hiding, the church in the control of the monogamists as all those who were living "the law" were in hiding--- and the rank and file membership in the church in open rebellion-- of course Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, in accordance to the Lord's direction. But could it have been otherwise had the Saints remained faithful? Go read these things for yourself. I have probably read all of the church's apologies for it, but nothing can change the fact that in rejecting the laws and ordinances of the gospel-- in fact voting to make their leaders criminals-- that the church made a covenant with death and hell, and that is when the pressure came for a changing of the ordinances as well. Only because Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith held all of the keys did those changes not occur until after 1918. Does history support the position of present day church apologists? I think not.

You have never expressed an interest in any of my works or studies, but let me offer this one insight to you. In 1983 I took a class entitled Twentieth Century European Intellectual History at the University of Montana. One of the readings was from the Selections from the Prison Notes, by Antonio Gramsci, in which he analyzed the sociological, religious, cultural and political implications of hegemony in Italy. Although Gramsci was analyzing the events of Italy's Risorgimento (Italy's war of political unification in the 1860's) his evaluation and analysis struck me so hard, because he might just as well have been discussing the conflict in Nineteenth Century Utah between the Mormon Polygamous leaders, the Mormon Monogamous majority, the non-Mormons in Utah, and the Federal Government. I became fascinated, and from that developed my first thesis, "Mormon Polygamy and the Manifesto of 1890: A Study of Hegemony and Social Conflict." What I found first in Gramsci and later in Karl Marx was an explanation of how social groups resolve their conflicts; from that I could see very clearly what my father had taught me all my life. I went to the University, never thinking that I would find in the ideas of men a validation of the fundamentalist perspective. If you care to be real esoteric for a moment please allow me to make the following sociological illustration.

Whenever any group of people forms an association, all their laws, rules, social controls and norms are dictated by the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. Whenever any of that social group's laws or rules comes in opposition or conflict with opposing social groups, either that society must remain true to that law or rule in conflict and pay the consequences, or that
society must yield that law or rule to obtain a peaceful resolution to that conflict. Whenever any of that social group's laws or rules is yielded in order to obtain a peaceful resolution, then that change will be in direct conflict with the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. The social structure must validate all rules and laws of the social order; all rules and laws of the social order must validate the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. As there has been a conflict emerge because the social order elected to alter one of the laws or rules of the order, then the social order must alter the basic premise or foundation of their social structure.

I suggest to you, that what happened in Mormonism, is that the original model of Mormonism, which I call the Zion model, stood as the antithesis of middle class America, which I call the Babylon model. The two came into conflict many times. New York, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois: each time the Mormons moved rather, than yielding or changing. Then to Utah: for forty years, 1847 to 1887, the Saints refused to yield any of their rules or laws. Finally, with the Constitutional Convention of 1887 and with the ratifying election, Utah's monogamist majority surrendered one of the most important laws of Mormonism, in opposition to and defiance of their polygamist leaders. Having yielded one of the laws which was part of their superstructure, they then had to begin to alter the basic premise or foundation of their social structure. What emerged was a new religion—based not on Joseph Smith's religion which required that all men who presided in the church practice polygamy, but on the concept of "follow the living prophet," which would enable all monogamist Mormons the comfort of being able to justify and explain why they had yielded an integral, eternal part of an eternal everlasting gospel: they simply changed the everlasting gospel into an ever-changing gospel. And all is well in Zion.

Original Mormon Model

Superstructure:
plurality of wives ideological, united order sociological, covenant people political and law of gathering doctrinal fullness of priesthood superstructures: unchangeable laws all ideas and beliefs unalterable ordinances must agree with the unalterable covenants basic premise or Michael, Father and God foundation. Adam is God Seed of Cain is cursed

Current Mormon Model

Superstructure:
temple monogamous marriage corporate capitalism universal church, all races universal church, all nations church office ordination laws changed as needed ordinances changed as needed covenants changed as needed Jehovah (Jesus) creator of all Adam is the only the first man the curse of Cain not in force

Foundation:
Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. One must follow all of his teachings exactly as he gave or received them. In order to receive a fullness of the Savior's glory, one must obey all of the laws and ordinances He revealed through Joseph Smith.

Foundation:
One must follow the teachings of the living church prophets. The Lord may lead, inspire or direct them to make changes in His revelations, ordinances teachings, doctrines, laws or commandments as revealed through Joseph Smith as needed.
You didn’t ask for the lesson in history. You might not find it valid or acceptable. But it might explain to you why you have not found a receptive ear to your message. We have found the model that we want to follow—Joseph Smith. You choose to follow the other model—you obey a changing doctrine, observe altered commandments, receive changed ordinances, and support any one who has control of the church today, tomorrow or next year. Consequently, you have an historical “problem.”

And yet, you accuse us of not knowing or understanding our history. You claim to have found “problems” in our viewpoints and position, maintaining that we cannot support our position because of our inability to document to your satisfaction one occurrence. And yet history provides you with numerous “problems” which threaten and challenge the position of the current leadership of the church. As history does not support your position you turn to nonexistent revelations to justify yourselves. Surely you must recognize that the church has implemented remarkable changes in ordinances, principles, doctrine—yet none of these changes was ever justified by revelation. I am reminded of your interpretation of our position as being either:

I Understand and Believe
or
It isn’t Important

Do you not see any irony in your own position?

I have appreciated this exchange of ideas with you, Brian. It has caused me to realize, quite vividly, just how far apart our positions are. I have often thought of the plight of my grandfather, B. Harvey Allred, Jr., who in 1903 received permission from Joseph F. Smith to live and practice the fullness of the gospel in Mexico. During the administration of Joseph F. Smith, my grandfather was very well admired and respected among the presiding authorities of the church. He continued to live exactly the same gospel, obey exactly the same doctrines, worship the same God, believe in the same doctrines for the remainder of his life. And yet, although he never changed or varied from anything that he covenanted to fulfill in his younger years when he had the approval and blessing of God’s servants, by the time he reached his sixties he found himself, “out of harmony with the leaders of the church.” He was eventually excommunicated for not bringing his life, his beliefs, his covenants and the identity of his God into harmony with church policy.

You have reminded me of what I term the “Mormon paradox:” how does one believe in and support the Prophet Joseph Smith and obey his teachings, and at the same time, support the present leadership of the church? Obviously, it is impossible, as the two are mutually exclusive.

As an historian I am perplexed that you would accept all of these changes without any qualms. Your ability to point out our “problem” while validating your own “problems” confuses and bewilders me. The present church position requires a great deal of faith in the living prophets, yet requires that you reject the calling and mission of Joseph the Prophet. Perhaps you will tell me that you understand the discrepancies between the present direction of the church and the teachings of Joseph Smith but you still “understand and believe;” or will
you tell me that "it isn't important?" As a witness of the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, I am heartbroken at the incredible renunciations of the teachings and revelations of Jesus Christ through that man. And yet, there has never been a revelation stating "thus saith the Lord," ever received to justify these changes.

The only support offered for the change in the policy toward the Negro in 1978 was that President Kimball felt "inspired." Where was the "revelation" to justify a policy which placed the church in direct opposition to every prophet in the world's history since the very foundations of this creation? Surely you must know that the Prophet Brigham Young stated definitively, positively and without equivocation that the Negro could not have the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood or the blessings of the House of the Lord, until after all the seed of Abel received that opportunity. Please read the Manuscript Addresses of Brigham Young. The prophet Joseph was most clear upon this question.

Most certainly, President Kimball's being "inspired" was a very convenient and widely accepted change, as it served to salve the consciences of those "politically correct" saints who were embarrassed by the medieval attitude of Mormonism's founders about such a socially and politically delicate issue. It is remarkable that for me to accept, believe, advocate and champion the teachings of Joseph and Brigham, once again I am running the gauntlet of those socially aware Latter-day Saints who will surely accuse me of bigotry, racism and prejudice. If so, I feel fortunate to be included in such good company as Brigham and Joseph, not to mention father Abraham who wrote: (Abraham chapter 1)

21. Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

22. From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

23. The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden.

24. When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

25. Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

26. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom,
but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

Of course, church apologists have written numerous contorted explanations observing that there is no link between the curse and the Negroes, no correlation between the Canaanites and the black skin. I remember Marty Martin’s observations in Mormonism and America, that the church considered any link between this scripture in Abraham 1 and the Negroes of today as a "nonsequitur" (a word taken from the Latin "sequi" a form of the word from which the English word "sequence" derives). In observing that there was no direct link between the black skin and the curse of Cain, and no direct correlation connecting the Canaanites with the Negro, Martin reasoned that modern church apologists had once again concluded, just as you do, that "Brigham was wrong." Consider the words of Enoch in the seventh chapter of Moses:

8. For behold the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.

12. And it came to pass that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent.

22. And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam, and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black and had not place among them.

Realizing that every prophet from the foundation of the world has understood the significance and importance of the mark and curse placed upon the seed of Cain, it becomes very interesting to me that the church would accept an "inspiration" to contradict the scriptures and establish new doctrine. And yet you accuse us of formulating our doctrine in retrospect. We do acknowledge that the church’s decision to implement the policy of admitting the Negro to the "blessings" of the "priesthood" was within their rights, as the church is a democratic institution. The absolute tragedy is that each year hundreds of the daughters of Israel enter the temple, of all places, where they are "sealed" by the "priesthood" to the sons of Cain. What do you think the flood was all about, Brother Brian? As in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the last days.

But the church does have the right to reject scriptures, the teachings of the prophets and their revelations. They proved that point in 1887; and their action in 1978 did make possible the fulfillment of prophecy. Consider the second chapter of II Thessalonians: (Inspired Version, by Joseph Smith)

1. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.

2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled by letter, except ye receive it from us; neither by spirit, nor by word, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3. Let no man deceive you by any means; for there shall come
a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of
perdition;

4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called
God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple
of God, showing himself that he is God.

5. Remember ye not, that, when I was with you, I told you
these things?

6. And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed
in his time.

7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, and he it
is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time
is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way.

8. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord
shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with
the brightness of his coming.

9. Yea, the Lord, even Jesus, whose coming is not until after
there cometh a falling away, by the working of Satan with all power,
and signs and lying wonders.

10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them
that perish,; because they received not the love of the truth, that
they might be saved.

11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion,
that they should believe a lie:

12. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth,
but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

One could assume that Paul was referring to the "falling away" of the
Catholic church. But then, how could the son of perdition sit "in the temple
of God, showing himself that he is God," except that this would have to be
fulfilled after Joseph Smith's calling? As there was not a temple of God at the
time of the building of the Kirtland Temple, can one not see that this is in
reference to the fact that the "son of perdition" has been allowed-- invited--
into the "temple of God?" Yes, we recognize that the church's decision had
to happen in order for that prophecy to be fulfilled, but that is a decision
that would be consistent with what Paul offers in verses 7 through 12 above.
Does that decision not reflect a "falling away" as Paul prophesied?

At the same time, one could compare Paul's admonition, "[r]e-member ye not,
that when I was yet with you, I told you these things," to the warnings of
Joseph Smith that if any man teach any doctrine other than what he had taught,
he would be accursed. I would not want to be in the position of teaching a
doctrine that is contrary to the revelations of God through His prophet Joseph
Smith. Perhaps you feel comfortable in that situation, but we prefer to follow
the teachings and revelations of the prophets, and we will allow others to accept the strong delusions, or "inspirations." Where was the revelation, Brother Brian?

Where was the revelation to make the numerous changes in the temple endowment? No longer are people instructed or taught how to approach God; no longer are sisters blessed to enter into the covenant of obedience to the law of their husbands, thus precluding their approaching God in the true order of prayer. No longer are the penalties given; consequently, the signs for them, which are absolutely necessary to approach God, are no longer given either. The leadership has completely cut off their fellow church members from the ability to embrace at the veil in order to enter into the presence of God. It is no longer possible to enter into the presence of God. Where is that? The Celestial glory. Apparently that is no longer a necessary place to go, but is an inconsequential, superfluous, optional, incidental and permissible existence to obtain. But where was the revelation?

Yet you tell me to accept these revelations. Where are they?

The development of a world-wide church, with corporate structures closely patterned after the leading law firms of Wall Street-- or Madison Avenue--probably brings great pride to you, Brother Brian, but it brings great concern to us. The church has become highly respected and accepted around the world. But what ever happened to the concept that there were only two forces in the world, good and evil? (I Nephi 14:10, 2 Nephi 2) That whatsoever is good comes from God and whatsoever is evil comes from Lucifer. (Alma 5) That there must needs be opposition in all things; that there are things that act, and those which are acted upon. (2 Nephi:2) That there are only two churches in the world: the church of Lucifer and the church of the Lamb. (I Nephi 14:10) Then why would the church need to be "inspired" to take out the part of the preacher in the temple endowment because it was "offensive" to the feelings of other churches? Of course it was offensive to the other churches: whose churches are they? (it is interesting that the only people or religion in the world that you publicly denounce are the fundamentalists who follow Joseph Smith's teachings) But where was the revelation commanding or directing the leaders of the church to make these changes in God's temples, Brother Brian?

While I understand the necessity of being the church "upon all the face of the earth," which Nephi saw in his vision (I Nephi 14:12), whatever happened to the concept of gathering to Zion? The church used to have a saying to the effect that

"We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory." Joseph Smith, Wentworth Letter. History of the Church, Volume 4:531.

Surprisingly, this is still in the Pearl of Great Price as well. I assume from this that some members of the church still believe in the concept of the gathering. We do. But where was the revelation that changed this basic
doctrines? The immigration quotas of the Immigration and Naturalization Acts? Does that mean that whatever act or bill that Congress passes will immediately have a direct effect on the teachings, laws, doctrines and "inspirations" of the church? But where was the revelation that we are not accepting?

While I would agree wholeheartedly that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which Ezra Taft Benson is president, is that church of which the angel in Nephi's vision spoke, I also do look forward to the setting in order by the one mighty and strong. (Section 85) While James Talmage put some minds at rest with one of his creative reinterpretations in which he claimed that the one mighty and strong was Edward Partridge, there are many of us who do have the ability to read and understand the scriptures ourselves. The concept of the setting in order by the one mighty strong most certainly used to be an integral part of Mormon Doctrine. I remember asking my father why the church no longer teaches it. He told me that they could not accept it because to believe in the setting in order would require that they admit that the church and House of God need to be set in order. That would admit to the possibility that perhaps not all is well in Zion.

Clearly, Joseph Smith's work is not finished: he will return as a resurrected being, standing once more upon the earth in the flesh to set in order the House of God. Please read a letter that Joseph wrote to Orson Hyde and John E. Page when they were called to dedicate the Holy Land for the gathering of the Jews. There is one important line in there where he writes to them,

"brethren you are in the pathway to eternal fame, and immortal glory, and inasmuch as you feel interested for the covenant people of the Lord, the God of their fathers shall bless you. Do not be discouraged of account of the greatness of the work; only be humble and faithful and then you can say, "what art thou, O great mountain! before Zerubbabel shalt thou be brought down."

Who was Zerubbabel? Is it not apparent to all who have eyes to see that this is Joseph Smith? Consider the words of the prophet Zechariah in chapter 4 of his prophecy:

6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

8. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.

10. For who hath despised the day of small things? For they
shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the servants of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

There are four very good reasons to believe that this prophecy will be fulfilled by Joseph Smith.

First, the Zerubbabel of the Bible, who is the "type" of this prophecy did not finish the work of building the Lord's house that he began, therefor, the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet to be accomplished. I am assuming that you are familiar with the realization that all of the Hebrew prophets used types and shadows.

Secondly, Joseph Smith was promised in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 90:16:

And this shall be your business and mission is all your lives to preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom.

Now, of course, one could argue that the word "lives" refers to all the members of the First Presidency, indicating that they would all hold this authority for the remainder of their mortal lives. Yet a more "careful" reading (which type you noted that I made in your previous letter) would lead one to observe the following: this revelation is to Joseph himself; all the pronouns of the previous verses demonstrate that Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were not recipients of this revelation with him. He, Joseph alone, is the one to whom the Lord is speaking. Note in verse 6 He says: "[v]erily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams." And lastly, verse 19 states: "...for the family of thy counselor and scribe, Frederick G. Williams." In Joseph's lives, he will "preside in council, and set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom." A logical deduction, you must surely admit, would be that to "set in order all the affairs of this church and kingdom" would necessitate that it is out of order.

The third reason is a very beautiful and touching prophecy from The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt. Although "I perceive an inability for" current church apologists "to receive all that the Lord has sent to us from heaven through His prophets," (compare your sentence from your page 5) I will offer this revelation received by Parley P. Pratt. This was when he was walking back to Nauvoo after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum. From page 333 of The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt:

The Spirit said unto me: "Lift up your head and rejoice; for behold! it is well with my servants Joseph and Hyrum. My servant Joseph still holds the keys of my kingdom in this dispensation, and he shall stand in due time on the earth, in the flesh, and fulfill (sic) that to which he is appointed......

And the fourth reason is Joseph's patriarchal blessing that he received from his own father. In the History of the Church, Volume 2:380 by Joseph Smith, Jr., he tells us:
"And in my turn, my father anointed my head, and sealed upon me the blessings of Moses, to lead Israel in the latter days, even as Moses led him in days of old; also the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

This blessing invites four serious inquiries.

First, how did Moses lead Israel? Was it not with a cloud and smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, freeing them out of bondage and leading them to the "promised land?" Surely, you would acknowledge that this was not fulfilled by Zion's camp but must require a complete fulfillment by Joseph in his lives here upon the earth in the flesh. Yes, a resurrected being.

Secondly, did not Joseph later receive a "fullness" of this sealing when Moses appeared unto him in the Kirtland Temple as recorded in Section 110:11:

After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

As this has not yet been fulfilled, we must also recognize that Joseph's mission is yet to be completed.

Thirdly, did not Moses number and organize—setting in order—all of Israel.

Lastly, although this is a peripheral observation, what are the "blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?" Read Section 132: all of it, not just verse 19.

I have presented all of this in order to lay the footing for the following scripture: Doctrine and Covenants, Section 85:7:

And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God.

This verse presents incontrovertible proof that Joseph Smith is the one mighty and strong who will yet, as Moses, lead Israel, who will yet, as Ezra number the children of Israel, and as is pointed out in Ezra 2:61 and 62, discover those of "Israel" who have mixed with the seed of the Canaanites, and declare them therefor polluted, put from the priesthood. If you chance to read this revelation in the History of the Church, you will find that it comes from a letter written by Joseph the Prophet to William Phelps, and that the date coincides exactly with the Prophet's translation of the Book of Ezra by the power of the Urim and Thummim. It is evident that Joseph had this revealed to him by the power of the Holy Ghost through the holy medium of the seer stones.
What did he perceive? Himself, as a resurrected being, "clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth;" for what purpose? "To set in order the House of God!" Why? Because as in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, the children of Israel would be restored to their land of inheritance, many of them would have been polluted by the cursed blood, and the House of God would have fallen into an out of order condition. How out of order? What did Isaiah say in his prophecy? Isaiah 24:5

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

I wouldn't expect that you would believe that this scripture would describe the church in her out of order condition today, but please consider the following: what "earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof." How can the "earth" be defiled, except that this refers to a spot or place that has been consecrated unto God, and given to the children of the covenant. Would Utah qualify for that? Which "inhabitants" can transgress the laws? Only those people who have had them revealed unto them. Which inhabitants of the earth can change the ordinance? Only those who received it in its fullness and yet decided of their own free will by the common consent of the people to change it. And equally tragic: what inhabitants can break the everlasting covenant? Only those who have made and entered into it. And where was the revelation that told or commanded them to transgress those laws, change the ordinance, break the everlasting covenant? Where are those revelations that you say we are not willing to receive, Brother Brian? Could it be that they don't exist?

One must admit that the church in its present condition has fulfilled this scripture to a great degree. President Joseph Fielding Smith referred to that very scripture in Isaiah 24:5 when he stated:

"Are we not too much inclined to blame the generations that are past for the breaking of the new and everlasting covenant, and to think it is because of the great apostasy which followed..... the Apostles in primitive time.....? Perhaps we should wake up to the realization that it is because of the breaking of covenants, especially the new and everlasting covenant which is the fullness of the gospel that the world is to be consumed by fire and few men left. Since this punishment is to come at the time of the cleansing of the earth when Christ comes again, should not the Latter-day Saints take heed unto themselves? We have been given the new and everlasting covenant, and many among us have broken it." (Deseret News, October 17, 1936)

Could we not agree that Latter-day Saints have broken the "New and Everlasting Covenant which is the fullness of the gospel" because they are the only ones on earth who have it?

By your own reasoning, you cannot accuse us of any of these, because according to your sweeping assertions none of us has had or received any of these, because you claim we don't have authority to perform any of these
ordinances or covenants in the first place. In contrast, the attitude that we have been taught by God's servants all of our lives, and with which I was most assuredly raised, is that we should live our lives in constant preparation for this very day. We take this scripture very personally, because we know that the Lord will hold us more accountable than most. And yet we do know that we have not mixed our blood with the Canaanite, and we hope that our names will be found in the book of the law of God. How does one have his name recorded there? By living and obeying all the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

The promise of Section 85 could have been fulfilled in 1890 and 1891, as the citations I listed before demonstrated. Jesus Christ would have come then, had the Saints remained faithful. The one mighty and strong could have come then, had they been willing to receive him. How much closer is the church to receiving the Prophet Joseph again today? Do you even believe in him? But I can promise you, because the Lord's servants have prophesied it, that he will come and set the house of God in order. Why or how is the house of God out of order? Because they have drawn closer and closer to Babylon, or the world, and further and further away from Zion. And through whom did all of the revelations on Zion come to us? Joseph Smith. Would you agree that it is probable that he would understand those revelations more than those who have reinterpreted them?

If you read Section 85 very carefully, you will see that it not only refers to a setting in order at the beginning of the millennium, but it also refers to the day of judgment and resurrection when the whole earth will be celestialized, and only those who have obeyed Celestial law will receive a lot of inheritance there. Zion is the pure in heart. Zion will be redeemed in the mortal sense, as promised in Sections 101, 103, 104 and 105, yet it will also be redeemed in the immortal sense when the earth is presented to God the Father, by his Son. And where will that take place? Read Daniel chapter 7:13-14. How will His kingdom be presented to Him? As a result of an accounting or a setting in order of His House. And by whom? Who is the head of this dispensation, the dispensation of the fullness of times, unto whom a fullness of keys are given for the last time? Joseph Smith and his true successors—those who fulfill his teachings and receive the revelations of God through him.

I understand that the church prefers the King James version to the Inspired Version. Is it because Joseph Smith was involved with the latter and several of his teachings are not in harmony with current church doctrines? Even though the Prophet Joseph would be excommunicated for his behavior were he a member today, perhaps I could direct your attention to the vision of Joseph of old in Genesis chapter 50 (Inspired Version):

30. And again, a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins: and not to the bringing forth of my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them in the last days.

31. Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto
the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.

32. And out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my work shall go forth among all my people, which shall restore them, who are of the House of Israel, in the last days.

33. And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation.

It would appear that Joseph of old thought quite highly of Joseph Smith the Prophet. Joseph of old was under the impression, and apparently the Lord was also when He gave this revelation to him, that Joseph Smith, the Seer, would bring His "people unto salvation." The words "my people" would lead a logical mind to deduce that this would mean the children of the covenant of the House of Israel. As the Lord mentioned that covenant in verse 31, and mentioned Israel in verse 32, and in verse 33 mentioned the seed of Joseph, generation to generation, how would they all be brought to a remembrance of God's covenants except-- through whom? Joseph Smith! Perhaps his work was significant after all. Of course, since the church no longer sees a distinction between the seed of Israel and the seed of Cain, then the significance of these covenants might not seem important to you. They are, however, significant to us. But we believe in and accept revelation. Read Genesis 50 and 2 Nephi 3. You might also consider 3 Nephi, chapters 16 through 28, where the concepts of the covenant people are discussed.

Another thought which might be of interest to you is mentioned in Section 84:34-42. How do we get back in the presence of God? Through Joseph Smith. His work is still not done. The magnificence of his mission is not yet complete. Not only Joseph of old received revelation about him, but Lehi also, who said the following to his son Joseph in 2 Nephi chapter 3:

8. And I will give unto him a commandment that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work.

Also, in the Book of Isaiah, in many places, he refers to Joseph Smith. Consider for example: Isaiah 11:1.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

In Section 113 the Prophet Joseph Smith answered some inquiries about these concepts. The stem is Christ (verse 2); the rod is Joseph Smith (verse 3 and 4); the branch is the king of the house of David who will be raised up to preside over the government and officiate at the temple in Jerusalem. Avraham
Gileadi's analysis of this verse adds understanding as well.

I mention all of this to pose one question to you, Brother Brian. As the Prophet Joseph Smith was prophesied of and promised from the foundations of the world to come and do this work, how can you or any thinking person who claims to believe in his mission possibly proffer that I should accept the teachings of the present leadership of the church as equal to or superior to those of Joseph Smith? You tell me that I must study the writings and teachings of other prophets, not just Joseph Smith. With all due respect, I have never read mention of the divine calling and mission of Gordon B. Hinckley, James E. Talmage, Mark E. Peterson, Bruce R. McConkie, Charles Darwin, John Widtsoe and the other "prophets" and leaders of the church who have elevated themselves to the position of changing, denying, defiling, profaning, perverting, transgressing, breaking and disobeying the laws, ordinances, covenants and revelations of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And yet, you seem to prefer all of them, any of them, to Joseph Smith.

Yes, even Charles Darwin, because you would prefer that a brother in the church believed that he was a descendant of natural selection and the survival of the fittest rather than believe that he was a descendant of Michael, our Father and our God. Instead of living by the same laws by which Abraham lived, you would rather that he pollute his blood by mixing with the seed of Cain. In fact, the church teaches that it is alright to do that, even though he will not find an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom, only because Spencer Kimball was "inspired" to give those blessings to the seed of Cain, thus nullifying the prophecies and writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Abraham and all of God's true prophets. I am sorry, Brother Brian, but I cannot accept being "inspired," any more than I can accept the theory of evolution; and yes, your whole theology is based on that premise. Yes, the church has "evolved" from one of revelation to one of inspiration. But is that progress?

You claim that you are constantly progressing, constantly receiving line upon line, precept on precept. But what is the scriptural purpose of that? Read Section 93, or 2 Nephi 3, and you will find that it refers to the Lord's servants accepting all that was given them until and so that they could receive a fullness. Christ did receive a fullness, and perpetuate it, before He made the atonement and was crucified. Joseph did receive a fullness, and perpetuate it, before he was martyred. Your position, and the position offered by all of your prophets of change, maintains that Joseph Smith only laid the base and you are now building the grand model. I am sorry, but you are not Zerubbabel who will finish his work. You have exalted yourself to sit in judgment upon him, offering that many of God's prophets have instituted a different law for a different time. Where? When? To whom? Where was the revelation for that?

And where was the revelation disallowing the calling of Joseph Smith? Your whole theology was developed out of your need to justify why you will not accept the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and do his works. You have borrowed from the author of Darwin's theories to proffer that God can change, that He can create a new species of the gospel; you generate new doctrines all the time. Your necessity to modify and "improve" the temple endowment to make it "less harsh, less threatening" represents a case of natural selection and survival of the fittest. Your "inspiration" to give the Canaanite the
Priesthood and pollute the temple of God did make possible a prophecy that Paul made almost 2,000 years ago; it did enable the church to be "selected" as one with the world, and to "survive among the fittest." It is doubtful whether that would justify making a decision based on American middle class values in preference to the will of God as revealed through His prophets. In fact, with all of these changes--can you really honestly state you truly feel these changes have been "progress?" Have they really brought the church closer to God, or further away?

Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Mormon and Moroni taught us at great length that there are only two forces, good and evil: good personified or represented by Zion; evil personified or represented by Babylon. Joseph Smith's whole mission was to prepare a people who would qualify to be "Zion," which Section 97:21 tells us is the "pure in heart," to be gathered out of Babylon and prepared to meet the Savior. (Hopefully, this is not new information to you.) That would prove the existence of only two sets of mutually exclusive alternatives for God's covenant people: which do you prefer?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Babylon</th>
<th>Zion</th>
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<td>Lucifer</td>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
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<td>the Abominable church</td>
<td>the church of the Lamb</td>
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<td>Isaiah's &quot;Egypt&quot;</td>
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<td>the Canaanites</td>
<td>the seed of Abel</td>
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<td>false prophets</td>
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Please allow me to examine only a few of the "inspired" changes made since the Manifesto, and especially since 1918. I am hoping that you know and recognize that each and every one of the doctrines, principles and ordinances of salvation and exaltation has been eliminated, modified or restricted.

1. Baptism: now only given once. no rebaptism.
2. Mother's blessings: no longer given.
3. Women performing ordinances with consecrated oil: no longer permitted.
4. Sacrament: the sign of the Aaronic priesthood no longer given. The word "administer" redefined in all Mormon dictionaries only to mean "bless," as deacons take the bread and water to the members who pass it to each other.
5. Dedication of baptismal water: no longer done.
7. United Order: faded into obscurity.
8. Temple endowment: wow. my heart breaks over this one.
10. Traveling without purse or scrip: no longer permitted.
11. Dedication of graves by the sign of the Melchizedek Priesthood: no longer done.
12. Second Anointing: no longer done, or at least greatly restricted.
15. Covenant people: does the church even teach this concept anymore, Brian?
16. Anything you want to put here: there are over 100 of them.
But where was the revelation that justified one of them, all of them, any of them, most of them, some of them? You say that we are not willing to accept these revelations. How can we, when they have never been presented, never been announced, never been printed, never been read-- never been received? I would agree, these changes were "inspired"-- but by which source? To which of the following models, Zion or Babylon, have all of these changes drawn the church? To be a revelation from God, these changes would have to have ADDED to the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith. You accuse us of not being willing to accept other than what Joseph or Brigham received: that is not true! We expect and anticipate many more revelations and added truth and light. That is what the millennium is all about, is it not? The whole gospel is based on the premise of continual revelation.

We accept and receive all that He has revealed (do you?) all that He does now reveal (as in "thus saith the Lord" which you do not have) and that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, which is immutable, unchanging, unswerving and unalterable, unlike your position. Yes, we are not willing to accept any of these "revelations" that support your position, because they TAKE AWAY FROM Joseph Smith; in fact they deny him-- in reality, however, they do not even exist! Yet, you accuse us of developing our theology in retrospect. Perhaps we err in not being willing to accept more; perhaps the church errrs in not being willing to keep even that which they still have left.

As the Lord revealed and established a fullness of His laws and ordinances through Joseph Smith, which the scriptures all verify, then to add to them would mean that nothing is taken away. You justify the church's actions by implying that the Lord has added, line upon line, precept on precept. We know that Joseph did not receive nor institute ALL the truth that there is. That would deny the basic premise of Mormonism that we will ALWAYS be receiving more. But your methodology doesn't ADD, it TAKES away. Most importantly, every change has taken the church closer to Babylon, and further from Zion. If moving toward, and embracing, Babylon is what you mean by "progress," then I would sadly agree with you, the church has made remarkable "progress" since 1918.

Consider my confusion: Mormonism started out with the perfect situation. We had a man who actually saw God, heard His voice, translated sacred records by the power of the interpreters, had numerous visitations from angels. In fact, this man was of such high caliber and integrity, that many of God's prophets prophesied of him. Some by his name. Exactly, precisely who he would be. From the foundation of the world. And yet, you and many others would think that to change the prophesies, reject the revelations, change the ordinances, break the covenants and transgress the laws that were revealed through him is "Progression?" I am confused. I never could accept the concepts taught by "science" on the origin of the species, but I must say that they are more consistent than you are. Darwin, at least, never claimed to have started out with the perfect model, and then retrogressed, or digressed-- or degenerated from there. The church was restored on Zion's plan in 1830; yet how far has the church "progressed?"

The church has become one of the most ardent supporters of the Babylonian
(American) capitalistic corporate structure, forgetting the true economic pattern of Zion. Where was the revelation disallowing or suspending the law of consecration? The church has missionaries all over the world, yet you don’t seem to have much embarrassment over the fact that the doctrine on which there is the most revelation is not practiced today. Interesting. Does no one want to live the economic laws of the Celestial Kingdom? Isn’t it necessary anymore, but only an incidental, superfluous commandment? What would happen if the people would live it? Did the Lord not promise that He would redeem the church and send the one mighty and strong to redeem Jackson County and free us from Babylon? Is Babylon that comfortable? Consider Section 105, all of it: I will offer only a few verses.

3. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

4. And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

5. And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

6. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer.

There seems a tendency among church lobbyists never to apply revelations and scriptures to themselves or the church during their day; but for the Lord’s servants in all times, in all ages, it has been plainly taught that all prophecies have come to pass, do come to pass, and will come to pass. If Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the Celestial kingdom, then when do you propose that we start? Could it have been wise never to have stopped? Some, outside the church, have never given up practicing that law! Where was the revelation suspending it? If it wasn’t suspended, then why don’t you live it? Those who choose not to live that law, have chosen to experience the results of their actions. What does verse 6 read: those who will not obey this covenant “must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer.”

Where are all of these revelations we are not willing to accept, Brother Brian? You claim to be motivated by the spirit of God to call us to repentance. Would not that same spirit prompt you to show us these revelations that you claim to have? Where are they? Could it be that they do not exist? Then all you would have to stand on is “follow the living prophet.” Isn’t that what the Catholic church teaches? Why should we follow your position rather than the Vatican’s? If “proof” of ordination is the only criterion that you can produce to justify your position, why wouldn’t you want to recognize a far older, far larger and grander claim than your own? Your logic would require you to give up any pretense of supporting Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, and become a Catholic.
One of the most intriguing comments in your letter was your offering on page 3. You referred to my recommendation that you study Joseph Smith’s teaching. You offered that my challenge "to gain a testimony of fundamentalism by studying the teachings of Joseph Smith is something akin to challenging someone to gain a testimony of Catholicism by studying the teachings of the apostle Peter. It is like challenging someone to study the authority held by Christ to gain a testimony of the Pope’s authority and having an investigator study the keys held by Joseph Smith to understand modern fundamentalist sealing priesthood authority."

I have tried to deduce the logical premises of your analogies. Although I have never been one to appreciate analogies, preferring simple and plain language, I believe your comparisons would follow these lines:

You posit that:
1. Lorin Wooley is in the same position as the pope.
2. The Catholic church is in the same position as fundamentalism.
3. You offer that Christ is the author of authority (notice how those words are somewhat similar); that the authority held by Joseph Smith is not the same authority held by the fundamentalists. Therefore, the authority held by the pope is similar to that held by the fundamentalists.

Your analogy presents some interesting comparisons. Perhaps I do not understand Catholic theology and history as well as you, but are not they the ones who claim that it doesn’t matter what previous prophets (or do they call them popes) did or taught, but it is only necessary to study the teachings of more current or recent ones, or those teachings since 325 (the Nicene Council)? Are not they the ones who make no effort to reconcile the teachings of the current church leadership with previous leaders, or even the scriptures? Are not they the ones who excommunicate people for believing in the teachings of the founders of their church? Aren’t they the ones who excommunicate people for "being out of harmony with the present leaders of the church?" Aren’t they the ones who have followed their living prophets, transgressed all the laws, changed all of the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant, eliminated plain and precious parts of the gospel, implemented a series of changes that would be more acceptable to the world, striven to obey all the laws of the governments of the land? And all the time claimed to have been "inspired" even though they have never received a revelation justifying their changes?

In fact, don’t they justify their existence by pointing out that they are the ones who control their historian’s office; they are the ones who control all of the buildings; they are the ones who have a church that has world recognition; they are the ones who are so numerous that any others would be insignificant? Aren’t they the ones who would discount the claims of Joseph Smith, because he could not prove his conferral of Priesthood, while they have a "smooth transition of succession" from pope to pope, for nearly 2,000 years? Of course, they admit that they have been wrong a couple of times. There really were those records that Lorenzo Valla found in the Vatican archives that they
denied that they had for centuries which proved that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. But, they argued, it doesn't prove that anyone else would have authority, because they don't have proof of those other people's claims in their archives. Aren't they the ones who have had to yield on countless points because historians like Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus, Thomas More, John Calvin proved their positions to be historically inaccurate? But they do have a clear succession of authority, and a valid record of witnessed ordinations. They just don't have a fullness of Priesthood. They just don't do the works of Abraham. They just do not have or receive revelations to justify all the "progress" that they have made.

Perhaps you might feel this is somewhat harsh in pointing out that every argument you have used to defend the church's continual slide away from its AUTHOR Joseph Smith, is exactly the same argument the Catholic church argues—every single one. How could you compare Lorin Woolley to the pope, unless you are agreeing that Lorin Woolley did have a valid ordination, just as did the pope? That premise would actually contradict the validity of your whole position, as succession and control of the legal corporate church entity is the only claim that you have to authenticity, as you have denied the truth of the calling of your founder.

How could you assert that the fundamentalists are in opposition to Joseph Smith when we are the only people on the face of the earth who really believe in his teachings? How could you argue that the fundamentalists don't have the same authority as Joseph Smith when you admit that no one in the church has that authority, lives the same laws, accepts the same ordinances, or perpetuates the same priesthood? Clearly, you do not want to be associated with him, Brian, so why do you take umbrage with us for at least trying to do his works? Yes, I find your analogy interesting, but not enlightening.

Where is this revelation that we are unwilling to accept, Brother Brian? It is amazing that you would accuse us of that. You suggest that not all of God's prophets agree; isn't that what every false prophet has claimed? This concept that different prophets can disagree perplexes me. Consider Paul's statement in I Corinthians chapter 14: (King James Version)

32. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the Saints.

And then you accuse Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith of having two different sets of positions before and after the Manifesto. On what? You cannot produce one shred of evidence to prove that those holy men ever profaned the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith or his successor Brigham Young. You even accuse the Prophet himself of being a false prophet because you maintain that God has changed the commandments and teachings that He revealed through that most holy prophet, when and after the prophet told us beyond a shadow of a doubt that his works would stand until the millennium, unchanged in their fullness! He said, "if any man preach any other gospel than that which I have preached, he shall be cursed." (The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph
Smith, p. 366.) Do you feel comfortable being in that position, Brother Brian?

I cannot express how ironic that it is that you would try to hammer us so hard. On what? One point—your inability to find proof of the Lorin Woolley statement among the carefully guarded secrets in the Church Historian’s office. Of course, you have to take that position, because that is the only weakness in the perpetuation of the Priesthood that you can perceive to have found. You, and the others who follow your position, accuse Lorin Woolley of deceit and dishonesty simply because you cannot find incontrovertible proof of his claims. You refuse to approach God and ask Him! Instead, you turn to your own wisdom, refer to revelations that never have been received; you make sweeping and incredible assertions to justify your refusal to obey God’s law, and yet in order to do so, you follow the very methods that you accuse Lorin Woolley of using.

You can not fault us on our doctrines, as they are all identical to those established and perpetuated by all of God’s prophets, all of them, from the foundation of the world; I am sorry if your leaders do not fit in that category.

You can not challenge us on our ordinances, as they are all identical to those established and perpetuated by all of God’s prophets, all of them, from the foundation of the world; I am sorry if your leaders have chosen not to accept and perpetuate them, but rather have chosen to change them.

You can not challenge us on our covenants, as they are all identical to those established and perpetuated by all of God’s prophets, all of them, from the foundation of the world; I am sorry if your leaders have preferred to break them.

You have no scriptural basis to challenge us on, except that you use the creative interpretations and positions of the present leadership of the church. You apparently feel no compulsion to rectify the teachings and predictions of recent church leaders with those who preceded them. You examine the writings of Joseph Musser to find one word here and one sentence there, when you surely must know that every revisionist theologian in the last 50 years could not possibly withstand a comparative analysis referencing their works with the teachings of Joseph Smith. Once again, I cannot understand how you refuse to recognize that Joseph Musser, and his predecessors and successors, are the only ones in the world, inside the church or outside the church who agree with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow or Joseph F. Smith, Jesus Christ, Isaiah, Zechariah, Moroni, Mormon, Nephi, and a few others.

By what criteria do you assess valid succession? Those who support Joseph Smith; or those who deny him. Those who continue his work; or those who oppose it. Those who preside over the ordinances and laws that he instituted; or those who have the control of the legal institution that he organized according to the laws of the land? The Catholic church has an earlier right to everyone of those claims, Brother Brian. I do not understand why you even bother to claim Joseph Smith was a prophet, when you deny his teachings. You even spend your efforts challenging the only people who do support, claim and perpetuate his teachings.

On only one point! Perhaps we have been unfair in not placing all of our
diaries and journals in the church historian's office. We have withheld information from you. We have not allowed you to read them in order to solve your whole dilemma. But we are not now, nor have we ever been, obligated to prove our position. Those who are looking for truth have always been able to find their way through the maze. Those who are looking to confound and argue have been able to find justification for their decision not to live all the laws of the gospel. The Jews did it, the Lamanites did it, the Catholics did it—and others today have done it as well. Denying the necessity of living the laws, however, would also deny the blessings attainable only through living them as well.

I was amazed that you would claim that you understand Joseph Smith's teachings on plural marriage. Then why don't you accept them? Why don't you follow and practice them? Why don't you live them? Why don't you do his works? You wonder why you are not able to reach us, to convince us, to convert us. Could it be because we are looking to men and women who do the works of Joseph Smith? You tell us that you have a testimony of Joseph Smith, but you deny the necessity of doing his works. You bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet, but you do not bear witness to the laws and ordinances of the gospel that were restored through him? You tell us that you have a testimony that Brigham Young was a prophet of God, but then you tell us that Brigham didn't know who God was—that he "was wrong!" Interesting; how could a man be a prophet of God, and yet be wrong as to who God was. You tell us that you represent the only true source of authority, using verse 18 of Section 132 to construct your whole theology, and then you deny the very men through whom you claim your authority derived? That is curious. In twenty or thirty years will you or someone else be standing at our pulpit saying, "Joseph F. Smith was wrong." Or, how about this one, "Spencer Kimball was wrong." Is that what you mean by an unchangeable, unalterable, eternal gospel?

Then you call us to repentance. To whose "repentance?" You assume that you are on the same "side" as Joseph and Brigham, only because you are a member of the same legal corporate entity over which they once presided; but then you also assume that although you have the same legal entity that you are excused from living and obeying the same laws and receiving the same ordinances that they revealed, received, obeyed, fulfilled and perpetuated. And then you assume that those who are doing the works of Joseph, Brigham, Heber, John, Wilford, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—are committing sin, because your leaders have changed the ordinances that were instituted from before the foundations of the world. You have based your whole revised, retrospective theology on one assumption: you, and other church lobbyists, assume that God can, or would, change or alter His laws and ordinances to fit the needs of His people at different times. Not even the Catholics would accept that assumption.

You support your assumption by quoting from Jacob chapter 2. Have you forgotten that this particular passage was the reason why Joseph Smith sought the word of the Lord on the question of a plurality of wives? How then could you assume that the very scriptures that would lead Joseph to receive a revelation commanding all who receive the law of Celestial PLURAL Marriage to live it, would also prohibit or forbid it? You are not the first one to use Jacob 2 to justify rejection of that holy law. Vice President Schuyler Colfax used it in 1869. You can read John Taylor's analysis of Jacob 2 and his
responses to in the Deseret News, October 20, 1869. I will offer only a brief part of his response after a few citations from Jacob 2:

28. For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

29. Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes.

30. For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people, otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.

31. For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

32. And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which have been led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.

33. For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts.

34. And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before; and ye have come unto great condemnation; for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done.

Then continue in the third chapter of Jacob 3:

5. Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursing which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers— that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them.

As President Taylor pointed out, the laws and commandments which Lehi was given included not just the proscription against concubinage, but against all ungodliness. Verse 30 of Jacob 2 makes it very clear that the Lord placed the law of Celestial PLURAL marriage on a much higher plane than the sin of taking concubines. The phrase, "for if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things," shows us two things: that in order to "raise up seed unto" Him, He WILL command His people—to do what? obviously to live a plurality of wives, as that is what they are prohibited from doing—EXCEPT HE SHALL COMMAND: secondly, unless He calls and commands people to live that holy law, then they
surely must not do so.

Most certainly, the Lord did "raise up seed unto" Himself among the RIGHTEOUS children of Lehi— to state otherwise you would have to argue that none of the children of Lehi were "seed unto" the Lord. Therefor, it follows that He DID command it to those who were worthy. Those to whom this law was not specifically revealed, were commanded to have but one wife, and concubines none. This is entirely consistent with the gospel in all ages. Hopefully you know that I could cite dozens of quotes specifying just that. If you are as familiar with Mormon history as you claim to be, you must certainly see a direct parallel among the saints in the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young; in fact, it was not until 1852, as you yourself stated, that the law of eternal marriage, of which a plurality was, is, and always will be an integral component, was first revealed— yet it never was a law of the church.

The teachings of Jacob provide a tragic insight into some of the problems in the church today. You may not consider these problems, but they weigh heavily on us. Consider verse 33, "they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people;" what is occurring when the daughters of Israel are being betrayed in bondage through "marriage" to the seed of Cain in the Temple? What is happening when thousands and thousands of righteous, capable women are forced either to remain in single barrenness, or to marry men unworthy of them— because their leaders have exalted themselves to deny the blessing of holy matrimony in Celestial Marriage to them?

Or "they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts;" is abortion absent from the church? Is it a "sin" of equal magnitude to the most heinous of all— "polygamy?" Are righteous women being seduced into adulterous associations because there are no righteous men available? Perhaps you might answer that all of this will be "straightened out in the millennium" as other church lobbyists have suggested. But where is the doctrinal basis of that idea? There is a doctrinal basis for the practice, in righteousness, of the law which would reduce, if not eliminate these tragedies: read Section 132, all of it, and you will find that this was the law given before the foundations of the world for the raising up of a righteous seed.

For those to whom this law is not commanded and authorization not given, the law of God to the Priesthood and the church is to have but one wife, and concubines none. It has always been so. Now, in 1890, in 1852, in 1841, in Jacob's day, in Mormon's day, in Jesus' day. What, however, would lead you to assume that neither Jacob, nor any of the other Nephite prophets were polygamists? Only because the Book of Mormon doesn't say they were? What about the Lord blessing Amulek's women? (Alma 10:11) Clearly, Amulek was among those "seed unto" the Lord who had been commanded to have more than one wife. Or what of Pahoran having many sons (Helaman 1:4)?

The Book of Mormon does not say many things. Consider just a few basic gospel doctrines of which there is no mention: the eternity of marriage; the nature and personality of God as being a man enthroned in yonder heavens who once was as we are now, and is as we might become; a multiplicity of Gods, (does the church even teach that any more?), three separate kingdoms of glory; temple endowments; work or baptism for the dead; Aaronic Priesthood; the existence of
Eloheim, Jehovah, Michael (does the church teach those any more?); the office of Apostle (the Nephite Twelve are referred to as "disciples"), the office of Bishop; the office of Patriarch; sealing keys of Elijah; washings and anointings; rebaptism; the war in heaven-- just to name a few.

Would the absence of these being mentioned also lead you to assume that these were not taught then, or believed then, or practiced then? Or that the children of Lehi had a different law, as you maintain in your letter? If they did not practice the law of a plurality of wives to "raise up seed unto" the Lord, as you assume they did not, then we also have to assume, that as a result of there being no "seed unto" the Lord, that there was no one worthy to receive or participate in temple work? Did the Nephites not have Bishops, Patriarchs, Apostles? Was there no temple work for the dead? Could the dead only go to heaven or hell, but not the Celestial, Terrestrial and Telestial Kingdoms? Was God not a "man enthroned in yonder heaven" then, but only a spirit as Mosiah chapters 15 and 16 might lead one to assume He was. Was God Michael/Adam in Jacob's time as He was from 1852-1877, but someone else today, or was He someone else?

The Bible doesn't tell us that Isaac practiced plural marriage, either, but Section 132 does. Just because you don't find mention of something, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. Any good historian knows that is poor history. Consider this: as you admitted in your book, it is now uncomfortable for the church to have to admit that they had a copy of the Revelation of 1886 all along after vehemently having denied its existence for so many years. Just because Joseph Smith's history never mentions his marriage to any of his plural wives, nor the birth of any of his children by them, I hope that you would agree that he did practice the principle.

Please don't be offended, Brian, but you make all kinds of sweeping assumptions about things only because they are not mentioned: Jacob having more than one wife, Lorin Woolley's ordination-- what other things that you cannot find must we eliminate simply because they are not clearly, simply stated to your satisfaction. No where in the scriptures are we told that Jesus Christ was married-- either once or many times; but Brigham teaches us that Joseph Smith was a descendant of Christ. A silence about something doesn't prove that it doesn't exist. Remember what I stated earlier about historical malpractice? More important than what the Book of Mormon doesn't say, however, is what it does say.

Consider how much older that Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi were than their younger brothers Jacob and Joseph. Let's theorize that Nephi might have been extremely mature at say age 15 when he killed Laban; as he was the youngest of the four brothers, and based on the average distance of two years between each brother, that would make Laman 21. Jacob and Joseph were both born during their years in the wilderness before they built their ship. Yes, I suppose that it is possible for Sarai to have children who were 25 years difference in age, but consider Nephi's statement in I Nephi 18:17-19:

17. Now my father, Lehi, had said many things unto them, and also unto the sons of Ishmael; but, behold, they did breathe out much threatenings against anyone that should speak for me; and my
parents being stricken in years, and having suffered much grief because of their children, they were brought down, yea, even upon their sick-beds.

18. Because of their grief and much sorrow, and the iniquity of my brethren, they were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their God; yea, their grey hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.

19. And Jacob, and Joseph, being young, having need of much nourishment, were grieved because of the afflictions of their mother; .........."

Of course, this doesn't prove anything, but if Jacob and Joseph had the same mother as Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi, would Nephi say "my mother" or "our mother," or "our parents," instead of "their mother?" Notice that in verse 17 he said "my parents" when he was talking about Laman and Lemuel's parents rather than "their parents." The Book of Mormon tells us the names of only three women: Sarai, Isabell, Abish; by your line of reasoning, there were no important women among the Nephites, because none other than Nephi's wife, Lamoni's wife and the mothers of Helaman's 2,000 Lamanite warriors, and a few others, were even mentioned. Although Alma, 2 Nephi, and 3 Nephi never mentioned their wives, I hope that you would agree that it is obvious that they had some-- if not many.

Nephi does not tell us the names of his sisters, or how young they were when he states in 2 Nephi 5:6: "........I, Nephi, did take my family,........and Jacob and Joseph, my sisters,........." How many did he have? Who was their mother? When were they born? Of course, this doesn't prove that Lehi had more than one wife, but if he did not, Sarai would have been having children over a very long period of time-- a length of time extremely unusual for women of that time. Anthropologists would find that extremely interesting. This is what you like to call a "problem," Brother Brian.

I feel bound to bring this to your attention. In your lengthy analysis of the "problem" of the separation of the calling of the head of Priesthood from the calling of the head of the church, you went through scriptural gymnastics to try to prove that Alma was not the head of the "church" but only of those branches that he founded. My first thought was to let you leave that idea in your book and symposium paper, as it would have caused people to go and investigate for themselves. I do hope that you will still leave it there, but you might want to reconsider your insistence that Mosiah was indeed the head of the church. You offered that you doubted that Hyrum Andrus would have supported the position of our "church." Just in making that statement you confirmed my feeling that you still don't understand what our position is. Once more: please re-read the following scriptures:

Mosiah 28:20: And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things, he took the plates of brass, and all the things which he had kept, and conferred them upon Alma, who was the son of Alma; yea, all the records, and also the interpreters,
and conferred them upon him, and commanded him that he should keep and preserve them, and also keep a record of the people, handing them down from one generation to another, even as they had been handed down from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.

Notice that these things were “conferred” upon Alma. What does that mean? What does it mean when a man receives and has the “interpreters?” Does that not make him a seer? Was Alma called and confirmed and appointed and anointed to be Mosiah’s successor or not? Next, consider the following:

Mosiah 29:42: And it came to pass that Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church.

Unless I misunderstood what you wrote, you claim that Alma the older only had a limited calling within the church which you claim was presided over by Mosiah, to organize a limited number of branches. Is that what you meant? First, please note that had that been the case, as you suggest, that Alma was not the high priest over the whole church, your assumption would mean that Alma would only have given his son, Alma, a limited appointment to act in the capacity as high priest only to those branches that he had organized. If so, then how could he have given his son, “charge concerning all the affairs of the church?” And, what does “THE high priest” mean? Doesn’t it mean over all the church?

Lastly:

Mosiah 29:47: And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi; and thus ended the days of Alma, who was the founder of their church.

I am beginning to understand the type of methodology that church apologists use, having read how Eldon Watson analyzed Section 132 and the revelation of 1886. But as a teacher, maybe I could offer a few insights on some basic rules in grammar. Notice the words “their church.” As this is one sentence, with two related but independent clauses, we must assume that the pronoun “their” refers to a plural noun: there are only two—kings and people. Now, of course, one of you could argue that because people can be made plural to become “peoples” that “their” would have to describe “kings.” Such an interpretation would indicate that Alma was the founder of the kings’ church. Or one could be a little more reasonable and honestly deduce that Alma was the founder of the “people’s church.” In either case, brother Brian, you might want to have to modify your position, because there was no CHURCH among the people of Nephi before Alma founded their church at the Waters of Mormon, or else he would not have been the FOUNDER.

Now you could argue that he founded only the church of the people at the Waters of Mormon, but they had no king; in fact, he refused to be their king. Therefor, it would have to refer to the “people of Nephi,” over whom the kings reigned and that would include ALL of the people of Nephi, otherwise Mormon would not have put these two ideas together in the same sentence. They stand as a couplet together, showing that the people of Nephi lost both their last
king, and their first high priest over their church. Clearly, it IS obvious that Alma, the younger, received the callings of both Mosiah, as prophet, seer and revelator, and the older Alma's office of high priest over the whole church of all the people of Nephi. Whether you accept it or not, the calling of president or "high priest" over the church, and the calling of God's prophet, seer and revelator, CAN and HAVE been divided between two separate men! I am sorry if I belabored that a little, but I am weary of having to deal with the type of contortions that would allow one to justify himself in twisting the scriptures to make them read as he pleases, rather than in accepting the plain, simple and direct words of God through His prophets.

Your whole challenge to us is based on these two premises: your inability to find proof of the Lorin Woolley statement; your unwillingness to accept the necessity of living and obeying all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel. All of your efforts to discredit Lorin Woolley have not changed the basic premises: does God require that we live all of the laws today, as He has in all ages, in all times, to all peoples; if so, has He kept His word and preserved His Priesthood in its fullness? You maintain that He has not. Perhaps you still do not understand that it is impossible for you to have credibility with us when you claim to have a testimony of God, His gospel, and His servants, and yet you continually deny their teachings; or how can we give you credence when you tell us that we have to accept the teachings of the present leaders of the church as the only true authority, even when they contradict ALL of the men, in all dispensations, whom they claim to succeed?

You keep coming back to that "authority question." You are right! That IS the real question! One of my father's associates wrote me a letter to emphasize that all of your arguments are just a "smoke screen." The real issue is, always has been and always will be authority. You bore us your testimony of the calling of Joseph Smith, but you do not accept, follow or believe his teachings. You bore us your testimony of Brigham Young, yet you do not follow his teachings— in fact, you stood at our pulpit, and you said, "HE WAS WRONG." Whew! I wonder if Brother Brigham would find your views in harmony with his. You bore your testimony of John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith all as being prophets of God. We could not agree more. Why don't you agree with yourself? Do you not see any irony in the fact that we agree with you more than you do?

We agree with you so much that we accept their teachings, we follow their teachings, and we believe their teachings— and even more remarkably, we even live and obey them. All of them. Every one of them. IN FACT, WE ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH WHO DO. None of the leaders in today's church does; in fact, they deny the necessity to do so. It is interesting that you would walk into our hall and direct and adjure us to do exactly what we were already doing and what you refuse to do. Why is it that you will not accept your own advice? You are very consistent with the current position; you preach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of Godliness, but denying the power of them, and denying the very nature and identity of God himself. If you can't see a glaring difference staring you right in the face, I don't know what else I could say. I believe that Webster's has a word for those who teach, preach or advocate one thing, but do another.
I was very soft with you that night when you exalted yourself to be a judge of Brigham Young; I was soft with you in my response to your early letters and your symposium paper. But authority IS the question. Section 132:7 states that no contracts...... are of efficacy--you have read it. In fact, you quoted it many times. We agree with you. You offered the necessity to be sure that we understand the implied warning in verse 18; we agree with you. The question is, who is that man? Is it someone who teaches, follows, practices, obeys, fulfills and perpetuates the same teachings as Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith and maintains the purity and continuity of the same laws and ordinances of the gospel that God revealed and instituted and perpetuated through those holy prophets? Or is it someone who presides over an organization which, although its size and grandeur are impressive, has not received one revelation since 1882--or even 1890? Has changed the ordinances of the House of God? Revoked and denounced the teachings of His prophets concerning the very nature and character of His being? Has corrupted the House of God by opening the doors of the temple to the Canaanites?

Of course, you see no problems in any of the things that I have offered, simply because on your trips to the church historian's office when you reviewed those items which that office has very carefully selected, you were unable to find evidence supporting Lorin Woolley's testimony, even though there has not yet been evidence produced to disprove it. And you have created an entire new religion around verses 18 and 19 of Section 132. If you would study the whole revelation, verse 7 would take on a whole new meaning for you.

You have a testimony of Ezra T. Benson, and I share the same testimony that he is indeed God's prophet, seer and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; I do not, however, share your testimony that he is qualified to sit in the position occupied, and so carefully preserved and perpetuated in its fullness by those first six men who sat in that calling. Our family has always honored, revered and respected President Benson. One of my father's brothers married his niece. President Benson spoke at my aunt's funeral. He has spoken with my Uncle Owen and extended his regards to all of us. He is a wonderful and righteous man; but has he done the works of Abraham? Wouldn't the holder of the authority described in Section 132:7 do as Abraham did? Or Joseph Smith, Brigham Young or their successors? Does he even claim to do so? Why does he remain silent, when he sees the church in its condition today? Is it because he has experienced the same heartbreak as Mormon?

And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity. (Mormon 1:16)

Yes, it is the authority thing again. The whole question devolves to one very brief and powerful set of queries:

1. in order to be God's mouthpiece, as described in Section 132:7 or Helaman 10:5, would a man have to receive a fullness of all the authority that Joseph Smith received?
2. in order to receive a fullness of authority, would one have to receive and hold all of the keys of the Priesthood?

3. in order to hold all the keys of the Priesthood, would one have to hold the keys to all the ordinances?

4. in order to hold a key to an ordinance, would one have to have received that ordinance first?

5. in order to receive an ordinance, would one have to fulfill and obey all the laws necessary to qualify for that ordinance first?

Now, please be careful in your answers. If you answer "no" to any of these questions, then you will have to deny that Joseph Smith was indeed that prophet of whom God's servants prophesied from the foundations of the world; I honestly do hope, for your sake, that you don't deny him. If you answer yes to all of those questions, then you will have to accept the statement to which you took exception— authority must exist outside the church today, as clearly, no one in the church today can satisfy all the criteria offered above. Use dialectic or analytical reasoning; be inductive or deductive; use Newtonian or Cartesian methodology— it is all the same. In order to be Joseph Smith's successor one would have to receive, fulfill, obey and perpetuate every law, ordinance and key that the Lord revealed through Joseph the Prophet. Lorin C. Woolley does fit those criteria; none of the church leaders during his life could or would— or even wanted to.

You assure me that Lorin Woolley's ordination never occurred. Well, I assure you that the Lorin Woolley statement is not the issue. The Joseph Smith statement is the issue. I could respond to your questions by asking you this one: "If the Joseph Smith first vision of 1820 and the conferrals of 1829 and 1836 did take place, are you justified before the Lord in your position of not following and living His teachings?" No one that I know was converted to the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Lorin Woolley statement. Rather, they have been brought from all over the world by their testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lorin Woolley statement is only the explanation of how the teachings and authority of Joseph Smith have been preserved. You keep wanting to attack the result of our dedication and commitment, never having understood the cause.

As my father used to say, you can't cure the disease simply by treating the symptoms. To borrow your penchant for analogies, our acceptance of the Lorin Woolley statement is only the "symptom" of fundamentalism; the "disease" which affects all of us is our testimony of Jesus Christ as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Yes, Brother Brian, I am thinking that you have missed the point. And yes, there I go with the authority question again. I have some more questions for you: why do you not accept the authority of Joseph Smith? Why do you not live his teachings, and do his works? Why do you not accept his calling? Why do you not accept his revelations? Why do you not seek for those who have the authority, the desire and the willingness to fulfill and administer those very ordinances and laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ that were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, which the church has chosen to reject— despite the fact that there has never been a revelation to justify that
position? Why do you not seek for those keys which Joseph Smith received?

In 1921, President Heber J. Grant stated, "no man upon the face of the earth has any right or any authority to perform a plural marriage, and there are no plural marriages today in the Church of Christ, because no human being has the right to perform them." (Gospel Standards, p. 159, excerpt quoted from the 1921 April Conference Report.)

We know that there is not that authority in the church. You have all admitted that you don’t have it; unfortunately, we must agree with you. You have all chosen not to follow some of the steps listed in the previous paragraph. But someone has! You took exception with my statement that authority has to exist outside of the church. Of course you did. Otherwise you would have had to agree with me— and the Prophet Joseph. I am sure you have read Section 112:30:

"For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time, in which is the dispensation of the fullness of times."

Either Joseph Smith was a false prophet, or Heber J. Grant was not his successor! It is clear that President Grant was speaking only for the church, over which he did preside, and not for all of Israel, over which he did not, or else, he was calling Joseph Smith a false prophet, and denying the truth of Section 112. Of course, being a faithful church position supporter, you might come up with some fancy interpretation to a simple scripture to make it serve your purposes. But for the rest of Israel, it is very obvious for us to read that the Lord promised that this “authority”, the power of the priesthood was given for the last time. Since President Grant admitted that he didn’t have it, then someone had to! If you deny that, then you will have to deny Joseph Smith. But maybe that will be the next step, as you have denied Brigham Young and the very nature and character of our Father in Heaven.

As I mentioned on March 17, the Adam-God Doctrine is an integral aspect of the gospel, going hand in hand with the plurality of wives and united order in the sacred core and heart of Mormonism. I offered you a soft reproach in my first letter, quoting B. H. Roberts. Of course, you replied that President Robert’s statement does not prove that Michael was the father of Adam, or that he was Elohim of the Old Testament. First, I must admit that I was not aware that Brigham Young ever claimed that He was Elohim. Secondly, there are reams of evidence on the fact that Joseph Smith taught the Adam God Doctrine and that Michael, who was Adam, did indeed sire Jesus Christ.

I remember asking my father why the church refused to accept the teachings of the prophets on the nature and character and identity of our Father in Heaven. Having been raised in my father’s home and being taught the true concept from my earliest recollections, it always made so much sense that I couldn’t understand how anyone could not accept it. My father’s response has since been proven many times, by every one who refused to accept the revelations and teachings of the Prophets Joseph and Brigham.
He told me that the church refused to accept the Adam God Doctrine, because the very identity and nature of God proved the necessity to receive an eternal increase through the plurality of wives throughout all eternity. They would also have to acknowledge that God is indeed our Father, easily approachable to those who are humble enough to receive the ordinances necessary to receive Him. He is our Father, both of our spirit bodies, and of our mortal bodies, having personally begun and directed both creations.

I know you won't accept this. Of course, you won't. You would be excommunicated from the church if you did. I find it fascinating that Mormons are allowed to believe the teachings and ideas of Charles Darwin; but to dare to be so rebellious as to accept and credence the word of Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, the man who knew Him is grounds for disfellowship and excommunication. How ironic! You prefer Charles Darwin to Brigham Young. Interesting. And yet you implore us to follow and accept the revelations of God. Perhaps you should consider the same advice.

If you haven't already read it, Brother Brian, please read Culley K. Christensen's The Adam God Maze. He presents incontrovertible evidence by anyone willing to view things objectively, that Brigham Young taught the Adam God Doctrine at least 800 different times, of which Culley Christensen has manuscript proof. He also documents in one chapter that Michael was indeed the father of Christ, that Joseph Smith taught it, and in another chapter that Brigham Young did not create or invent any of the concept-- he got it ALL from Joseph Smith the Prophet.

When you stood there at our pulpit and you pronounced from your learned perception that Brigham was wrong, you must have realized that hundreds of people gasped that you would deny the prophetic calling of that man. And moreover, this was right after you had told us that you had a testimony of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Of all the positions that you have taken and offered, this one distresses me the most. Please reconsider your position.

Can you not recognize that to deny that validity of a doctrine on which Brigham Young taught some 800 times is very dangerous? Please read Christensen's book. It follows all the lines of reasoning and quotes all of Joseph's teachings. You must realize that to deny that doctrine is to accuse Brigham Young of being a false prophet, and to deny the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed through Joseph Smith. You can't take just part of the gospel and reject the most important doctrines and teachings of Jesus Christ. I know you have read Section 132:24 "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." You are rejecting God. You are denying His identity, you are refusing to know Him, Brother Brian. You are rejecting not only our Father, but you are refusing to accept His Son. Joseph Smith saw them both. He knew them. Please study these things out for yourself, reading only the teachings of Joseph Smith, and stop consulting the words of the university trained theologians who obviously have so much influence over you. Right in the church are those who have so exalted themselves that they have created a new theology-- reject them and their teachings and return to the teachings of the man who knew God, talked to him face to face-- the Prophet Joseph.
After teaching us about the identity and nature of God, Brigham told us "Now let all who may hear these doctrines pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation." Journal of Discourses, Volume 1:51. You state that others after him simply let it die out. THAT IS NOT TRUE. Stop reading the apologists who try to ignore the power of that doctrine. It continued through the administrations of Presidents Taylor, Woodruff, Snow and Smith. Please read the history, and stop reading the fantasy.

If you don't like Brigham Young and you are convinced that he was wrong, then read only the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. They are loaded with his teachings on the Adam God doctrine and paternity of Jesus Christ. Read them. Brother Christensen has done a marvelous job of coalescing all of these sources. If nothing else out of our communication touches you, I hope that this will. Can you not see that to accuse Brigham Young of being wrong is to deny that he knew who God was? That would mean that he was not receiving revelation from the correct source. Since Brigham Young was the founder of the whole Utah experience and the successor of Joseph Smith, that would mean that the whole era would be shrouded in false teachings, as that was one of the most common topics of his addresses and sermons. For thirty three years God entrusted His people to the direction and guidance of Brigham Young and gave him constant revelation. If he was wrong, then all of the Mormons in Utah were deceived. That would mean that all of the men that he called to the Apostleship were called to bear witness of a strange God. That would mean that he did not have the authority to lead the church out to Utah, or accept the leadership of the church in 1844. Can't you see that you can't have it both ways?

If Brigham Young was wrong, then he brought the children of Israel into disobedience for teaching them a false God. It plainly would make Brigham Young a liar, because he told us that Joseph taught these doctrines to him. If he was wrong in his knowledge and understanding of the true and living God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, then that would mean that all of his teachings and revelations would have come from a false source. That would make all of the temple ordinances performed during his administration and those of Presidents Taylor, Woodruff and Snow invalid, because those very doctrines were part of the instruction given to endowment recipients in the lecture at the veil, before they entered the Celestial room. When church apologists and revisionists reach back over 120 years and simply say, "he was wrong," they place themselves in a terrible predicament, as you all claim to be his successors, even though you do not believe him, obey his teachings or do his works. If Brigham Young was wrong, then the whole church is wrong. No one in the church today could have any authority—in fact you are fueling the Tanner's fire of accusations against you. If he was right, then maybe the whole church should redefine its position again. And maybe you should rethink yours.

Consider Isaiah 3:12 (Avraham Gileadi's translation)

As for my people, babes subject them; women oppress them.
O my people, your leaders mislead you, abolishing your traditional ways.
Of course, you could say that this does not apply to the church today; isn't that what people have always said? Or you could interpret that to mean that it was Brigham Young who misled the people of God and abolished their traditional ways. If so, then indeed no one who claims to receive any ordinances or authority from him will be exalted at the last day; that would include everyone in the whole church. If you would answer that Brigham Young is not one of the leaders who misleads Israel, then surely you would have to admit, by any degree of logic or fairness, that this scripture would have to refer to those people who, in any time, or in any dispensation, arrogate to themselves the authority to presume to abolish the ways of God and reject His holy prophets. As my Dad used to say, "you can't have it both ways." If Joseph Smith was a prophet, then why don't you accept him? If Brigham Young was a prophet, then by what right or authority do you exalt yourself to stand in judgment upon him and say, "he was wrong?"

I am not trying to lure you into "our fold" by advocating that you change your views on Brigham Young, Joseph Smith and the very identity of our Father and God. I am simply, honestly and humbly asking you to reexamine the attitude that would cause or prompt you to stand before any of God's children and say, "Well, Bro Brigham was wrong." When was he right? When was Joseph wrong? What times? What parts? Frankly, that spirit frightens me. Either the whole gospel fabric is true—or all of it is a tapestry of lies. No part is more integral or essential than the necessity that we come to know who our Father in Heaven is. Isn't that the whole purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ? To introduce us to the Father? Isn't that what Section 84:34-42 is all about?

I marvel that anyone who professes to be a Mormon would claim to believe that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were prophets, knowing that these men knew God, but would then deny themselves access to that same pattern or procedure and just simply say, "Well, he was wrong." Please reconsider your attitude. I know that the learned philosophers and sophists of the church have sought to bury this true doctrine and erect an identity more acceptable to the sectarian world. But hopefully, you would be able to study these things out for yourself. You claim to believe in the Prophet Joseph Smith. Maybe you should consider studying his writings and teachings instead Max Anderson's or Eldon Watson's.

I realize that this is a dangerous thing that I am asking you to do. I know that the doctrines and teachings of Joseph Smith are quite unpopular in the church today, and that the teachings of Brigham Young are associated with apostate doctrines. To reject the teachings of Joseph and Brigham would place you in much more comfortable position among your brethren, as you could then accept the teachings of the living prophets without qualms. Please consider, however, the messages of God's servants about those who will be sent strong delusions in the last days. Just to name a few, 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; and Isaiah 66:4,5 which I will offer here:

4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear; but they did evil before mine eye, and chose that in which I delighted not.
5. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, "Let the Lord be glorified:" but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

On that night that I spoke, I referred to us as being paranoid, and you inferred that this was because we were insecure in our position. Not hardly. We are, however, wary of receiving the same kind of treatment and persecution that Brother Musser, my uncle, my father and other members of the Priesthood endured in the 1940's and 50's. You could never know what that was like. Never. Although each of them willingly went to prison as a testimony of his commitment to fulfill and perpetuate the laws and ordinances of the gospel exactly as the Lord restored them through Joseph Smith, it was still very tragic for our families to have to endure. The sad thing was that it was the church leaders themselves who instigated and brought almost all of that persecution upon them. Perhaps I am wrong, but I sense that same spirit in your letter.

As prophesied in Isaiah 66:5 which I quoted before, it is not a new thing for those who obey the commandments of Jesus Christ to be persecuted by the presiding "church" officials. Paul related in Acts 24:14 and also in 2 Timothy, chapter 3:

12. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

As we know that persecution will come from those who deny Him, we have faith that He will claim us even though those who presided over the legal entity which bore His name have rejected, scorned and persecuted us. Yet, we will feel ourselves in good company as that is the same treatment received by Jeremiah, Lehi, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter, James, John, and Abinadi to name a few, from those who presided over the "church" in their day. Whose side do you wish to be on?

You offered your apologies for offending me in your last letter. I am not offended; but I am saddened that you would reject the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and deny the calling and testimony of Brigham Young. And I am sorrowful that you choose to attack the credibility, honor and integrity of the people that I love. My father was the most honorable, honest, saintly, Christ-like man I have ever met. I have total confidence in him, total confidence in his successor and in his predecessors. You suggest that we will not last in the heat of the day. Perhaps I will not because of my own weaknesses; rather than feeling to exalt ourselves because we have a knowledge and testimony of the fullness of the gospel, we are constantly humbled to recognize the significance of the covenants that we have entered. For those of us who do last in the heat of the day, it will only be through the grace of our Savior that we are saved, after all that we can do. Isn't that what Nephi, in 2 Nephi 25:23, tells us? But at least we will have made and entered into those covenants that the Savior has commanded us to fulfill.

Although every member of this work recognize and acknowledge his weaknesses, each of us strives to be the type of men that my father, my uncle, and Brother Musser were. Even though you have chosen not to respect them, they
stand as a beacon of hope to us, in that they have shown us through their examples that it is possible, notwithstanding our failings, to obtain God's promised blessings if we will live and obey all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Even though you have chosen not to honor and respect the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and have chosen to reject the testimony of Brigham Young, we hope to follow after them and several other wonderful men and women of our time and the previous century who dedicated their lives to the service of God and willingly sacrificed everything for Him. Many of them went to prison, and suffered more than you could ever know because of their testimony of the Prophet Joseph and their commitment to perpetuate his work here upon the earth. You see, Brian, we do not claim (as you infer that we do) to be any more worthy than those Saints in the 1880's who gave up everything in order to remain true to the commandments; but we, at least, are trying to do as they did.

Despite our doctrinal differences, I would still be willing to help you gain a correct insight into our perspectives. If you would be an objective historical researcher and receive what I tell you without argument, I will answer any question relative to our views that you would wish to ask. I would do my best to explain it to you from an historian's point of view. If, however, you would rather debate every point, then perhaps we should do that in front of your congregation, in your ward house, with your presiding authorities there. I would prefer, however, that you simply allow us to have our views, to follow our own consciences and to fulfill our covenants without further argument. All we have ever asked is that we be granted the same privilege by the church which they have always claimed for themselves:

We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may.

I do appreciate your efforts to have us examine our position again, more carefully and prayerfully. It has been a good experience for all of us.

Sincerely,

Vance L. Aldred
Samuel W. Taylor  
1954 STOCKBRIDGE AVE UE  
REDWOOD CITY, CALIF. 94063  
27 May 79

Mr J Max Anderson  
Publishers Press  
% Bookcraft  
164 S. 2300 South  
Salt Lake City Utah

Dear Sir,

I have your book, "The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact." Perhaps you know that I have published several books on the subject. My last three, "Nightfall at Nauvoo," "The Kingdom or Nothing," and "Rocky Mountain Empire" trace plural marriage both above-ground and underground from its inception until its final abandonment.

Our positions are so far apart that I am sure we have no common meeting ground, so I won't try to quibble. However, in deriding the entire story of the John Taylor revelation of September 1886, I wonder if you are aware of a talk delivered during conference, April 1978, by President Spencer W. Kimball? It was published in "The Ensign," May 1978, pp 45-48. The final paragraph is as follows:

"I know that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives," said John Taylor, my predecessor, "for I have seen him." I bear this testimony to you brethren in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Inasmuch as to my knowledge President John Taylor claimed to have been visited by Jesus Christ on only one occasion, the night of 26-27 September 1886, I wonder if you include President Kimball among those deluded by the story of events of that night?

Sincerely,

[Signature]
SPENCER W KIMBALL CONFIRMS JOHN TAYLOR

VISITATION BY JESUS CHRIST, 26-7 SEPT 1886.

My first information came from Ron Smith, formerly of our elders quorum presidency, who'd moved away, but who visited the early presidency meeting shortly after April conference, 1975.

He asked, "Say, Sam, when did President John Taylor see Jesus Christ?"

This, coming straight out of left field, boggled me. Ron said that President Spencer W Kimball had made the statement at conference, broadcast over network TV.

After thinking it over, I said, "The only time John Taylor made this claim was on the morning of 27 September 1886, at the time he wrote the disputed revelation of that date."

The "Church News" report of Kimball's talk omitted mention of John Taylor's visitation. However, the May 1975 "Ensign" quoted it. Here was official confirmation of the visitation which the establishment had taken such pains to reject.

Then in 1979 Max Anderson published his book, "The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact," in which he spends 157 pages demolishing the 1886 story. Quite obviously he didn't realize that Kimball had confirmed it.

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Incidentally, my spies report that during his research Max Anderson became convinced that the 1886 revelation was authentic. However, he was "persuaded" to publish his book debunking it. So much for his integrity.
Dear Brian,

I am a friend of Todd and Leslie's and have watched with keen interest your efforts to "re-claim" Leslie from, what must seem to you, the worst possible thing that could have happened to her. She and Todd feel deeply for you and your parents and have shed many tears and offered many prayers that you and your family might be comforted. Todd loves Leslie deeply and has felt very discouraged as her family have rejected him and misunderstood what he is doing. Really, if considered in a different light, which is difficult I know, we ought to be proud of Leslie for choosing and supporting a husband who is willing to sacrifice everything to obey what he feels God has commanded him to do. Living all the laws and ordinances of the gospel requires deep commitment and faith in the Lord whether authorized or not.

I have read every one of your letters. I attended your fireside and have pondered what you are saying very deeply. Recognizing the love you have for Leslie which you express by your commitment and efforts has touched my heart. Brian, I don't know if you will believe what I am about to say but I assure you it comes from the deepest parts of my heart. I, like Todd and Leslie and others, have shed tears and offered prayers in your behalf. Perhaps this will offend you but you must realize that you are welcome here and no-one resents what you are doing for Leslie.

The reason no-one resents what you are doing is because most of us came into this work by doing exactly what you are doing. The majority of the people in this group have come here from the Church. We love the Church and I personally have a deep and abiding love for it and its leaders. My testimony in its divinity has never wavered and I still teach people the basic principles of the Gospel and direct them to the Church. You see, brother Brian, the Gospel is true and the ways of God are far more encompassing than any of us realize. Has not the Lord told us this through his prophet Isaiah:

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:6-9)
I served in three Bishoprics and two Elder's Quorum presidencies. I have served in the temple and in other various assignments including a 27 month mission, six months of which I served as Assistant to the President. I loved every minute of my mission and I served God with every fiber of my being. I have sat in on Bishops courts, in regional representative meetings, associated with various general authorities, and participated in many leadership capacities. And I tell you with all soberness that the Church is true.

Their are men of God in it and this testimony has come to me through the clear and undeniable manifestations of the Holy Ghost. And, Brian, if you honestly believe that the manifestations of the Holy Ghost can be duplicated by the adversary than you have never experienced the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost represents the power of God whereby the truth of all things are made known. God does not trifle with us. He has promised (in more places than I can mention) "and by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." And further has he not said in language impossible to misunderstand:

... 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.

Brother Brian, when I contemplate the many times God has, in His mercy, opened up the eyes of my understanding—when He has poured light and intelligence into my mind and as my heart has burned within me with power while all the principles of the Gospel come together in clarity and precision and the scriptures unfold and enter my heart with force—I am amazed. Their have been times, my dear brother, when I felt as if I would be consumed.

Dear brother, you must realize by now that I value you very highly or I would not cast my pearls before you. I know that you are not swine but, rather, a son of God. I was introduced to the fullness of the everlasting Gospel through the scriptures and the Journal of Discourses. I obtained a copy of the Journals and read entire talks not just obscure quotes here and there. And I read with a hunger and a thirst for knowledge and further light and so that I could come to know the path God would have me pursue. I spent hundreds of hours in the B.Y.U. library pouring over everything I could find that pertained to the Gospel of the Son of God. One day I found a book written by B. Harvey Allred called A leaf in review. As I read it I was shocked but filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. The words of that man entered into my heart with force and though I resisted what he was saying I could not deny the power of the spirit which entered my heart.

I began studying everything I could about Fundamentalism. At first I only studied literature produced by members of the Church as I felt apostates would certainly
be biased. I was surprised to discover that, on the contrary, most of the
fundamentalist writers were true to their quotes and the members of the church
were the ones who took things out of context. Brian this is not what I wanted to
discover! I had faith that the things of God, the truth if you will, would prevail! I
found the four hidden revelations and read them with interest and skepticism. I
read the Lorin Woolsey statement and thought "no way!" I began to search for
evidence which would establish either the truth or falsity of that story. I studied
about the manifesto and familiarized myself with the events which led up to its
issuance. I found out about all the post manifesto plural marriages and then it
dawned on me that the manifesto is not a revelation. I found out that James E
Talmage had claimed celestial marriage was temple marriage and that plural
marriage was an incident never an essential. I knew that wasn't right from my
study of the journal of Discourses. I began to find contradictions which were more
than trivial and which could not be reconciled.

One thing led to another and I arrived at the point you keep laboring with. The
authority issue. I studied as if my eternal welfare depended upon it--as it did!
Every where I looked I found doctrinal contradiction and organizations all claiming
to have this all important authority. I knew their were men of God in the Church
and I also knew President Benson is a Prophet. But I didn't know what all the Keys
of the Priesthood were nor did I know how to recognize who God's anointed and
appointed servant was. I searched, as you have, for historical proof and found that
no matter which position you take be it for the church or any other claim to
authority it was and is utterly impossible to establish intellectually. As I studied it
out in my mind I found that I was utterly dependent upon a higher power for a
knowledge of the truth than all my studies could provide.

I, at length, found myself in the exact situation that the young Joseph Smith found
himself.

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?

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

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:

Brian, Vance is right "was Joseph Smith a prophet of God or was he not?" You see, the things of God are only known by the spirit of God and this is the testimony of Joseph Smith is it not?

I remember being confronted by a very determined born again Christian on my mission. He attacked everything I stood for and told me I was surely headed for hell. He had dozens of reasons why my beliefs were wrong. Joseph smith this . . . and Brigham Young that . . . and Spencer Kimball that and so on. Finally, I said "OK! Assuming that I am wrong and the teachings of the Church are false What's right?" He was stunned. He stood there with his mouth gaping and then said "Jesus Christ Crucified!" I looked at him, compassion entered my heart, and I realized that he truly did not know what he was doing. You see, Brian, I already knew by the manifestations of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ. This young man had no idea of the depth of my conviction nor did he comprehend what knowing Jesus Christ crucified meant in terms of commitment and personal change.

Brain, why can't there be more than the Church offers? Has God really made it impossible through his prophets for the willing to embrace all that the Prophet Joseph Smith restored? Are you or is the Church really threatened by people who believe in the true and living God and who only want to glorify Him by receiving and obeying all that He has to offer? I ask you what Nephi asked us all: "Why do you contend with one another, and teach with your learning and deny the Holy Ghost? Has the day of miracles ceased?" Do you really think that you can establish the Church's position by tearing down the fundamentalists position? Why can't God's Church be true as far it goes while at the same time the willing of God's people are being led by Him to higher light and truth--to higher plateaus, to higher ordinances, to higher laws, even unto kingdoms, principalities, powers, heights and depths, dominions etc.? Stop telling us what's wrong, Brian, and tell us something that's right. Was Joseph Smith a prophet of God or was he not? Does the Church embrace all that he restored? Do you? That's what I would like to know.

With all the love I possess I tell you, Brian, that God's plan is designed such that all who are willing may receive as much as they are willing to receive and rise as high as they will--if they will. God is not a respecter of persons. God does not change neither doth he vary from that which he hath said. His laws are irrevocable. He is a God of truth and cannot lie and has he not said "I the lord am bound when ye do what I say, but if ye do not what I say ye have no promise." Brian, I know, as Joseph Smith knew, that God gives to those who ask. He reveals to those who seek, and honors those who knock with his spirit and power.

May God Bless you in your quest.

Bill Black
Dear Brian,

5/5/91

Thank you for your letter. I enjoy the work you are doing very much. When last I wrote to you I did feel compassion and the spirit of love and truth. As I write to you today I hope that I may be guided by this same spirit of love and truth. I do not want to "teach with my learning and deny the Holy Ghost." I want you to know that the things of God cannot be proven "intellectually" but are only known by the spirit of God. There is a scripture which reads:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given unto us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; . . .

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

Brigham Young made the point I want to make to you back in 1876. He said:

I have proven to my satisfaction, according to the best knowledge I can gather, that man can be deceived by the sight of the natural eye, he can be deceived by the hearing of the ear, and by the touch of the hand; that he can be deceived in all of what are called the natural senses.

But there is one thing in which he cannot be deceived. What is that? It is the operations of the Holy Ghost, the spirit and power of God upon the creature (Journal of Discourses 18:230).

It may be interesting for you to know that my university background is political philosophy with an emphasis in Logic. I have read the philosophers and studied the science of reasoning. I have struggled along with Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Hume, Mill, Locke and many others as they have argued and attempted to derive ultimate truth. I have struggled with the ideas of the Pythagoreans, the sophists, the religionists and the relativists and there is one thing I know--you cannot deduce "reality" through argument. This I will try to explain.

I. The resources of man's wisdom are insufficient to derive reality.

In your letter you claim to have arrived at "absolute reality" concerning the events of September 1886. You consider all fundamentalists as ignorant of this "reality" and that they are "mutually committed to their doctrine, irrespective of the truthfulness of it." Though you refuse to discuss "doctrine;" you feel justified in making such assertions because (though you may not realize it) you feel your arguments are "infallible." Infallible means "incapable of error" or "not liable to mislead, deceive, or disappoint." In other words, you feel that your conclusions follow demonstratively in a manner which is irrefutable or impeccable. This is quite an accomplishment for you since no philosopher or professional historian has ever been able to construct an infallible argument which establishes "reality." Even in the sciences, no honest professional claims to have constructed a perfect argument which proves irrefutably the ultimate "truth." Professionals from every field of endeavor acknowledge the "fallibility" of man's reasoning. This is why the great men of science, history, mathematics, philosophy, etc., claim only to be setting forth their "best opinions." The value of their opinions lies in their ability to describe phenomena without "self-contradiction."
As soon as one of these professionals set forth their "opinion" as "absolute fact" they are assuming "infallibility." Unfortunately, for mankind, all human beings are fallible and susceptible to personal bias and emotional prejudice. Not only this, but man's intellectual propensity is finite and even the very best in "intellectual propensity" is limited to finite "man made" modes of reasoning. For the Logician and the Mathematician both consistency and completeness represent the viability of any system of reasoning. In logical systems, scientific theory, number theory, etc... consistency means--given the rules and definitions within the system--no contradiction is obtainable. Completeness means--given the rules and definitions within the system--that every theorem in the system is provable or derivative. If either the consistency or the completeness of any given system fails the entire system fails. No theoretical model, not even mathematics, is 100% free of inconsistency or incompleteness. The famous mathematician Godel showed that "in any system rich enough to contain elementary arithmetic, there were always theorems that can neither be proven nor disproven." Godel went on to demonstrate that "no logical system can ever prove that it itself is a perfect system in the sense that it may not contain concealed self-contradiction...This means that the human intelligence can never be sure of itself, it is not...capable of unlimited perfectibility, as is so often fondly imagined (Scientific Monthly 79 pg.35-36). Since no system of reasoning is "infallible" and since all men's conclusions are dependent upon "fallible" systems of reasoning, an assumption of infallibility is "self-contradictory." In other words, despite the tremendous value of our "man made" modes of reasoning, inconsistency or incompleteness inherent within them render them incapable of deriving "ultimate reality."

The "mode of reasoning" to which you necessarily subscribe to establish your reality is logic. You are making assertions based upon premises which you call evidence. Your assumption is that both your premises are true and your "mode of reasoning" is infallible. Your assumption, however, is incorrect for neither your mode of reasoning is infallible nor are your premises verifiable true. You see, the very system of deduction itself requires that you "assume" the existence or truth of whatever is asserted even if the thing being asserted is not true or is nonexistent. This fact reveals one of the fatal weaknesses in our system of logic. In order for the deductive system to make sense the assertions must be "assumed" true or to exist. And if one "assumes" the existence of something that does not exist but does so in a logically legal way then one can construct proofs of validity that assert things about nonexistent things. Thus, it is possible to create valid arguments that assert untruth. Therefore, basing "reality" upon deduction or logic is like trusting your financial calculations to a calculator that tells you two plus two equals four, while at the same time, is capable of telling you that two plus two does not equal four. This is one reason why Webster defines "reality" as "something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily."

it is far beyond the scope of this short letter to demonstrate why the resources of logic are insufficient to derive reality. But Hugh Nibley, after quoting Origen, Augustine, and Godel, summarized the point in his article The Prophets And The Open Mind.

...Until the final returns are in, no one is in a position to make final pronouncements, and as long as science continues to progress, the final returns will remain at the other end of a future of wonders and surprizes. In the world of things, we must forever keep an open mind, because we simply don't know the answers. But we are not claiming that because science does not have the ultimate answers, religion does have them. What we do claim is that the words of the prophets cannot be held to the tentative and defective tests that men have devised for them. Science, philosophy, and common sense all have a right to their day in court. But the last word does not lie with them. Every time men in their wisdom have come forth with the last word, other words have promptly followed. The last word is a testimony of the gospel that comes only by revelation (The world and the Prophets pg. 132-134).
II. Assuming, on the contrary, that our system of logic is infallible your arguments still do not derive reality.

You say that since you have read Samuel Bateman's journal and that "most" fundamentalists have not, you have seen more "evidence" than they have. All the materials you have seen "lack any evidence" that the 1886 ordinations ever occurred. Therefore, reality is that no 1886 ordinations ever occurred. This is just like saying "I have seen more cats than you have. All the cats I've seen are black. Therefore, reality is that all cats are black." Can you see the problem with your reasoning? You are committing "hasty generalization." In logic there is a great difference between some or most and all.

A more fundamental problem with your reasoning, however, is your inability to distinguish between a "deductive" and an "inductive" argument. Deductive arguments are valid (structurally correct) and sound (true) if and only if both the premises are verifiabley true and the conclusion follows demonstratively. Inductive arguments, on the other hand, "are not designed to demonstrate the 'truth' of their conclusions as following from their premises, but are intended merely to support their conclusions as probable, or probably true" (Copi, *Intro to Logic* pg.377). Historical presentations are inductive arguments in the truest sense of the word. Therefore they cannot derive "absolute reality." For example; If you have a barrel of beans and you want to determine whether they are all black then you have to physically see all the beans. If physically seeing all the beans is impractical or impossible you can argue inductively and derive a good "approximation." This is true because no matter how careful you are to take a random and representative sample of the beans you cannot be 100% certain that somewhere in the barrel there is, in reality, a white bean.

In other words, have you seen all the evidence? Considering the nature of the 1886 event will you ever be able to see all the evidence? If you do not have all the evidence then the best you can conclude is: "Based on the evidence I've seen, and "assuming" there is no other evidence to the contrary, it would appear to me that the 1886 ordinations probably never occurred." This is a far cry from reality, as you put it. You see, Brian, your "reality" is nothing more than your "historical point of view." No matter how good you are at interpreting history your interpretation is still only an interpretation. Limitations inherent in the very task of presenting history render such presentations merely "historical opinions". Hugh Nibley, an historian of no small skill, makes a good point in an article he published titled The Way of The Church. I think it equally applies to our situation today.

The only completely fair presentation of church history would be a full display of all known evidence laid out before the public in chronological order--all the written stuff: histories, letters, sermons, tomes of philosophy, all the artifacts, ruins, and inscriptions, all the traditions, rituals, liturgies, and legends would have to be there, without any attempt on the part of the custodian to interpret or control. But such a corpus would be all but useless, an impenetrable jungle of stuff beyond the capacity of any reader. (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg 215).

Re-creating reality from historical data is impossible. The very best any historian can do is approximate reality. An honest historian is limited to the evidence that he can find and then he must "interpret" it. Again Nibley writes:

To begin with, anyone who writes church history has the inescapable and dangerous obligation of deciding somehow just what evidence shall be made available and what shall not; obviously, he cannot include it all. Now anyone who takes it upon himself to withhold evidence is actually determining what the reader's
idea of church history is going to be--he is controlling the past (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg. 215).

Even if all the evidence is available an historian's presentation cannot include it all. Where there is a lack of evidence the historian is forced to fill in with his own conjecture. Again, inherent in its very nature, an historical presentation is an interpretation. It is here, in the "interpretation," that "personal bias" reveals itself, especially when one's religious views are involved. In fact, "personal bias" is apparent so often in historical presentations that the professionals have accepted, as a general principle, "a margin of error" which they call "historical bias." No honest historian claims that his presentations establish "reality." Nibley, in his usual fashion, brings out how "the scholars when they think they are being most sound, most objective, and most scientific in their construction of church history, are actually doing little more than faithfully reflecting their own background and conditioning" (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg. 214).

Nibley goes on to show that even if this is not enough to demonstrate the tentative nature of "historical reality," as you call it, forgery and deliberate falsification is.

... the business of control does not end with the selecting of evidence. Once our texts have been chosen for presentation, we discover that they are all without exception in an imperfect and fragmentary state, marred by scribal slips, emendations, interpolations, and deletions. ... careless, or (what is far more dangerous) careful and deliberate scribes have been ... altering the texts. . . . (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg 216).

Historical data can be fabricated, altered, destroyed, and is often misconstrued and mis-reported. Do you remember the stir Mark Hoffeman made with his forgeries? How can you be so certain that the data you have seen represents all there is to see and how can you place so much credence upon what you have seen so as to conclude "reality?" By your own admission much of what you have seen is "secondary" and "unclear whether it ever really occurred."

Now assuming again, for argument's sake, that our system of logic is infallible and that you have all the evidence and that the integrity of all the evidence is infallible and that your interpretation is completely free of historical bias; you can not conclude that something never occurred just because it is never mentioned. Your argument that "because there is no evidence to support fundamentalist claims of the 1886 ordinations therefore they never occurred" is an Argumentum ad Ignorantiam (argument from ignorance or false because it has not been proven true). This is a common fallacy. For example: I have seen all the beans in the barrel. All the beans I have seen are black. Therefore, reality is that there never has been a white bean in the barrel. Can you see the fallacy? A lack of evidence is not evidence.

III. Basing reality upon supposed historical evidence while ignoring doctrine is "avoiding the hard questions."

Your question "If the Lorin C. Woolly 1886 ordinations never occurred, are you still justified before the Lord?" is very much like the classic complex question "Have you stopped beating on your wife yet?" It cleverly avoids a very important question by asking a less important one on the assumption that the other has already been answered. Your underlying argument is; "Since my evidence is infallible and establishes beyond dispute that the 1886 ordinations never occurred, there is no authority outside the church. Therefore, a discussion of the gospel is irrelevant and if you bring up the gospel you are "avoiding the hard questions." Brian, notwithstanding the value of historical analysis with its inherent limitations, you cannot base "reality" upon historical evidence alone and at the same time ignore doctrine. To do so is simply to "avoid the hard questions." Nibley points out that such an appeal to keep historical fact and true
doctrine separate is nothing more than "a device for placing one's particular beliefs beyond the reach of objective investigation" (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg. 212).

It is apparent, however, that you do not believe there is sufficient proof to establish your position. This is evidenced in another fallacy you continue to commit. Since the available evidence does not prove or disprove the 1886 ordinations you resort to character assassination or "arguments against the man." You think that if you can discredit Lorin Woolly by producing all kinds of incriminating evidence that he was a liar or a nut case you will prove the 1886 ordinations never occurred. Brian, "discrediting the witness," as lawyers put it, is the oldest anti-mormon trick in the book. Have you never heard that "Joe" Smith was a liar and a story teller, a gold digger and a wine bibber? Did not the Saviour receive similar treatment?

Further, while you admit and apologize for inconsistency among current Church leader's teachings and statements you use the inconsistencies among various "priesthood" leader's statements and teachings as definitive proof that they cannot be true "prophets." This kind of arguing is self-condemning. Inconsistency or contradiction among "church" brethren or "priesthood" brethren demonstrates that there is sufficient cause to seek light and knowledge for ourselves through personal revelation, does it not?

With regard to your view of "personal revelation." Since when has the Lord's injunction to "study it out in your mind" meant search for proof through every obscure source you can possibly find, be careful not to miss anything, and "then ask me if it be right?" Did you check Joseph Smith's claims for "historical accuracy?" Did you study the five known versions of the first vision which clearly contradict one another and have an evolutionary flavor to them before you prayed to know if the Book of Mormon is true? Or did you simply "fall on your knees immediately and ask God?" Perhaps you merely "read the Book of Mormon and then prayed to know?" Or perhaps you "studied it out in your mind" and checked all Book of Mormon claims comparing and contrasting various usage of Biblical passages to the original Hebrew texts along with other scripture texts of ancient date. Did you research every available archaeological evidence and investigate native South American mythology and religious tradition to be sure there was evidence that Joseph's claims were "accurate?" Since there is no verifiable or definitive evidence to prove or disprove Book of Mormon claims, according to your reasoning, the events within the Book must be false. Right? Brian, if your interpretation of "study it out in your mind" is correct then only historians and scholars can have testimonies.

IV. Without the Spirit of God you cannot comprehend the things of God! If you argue without that spirit you will be lost in a never ending game of intellectual volleyball which will lead you no where. You will be, as the scripture states, "ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Do you really think you can prove that the Church is true? Do you think anyone can prove it false? Can you prove that the 1886 visitation and ordinations never occurred? Not any more than you can prove the first vision never occurred. Are you really willing to stake your salvation upon hearsay or on your own historical point of view? Do you agree that it is a possibility that historical documents can be forged, altered, destroyed, construed and misconstrued? Even if they are preserved completely undisturbed can you be absolutely certain that they are complete and representative of reality and that your interpretation is infallible? A journal is only one man's opinion and very often hardly that. Do you write everything that happens to you along with every detail in such a way that future readers will completely understand reality as it existed at the time you interpreted your own experience? What about things too sacred to write? What about things you are commanded by the Lord not to write?

The prophet Joseph Smith taught us that even the Holy Bible has been tampered with and that it is impossible to know what is true and what is not true except through the spirit of God.
Perhaps what you are really saying is that the spirit of God has revealed to you that your source material is infallible and that your interpretation of it is correct. If you are saying this then you are in the same position as any fundamentalist. You are forced to acknowledge the miraculous power of God as the ultimate source of your truth.

My basic point is this: As long as we continue to "contend" with one another and "teach with our learning" we will never come to a knowledge of the truth. Consider the following:

"Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—Unto what were ye ordained? To teach my gospel by the Spirit of truth . . . or some other way?" (D&C 50: 13-17)

And the spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the spirit ye shall not teach.

...For, behold, the Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son (D&C 42:14-17).

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:5)

Do your supposed arguments and evidences fit the above criteria?

An illustration may be helpful. Fundamentalists claim that Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith appeared to John Taylor in 1886 and instructed him to make provision to preserve the "higher" principles of the Gospel outside the boundaries of the corporate Church if necessary. You realize that this event is the basis for all "fundamentalist claims to authority" and look us square in the eyes and say "Prove it." We look you back in the eyes and say "We can't." You then ask us "If you can't prove it then how do you know it?" And the only thing we can say is "Through the miraculous power of God." When we respond with such a ridiculous answer you immediately accuse us of being deluded by some strange burnings or vain imaginations and tell us that you can prove beyond doubt that the events of 1886 never occurred and then ask "How do you explain that?" Again we say "We can't." And you ask "Then how come you still believe that which I can prove false?" And again our only response is "Because we know by the manifestations of the Holy Ghost that they are true regardless of your 'proof.'" And so you conclude: "these fundamentalists are amazing; they believe in fairy tales that have no basis in intellectual fact with so much conviction they are willing to risk the penalties of breaking the laws of men to obey the hardest laws of God and are willing sacrifice all that they have (i.e. the Church, their families in the Church, their good name among men, their professions, etc...) and no matter what I present they remain steadfast and sure. Truly (you continue) these are the most deluded people I have ever run across, they obviously have never 'studied it out in their minds'."

It reminds me of an interesting exchange between Amulek and a man named Zeezrom. Alma and Amulek, as you will recall, were preaching the gospel to the people of Ammonihah when the leading lawyers confronted them. The most skilful of the lawyers was Zeezrom and it was he that took the lead. Zeezrom said to Amulek "Will ye answer the questions which I shall put to you?" Amulek responded "Yea, if it be according to the Spirit of the Lord, which is in me; for I shall say nothing which is contrary to the Spirit of the Lord." A series of questions ensued from Zeezrom one of which was:

...Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And Amulek said; Yea there is a true and living God.

...Now Zeezrom said unto him again; How knowest thou these things? And he (Amulek) said: An angel hath made them known unto me.
In other words, Brian, Zeezrom wanted proof but not so he would believe but so he might catch Amulek in a snare. Zeezrom knew Amulek could not prove his claim. How do you prove that "an angel of the Lord hath made them known?" There is only one way such things are proven and that is by and through the miraculous power of God. For the faithful such proof gives them conviction to sacrifice all things for Christ's sake. For the faithless such proof condemns them unless they repent.

Fortunately, Zeezrom eventually did recognize the miraculous power of God and repented. But another Book of Mormon character did not. Korihor sought opportunity to debate with Alma because he knew Alma's position could not be "proven." Consider Alma's testimony:

...I am called to speak after this manner...yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers...And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.

And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God (Alma 5:44-47).

Again, how do you prove that "the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit?" Korihor, by contrast, asked the people:

O ye that are bound down under a foolish tradition and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things?...Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold they are foolish traditions of your fathers.

How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see;...it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

...And it came to pass that the high priest said unto him: Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord?...Why do ye speak against all the prophecies of the Holy Prophets?

...And Korihor said unto him: Because I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers, and because I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance...who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries etc... (Alma 30)
Korihor is basically telling the high priest that he is a cultist! He is also arguing from ignorance (Argumentum ad Ignorantiam). Apparently his fallacious argument had some influence with the people but not with Alma. Alma turned the table on Korihor and asked:

...what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only.

Behold, ...ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you: but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry about you, working devices that he may destroy the children of God

And now Korihor said unto Alma: If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then I will be convinced of the truth of thy Words.

...And now it came to pass that Alma said unto him: Behold I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart, yea, that ye will resist the spirit of truth, that thy soul may be destroyed (Alma 30).

And you know the rest of the story. Korihor got his proof but did it help him? I think not.

While reading the Book of Mormon a few years ago I recognized that one major consistent or recurring theme throughout was that from Lehi to Moroni all those who gained eternal life were led to it by the miraculous power of God. Every story seems to portray exactly what happens to those who subscribe to the miraculous power of God and what happens to those who do not. Interestingly, all the respective characters be they faithful or faithless demonstrate common characteristics. For example, those who are faithful are always considered by the faithless as "deluded" or "deceived" as in the case of Laman and Lemuel who constantly accused both Nephi and their father as "visionary" and "led away by the vain and foolish imaginations of their hearts." Further, the faithless very often take offence at, mock, and deride the proclamations of the faithful and they almost always seek their lives. This rejection is always precipitated by the unreal, superstitious, and unfounded claims of the faithful which, to the faithless, clearly lack even basic common sense. The faithless are moved to such anger so as to seek the faithful's blood not because the faithful's claims are "unfounded" but because their "unfounded" claims enter with force into the hearts of the faithless. Truth "pierces to the very center." The ensuing persecution by the faithless often serves as a catalyst to the faithful in their faithfulness. The faithful increase their reliance upon God and are led, by His miraculous power, out of danger, through dark and dreary wildernesses and into "lands of promise."

When once exposed to the miraculous power of God the faithful find themselves in a precarious predicament. None of the faithless believe or understand the miraculous experiences of the faithful yet the faithful cannot deny that which they know beyond dispute and which they can only attribute to the miraculous power of God. As the faithful "speak by the power of the Holy Ghost" their message is carried forth into the hearts of the children of men, but, the faithless resist the "spirit of truth" and reject their claims. The faithless resort to all manner of subterfuge and rationalization even if such subterfuge is self contradictory and totally void of any proper reasoning. If, and as soon as, the faithful resort to argument, or "some other way," to exonerate their position they lose the miraculous power of God and the faithless have won. The only hope the faithful have for exoneration is if they can communicate by means of God's miraculous power with those who, unlike the faithless, have "ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that feel and know" the voice of God. Only those who recognize the miraculous power of God, which recognition is in itself a demonstration of God's miraculous power, can comprehend the position of the faithful. All else are left in the dark. And so we have the faithful who exhort others to be faithful because
they know things they cannot prove and we have the faithless who demand proof before they will be faithful and who, without conscience, deny the miraculous power of God.

Lehi, being weighed down by the spirit of God and by the words of Jeremiah and others of the "self proclaimed" prophets, fell down before God and in the depths of his soul pled for understanding. As the Holy Ghost opened up the visions of eternity to his mind his heart was overpowered and he realized that to gain eternal life he had to follow the directing influence of the Holy Spirit or perish. The instant Lehi tried to convey the message he had received by miraculous means to others he was violently rejected. Even his own children held him and his "vain imaginations" in derision and contempt. They considered him deluded precisely because his claims were unfounded, unbelievable, and unprovable. They wanted to kill him because his message "pierced their hearts."

The weight of Lehi's understanding was no easy burden. Despite the love he had for his people and his brethren who were "elders in the Church" he knew and was sure that salvation can only be obtained by hearkening to the words of Christ. Eternal life is not obtained by being a good church member, or by being a good citizen, or by following the precepts of men. Eternal life (God's Life) is only obtained by becoming as a little child and submitting to the will of God as he directs every step of your journey by His miraculous power.

Alma, in recounting Lehi's journey to the promised land, compared the Liahona, (which interpreted means a compass) to the words of Christ. Alma said that by small and miraculous means God leads the willing back into his presence. He also said "...behold, it is as easy to give heed to the words of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land."(Alma 37:44)

Moroni promised that if a person would contemplate "the miraculous power of God" which He mercifully bestows upon all those who seek him with real intent, a sincere heart, and with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that if a person would ask in humble prayer they too would experience this miracle. And the whole point of Lehi's dream is that by clinging to the iron rod (which is the word of God or this miraculous power of which I am speaking) one can, despite the "mists of thick darkness," lay hold of every gift of God even eternal life (See also 2 Neph 31-33).

In this last dispensation the path back into the presence of God is no different than in any other dispensation. The Prophet Joseph Smith sealed this testimony with his precious blood. He, like every person who has ever sought to know the things of God, was faced with contradiction impossible to reconcile. He realized that if he remained dependent upon the knowledge of men or their arguments for a knowledge of the truth he would never obtain it. Every person who seeks salvation will eventually find themselves in the exact situation that the young Joseph Smith found himself. I know I sent these words to you in my previous letter but I implore you to look again--very carefully--at what the prophet is saying.

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?

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

The prophet Joseph's life was as nearly a perfect example of one being led by the miraculous power of God as any ever recorded in Holy writ. I believe this fact to be the very essence of his testament. He told us in language impossible to misunderstand; "It is the first principle of revealed religion to know for a certainty the character of God, . . . that a man may converse with him as one man converses with another." It is the "first principle" because no man can embrace the fullness of the gospel until he knows by personal experience how to recognize the "miraculous power of God." And, paradoxically, the only way to recognize the "miraculous power of God" is by and through the "miraculous power of God." It takes a miracle to know a miracle! The Lord himself has said:

But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifieth unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils (D&C 46:7).

Without the miraculous power of God there is no salvation. The Saviour told the Prophet that the abomination which he abhorred was that all the religions on earth "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." President Bensen told us that the whole church was under condemnation and would remain under condemnation unless we repented and remembered the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon (Conference May 1986). What does the Book of Mormon say?

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

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 foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

. . . 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 to 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.

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 (2 Ne. 28: 26-31; see also Mormon chapter 8 & 9).

A few questions for you to contemplate: How did Lehi prove to his peers that he had seen the pillar of fire? (See 1 Nephi 10:17) How did Nephi prove to his unbelieving brothers that he had been commanded by God to build a ship? How much sense do you think it made to Laman
and Lemuel when Nephi explained the reason God commanded him to build the ship was so they could cross the ocean? Do you think Laman and Lemuel honored Nephi because he could produce intellectual evidence that it was so? (See 1 Nephi Chapter 17)

How did Jesus prove he had authority? (See Matthew Chapter 7 Inspired Version) If the "reality" of his authority was dependent upon a "smooth and identifiable succession of ordination" why did none of the "current authorities" recognize him as the Son of God? How did Peter know Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, when the Saviour asked him "Whom do ye say that I am?" (See Matthew 16:15-17) How did Joseph Smith prove the first vision or that Peter, James, and John had given him authority? How did the saints know that Brigham Young was the "Authorized" successor of Joseph? How do you prove that the Book of Mormon is true? How do you prove that there is a "True and Living God?"

V. If you are sincere about "coming to a knowledge of the truth," as you say you are, you must realize by now that it can only come through the Holy Ghost.

Brian, I have not intended to offend you. You argue that since everyone is receiving "burnings" of their respective doctrines, authority, and priesthood leaders that all the "burnings" cannot be coming from the same source. You claim to have received a "witness" and you justify your witness as the only true witness because, as you say, "most fundamentalists have not studied it out" as properly as you have. You are right when you say "I can't explain where all the burnings come from" perhaps not even your own. The manifestations of the Holy Ghost are the means through which God communicates with his children. When you have experienced them you know their source. The power of the Holy Ghost is undeniable and unlike any other "burning." It is not difficult for those familiar with the workings of the Holy Spirit to discern truth from error. For those who are not familiar, the world is a frightening place. I agree with you that "studying it out" is a key factor but studying what? My point is this: If you are searching for truth then search truth! Consider again what Brigham Young said:

I have proven to my satisfaction, according to the best knowledge I can gather, that man can be deceived by the sight of the natural eye, he can be deceived by the hearing of the ear, and by the touch of the hand; that he can be deceived in all of what are called the natural senses.

But there is one thing in which he cannot be deceived. What is that? It is the operations of the Holy Ghost, the spirit and power of God upon the creature (Journal of Discourses 18:230).

VI. Some doctrinal points worthy of discussion

I would enjoy talking Authority with you since I totally agree that it is the central issue. We agree that one must have access to proper authority before one can enter into plural or any marriage that will endure into the eternities. The question, from a gospel standpoint is; "how does one recognize true messengers or God's authorized servants?" Is it by "a smooth, uninterrupted, and easily identifiable line of ordination" or is it as the Saviour said "by their fruits?" What are the "fruits" spoken of? Another good question worthy of discussion is: "Can a person enter into the highest degree of the celestial kingdom without living all the laws and receiving all the ordinances pertaining to that degree of exaltation? Additionally, I would enjoy your views on the following: "Can a perfectly just God who is not a respecter of persons alter his requirements for entrance into the highest degree from one generation to the next and remain just? What do the scriptures say? Explain and analyze the following:

There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated.
And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

Can God change his laws? Can prophets change God’s requirements for exaltation?

What about D&C 58:30-33 which states;

Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and not fulfilled?

I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for His promises are not fulfilled . .

Can a man pass on the Melchizedek priesthood if he himself has not received it? Would the Melchizedek priesthood be lost from the earth if for an entire generation no one who had it was allowed to pass it on before they died? Must we have all the "keys" upon the earth when the winding up scene occurs? If, as you say, there is no authority to perform higher ordinances in the Church today are we going to have another "restoration of all things" for yet another "last time?" What is "authority" as defined by D&C 121?

VII. In closing, you ask me not to be "selective to accept Joseph Smith and reject those who came after." I ask you in all solemnity don't be selective to accept the living prophets and reject Joseph Smith.

I can testify to you that the faithful do believe all God has revealed, all that he does now reveal and that God will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But I perceive an inability on your part to receive all that God has revealed through Joseph Smith. This may be a hard saying but a more accurate rendition of the Ninth Article of Faith from your viewpoint would be "We believe some of what God has revealed, that God can change what he has revealed even if the change contradicts what has previously been revealed, and that God will yet change, alter, or otherwise disregard many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Joseph Smith said:

... we never can comprehend the things of God and of heaven, but by revelation. We may spiritualize and express opinions to all eternity; but that is no authority (TPJS 292).

I cannot deny that which has been given me through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost. The whole experience fills my soul with wonder and amazement. I do not expect you to comprehend or believe that which has been given me. If I had not experienced what I have I wouldn't believe it either. Who am I that I can withstand God and deny the Holy Ghost?

I apologize that this letter is so long. I did not intend for it to be. Please continue to research and correspond with Vance as you have been. The dialogue is very interesting. I hope both of you will be as objective as you can be and bring to light as much history as you can. I feel, however, as valuable as it is, that it is futile to believe that such research can result in "absolute reality." I would like to hear from you if you have time. If you do not I will understand.

Sincerely

[Signature]
Dear Brian,

5/5/91

Thank you for your letter. I enjoy the work you are doing very much. When last I wrote to you I did feel compassion and the spirit of love and truth. As I write to you today I hope that I may be guided by this same spirit of love and truth. I do not want to "teach with my learning and deny the Holy Ghost." I want you to know that the things of God cannot be proven "intellectually" but are only known by the spirit of God. There is a scripture which reads:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given unto us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; ...;

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

Brigham Young made the point I want to make to you back in 1876. He said:

I have proven to my satisfaction, according to the best knowledge I can gather, that man can be deceived by the sight of the natural eye, he can be deceived by the hearing of the ear, and by the touch of the hand, that he can be deceived in all of what are called the natural senses.

But there is one thing in which he cannot be deceived. What is that? It is the operations of the Holy Ghost, the spirit and power of God upon the creature (Journal of Discourses 18:230).

It may be interesting for you to know that my university background is political philosophy with an emphasis in Logic. I have read the philosophers and studied the science of reasoning. I have struggled along with Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Hume, Mill, Locke and many others as they have argued and attempted to derive ultimate truth. I have struggled with the ideas of the Pythagoreans, the sophists, the religionists and the relativists and there is one thing I know--you cannot deduce "reality" through argument. This I will try to explain.

I. The resources of man's wisdom are insufficient to derive reality.

In your letter you claim to have arrived at "absolute reality" concerning the events of September 1886. You consider all fundamentalists as ignorant of this "reality" and that they are "mutually committed to their doctrine, irrespective of the truthfulness of it." Though you refuse to discuss "doctrine" you feel justified in making such assertions because (though you may not realize it) you feel your arguments are "infallible." Infallible means "incapable of error" or "not liable to mislead, deceive, or disappoint." In other words, you feel that your conclusions follow demonstratively in a manner which is irrefutable or impeccable. This is quite an accomplishment for you since no philosopher or professional historian has ever been able to construct an infallible argument which establishes "reality." Even in the sciences, no honest professional claims to have constructed a perfect argument which "proves" the ultimate "truth." Professionals from every field of endeavor acknowledge the "fallibility" of man's reasoning. This is why the great men of science, history, mathematics, philosophy, etc., claim only to be setting forth their "best opinions." The value of their opinions lies in their ability to describe phenomena without "self-contradiction."
As soon as one of these professionals set forth their "opinion" as an absolute fact, they are assuming infallibility. Unfortunately, for mankind, all human beings are fallible and susceptible to personal bias and emotional prejudice. Not only this, but man's intellectual propensity is finite and even the very best in "intellectual propensity" is limited to finite "man made" modes of reasoning. For the Logician and the Mathematician both consistency and completeness represent the viability of any system of reasoning. In logical systems, scientific theory, number theory, etc. consistency means--given the rules and definitions within the system--no contradiction is obtainable. Completeness means--given the rules and definitions within the system--that every theorem in the system is provable or derivative. If either the consistency or the completeness of any given system fails the entire system fails. No theoretical model, not even mathematics, is 100% free of inconsistency or incompleteness. The famous mathematician Godel showed that "in any system rich enough to contain elementary arithmetic, there were always theorems that can neither be proven nor disproven." Godel went on to demonstrate that "no logical system can ever prove that it itself is a perfect system in the sense that it may not contain concealed self-contradiction. . . . This means that the human intelligence can never be sure of itself; it is not capable of unlimited perfectibility, as is so often fondly imagined (Scientific Monthly 79 pg. 35-36). Since no system of reasoning is infallible and since all men's conclusions are dependent upon "fallible" systems of reasoning, an assumption of infallibility is self-contradictory. In other words, despite the tremendous value of our "man made" modes of reasoning, inconsistency or incompleteness inherent within them render them incapable of deriving ultimate reality."

The "mode of reasoning" to which you necessarily subscribe to establish your reality is logic. You are making assertions based upon premises which you call evidence. Your assumption is that both your premises are true and your "mode of reasoning" is infallible. Your assumption, however, is incorrect for neither your mode of reasoning is infallible nor are your premises verifiably true. You see, the very system of deduction itself requires that you "assume" the existence or truth of whatever is asserted even if the thing being asserted is not true or is nonexistent. This fact reveals one of the fatal weaknesses in our system of logic. In order for the deductive system to make sense the assertions must be "assumed" true or to exist. And if one "assumes" the existence of something that does not exist but does so in a logically legal way then one can construct proofs of validity that assert things about nonexistent things. Thus, it is possible to create valid arguments that assert untruth. Therefore, basing "reality" upon deduction or logic is like trusting your financial calculations to a calculator that tells you two plus two equals four, while at the same time, is capable of telling you that two plus two does not equal four. This is one reason why Webster defines "reality" as "something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily."

It is far beyond the scope of this short letter to demonstrate why the resources of logic are insufficient to derive reality. But Hugh Nibley, after quoting Origon, Augustine, and Godel, summarized the point in his article The Prophets And The Open Mind.

. . . Until the final returns are in, no one is in a position to make final pronouncements, and as long as science continues to progress, the final returns will remain at the other end of a future of wonders and surprises. In the world of things, we must forever keep an open mind, because we simply don't know the answers. But we are not claiming that because science does not have the ultimate answers, religion does have them. What we do claim is that the words of the prophets cannot be held to the tentative and defective tests that men have devised for them. Science, philosophy, and common sense all have a right to their day in court. But the last word does not lie with them. Every time men in their wisdom have come forth with the last word, other words have promptly followed. The last word is a testimony of the gospel that comes only by revelation (The world and the Prophets pg. 132-134).
II. Assuming, on the contrary, that our system of logic is infallible your arguments still do not derive reality.

You say that since you have read Samuel Bateman's journal and that "most" fundamentalists have not, you have seen more "evidence" than they have. All the materials you have seen "lack any evidence" that the 1886 ordinations ever occurred. Therefore, reality is that no 1886 ordinations ever occurred. This is just like saying "I have seen more cats than you have. All the cats I've seen are black. Therefore, reality is that all cats are black." Can you see the problem with your reasoning? You are committing a hasty generalization. In logic there is a great difference between some or most and all.

A more fundamental problem with your reasoning, however, is your inability to distinguish between a deductive and an inductive argument. Deductive arguments are valid (structurally correct) and sound (true) if and only if both the premises are verifiably true and the conclusion follows demonstratively. Inductive arguments, on the other hand, are not designed to demonstrate the 'truth' of their conclusions as following from their premises, but are intended merely to support their conclusions as probable, or probably true" (Copi, Intro to Logic pg.377). Historical presentations are inductive arguments in the truest sense of the word. Therefore they cannot derive "absolute reality." For example: If you have a barrel of beans and you want to determine whether they are all black then you have to physically see all the beans. If physically seeing all the beans is impractical or impossible you can argue inductively and derive a good "approximation." This is true because no matter how careful you are to take a random and representative sample of the beans you cannot be 100% certain that somewhere in the barrel there is, in reality, a white bean.

In other words, have you seen all the evidence? Considering the nature of the 1886 event will you ever be able to see all the evidence? If you do not have all the evidence then the best you can conclude is: "Based on the evidence I've seen, and "assuming" there is no other evidence to the contrary, it would appear to me that the 1886 ordinations probably never occurred." This is a far cry from reality, as you put it. You see, Brian, your "reality" is nothing more than your "historical point of view." No matter how good you are interpreting history your interpretation is still only an interpretation. Limitations inherent in the very task of presenting history render such presentations merely "historical opinions". Hugh Nibley, an historian of no small skill, makes a good point in an article he published titled The Way of The Church. I think it equally applies to our situation today.

The only completely fair presentation of church history would be a full display of all known evidence laid out before the public in chronological order--all the written stuff: histories, letters, sermons, tomes of philosophy, all the artifacts, ruins, and inscriptions, all the traditions, rituals, liturgies, and legends would have to be there, without any attempt on the part of the custodian to interpret or control. But such a corpus would be all but useless, so impenetrable jungle of stuff beyond the capacity of any reader. (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg 215).

Re-creating reality from historical data is impossible. The very best any historian can do is approximate reality. An honest historian is limited to the evidence that he can find and then he must "interpret" it. Again Nibley writes:

To begin with, anyone who writes church history has the inescapable and dangerous obligation of deciding somehow just what evidence shall be made available and what shall not; obviously, he cannot include it all. Now anyone who takes it upon himself to withhold evidence is actually determining what the reader's
idea of church history is going to be—he is controlling the past (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg. 215).

Even if all the evidence is available an historian's presentation cannot include it all. Where there is a lack of evidence the historian is forced to fill in with his own conjecture. Again, inherent in its very nature, an historical presentation is an interpretation. It is here, in the "interpretation," that "personal bias" reveals itself, especially when one's religious views are involved. In fact, "personal bias" is apparent so often in historical presentations that the professionals have accepted, as a general principle, "a margin of error" which they call "historical bias." No honest historian claims that his presentations establish "reality." Nibley, in his usual fashion, brings out how "the scholars when they think they are being most sound, most objective, and most scientific in their construction of church history, are actually doing little more than faithfully reflecting their own background and conditioning" (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg. 214).

Nibley goes on to show that even if this is not enough to demonstrate the tentative nature of "historical reality," as you call it, forgery and deliberate falsification is.

...the business of control does not end with the selecting of evidence. Once our texts have been chosen for presentation, we discover that they are all without exception in an imperfect and fragmentary state, marred by scribal slips, emendations, interpolations, and deletions. ...careless, or (what is far more dangerous) careful and deliberate scribes have been...altering the texts. ...(Mormonism and Early Christianity pg 216).

Historical data can be fabricated, altered, destroyed, and is often misconstrued and mis-reported. Do you remember the stir Mark Hoffman made with his forgeries? How can you be so certain that the data you have seen represents all there is to see and how can you place so much credence upon what you have seen so as to conclude "reality?" By your own admission much of what you have seen is "secondary" and "unclear whether it ever really occurred."

Now assuming again, for argument's sake, that our system of logic is infallible and that you have all the evidence and that the integrity of all the evidence is infallible and that your interpretation is completely free of historical bias; you can not conclude that something never occurred just because it is never mentioned. Your argument that "because there is no evidence to support fundamentalist claims of the 1886 ordinances therefore they never occurred" is an Argumentum ad Ignorantiam (argument from ignorance or false because it has not been proven true). This is a common fallacy. For example: I have seen all the beans in the barrel. All the beans I have seen are black. Therefore, reality is that there never has been a white bean in the barrel. Can you see the fallacy? A lack of evidence is not evidence.

III. Basing reality upon supposed historical evidence while ignoring doctrine is "avoiding the hard questions."

Your question "If the Lorin C. Woolly 1886 ordinances never occurred, are you still justified before the Lord?" is very much like the classic complex question "Have you stopped beating on your wife yet?" It cleverly avoids a very important question by asking a less important one on the assumption that the other has already been answered. Your underlying argument is; "Since my evidence is infallible and establishes beyond dispute that the 1886 ordinances never occurred, there is no authority outside the church. Therefore, a discussion of the gospel is irrelevant and if you bring up the gospel you are "avoiding the hard questions." Brian, notwithstanding the value of historical analysis with its inherent limitations, you cannot base "reality" upon historical evidence alone and at the same time ignore doctrine. To do so is simply to avoid the hard questions." Nibley points out that such an appeal to keep historical fact and true
doctrine separate is nothing more than "a device for placing one's particular beliefs beyond the reach of objective investigation" (Mormonism and Early Christianity pg. 212).

It is apparent, however, that you do not believe there is sufficient proof to establish your position. This is evidenced in another fallacy you continue to commit. Since the available evidence does not prove or disprove the 1886 ordinations you resort to character assassination or "arguments against the man." You think that if you can discredit Lorin Wooly by producing all kinds of incriminating evidence that he was a liar or a nut case you will prove the 1886 ordinations never occurred. Brian, "discrediting the witness," as lawyers put it, is the oldest anti-mormon trick in the book. Have you never heard that "Joe" Smith was a liar and a story teller, a gold digger and a wine bibber? Did not the Saviour receive similar treatment?

Further, while you admit and apologize for inconsistency among currant Church leader's teachings and statements you use the inconsistencies among various "priesthood" leader's statements and teachings as definitive proof that they cannot be true "prophets." This kind of arguing is self-condemning. Inconsistency or contradiction among "church" brethren or "priesthood" brethren demonstrates that there is sufficient cause to seek light and knowledge for ourselves through personal revelation, does it not?

With regard to your view of "personal revelation." Since when has the Lord's injunction to "study it out in your mind" meant search for proof through every obscure source you can possibly find, be careful not to miss anything, and "then ask me if it be right?" Did you check Joseph Smith's claims for "historical accuracy?" Did you study the five known versions of the first vision which clearly contradict one another and have an evolutionary flavor to them before you prayed to know if the Book of Mormon is true? Or did you simply "fall on your knees immediately and ask God?" Perhaps you merely "read the Book of Mormon and then prayed to know?" Or perhaps you "studied it out in your mind" and checked all Book of Mormon claims comparing and contrasting various usage of Biblical passages to the original Hebrew texts along with other scripture texts of ancient date. Did you research every available archaeological evidence and investigate native South American mythology and religious tradition to be sure there was evidence that Joseph's claims were "accurate?" Since there is no verifiable or definitive evidence to prove or disprove Book of Mormon claims, according to your reasoning, the events within the Book must be false. Right? Brian, if your interpretation of "study it out in your mind" is correct then only historians and scholars can have testimonies.

IV. Without the Spirit of God you cannot comprehend the things of God! If you argue without that spirit you will be lost in a never ending game of intellectual volleyball which will lead you no where. You will be, as the scripture states, "ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Do you really think you can prove that the Church is true? Do you think anyone can prove it false? Can you prove that the 1886 visitation and ordinations never occurred? Not any more than you can prove the first vision never occurred. Are you really willing to stake your salvation upon hearsay or on your own historical point of view? Do you agree that it is a possibility that historical documents can be forged, altered, destroyed, misconstrued and misconstrued? Even if they are preserved completely undisturbed can you be absolutely certain that they are complete and representative of reality and that your interpretation is infallible? A journal is only one man's opinion and very often hardly that. Do you write everything that happens to you along with every detail in such a way that future readers will completely understand reality as it existed at the time you interpreted your own experience? What about things too sacred to write? What about things you are commanded by the Lord not to write?

The prophet Joseph Smith taught us that even the Holy Bible has been tampered with and that it is impossible to know what is true and what is not true except through the spirit of God.
Perhaps what you are really saying is that the spirit of God has revealed to you that your source material is infallible and that your interpretation of it is correct. If you are saying this then you are in the same position as any fundamentalist. You are forced to acknowledge the miraculous power of God as the ultimate source of your truth. — THATS OK Etc.

My basic point is this: As long as we continue to "contend" with one another and "teach with our learning" we will never come to a knowledge of the truth. Consider the following:

"Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—Unto what were ye ordained? To teach my gospel by the Spirit of truth . . . or some other way?" (D&C 50: 13-17)

And the spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the spirit ye shall not teach.

. . . For, behold, the Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son (D&C 42:14-17).

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:5)

Do your supposed arguments and evidences fit the above criteria?

An illustration may be helpful. Fundamentalists claim that Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith appeared to John Taylor in 1886 and instructed him to make provision to preserve the "higher" principles of the Gospel outside the boundaries of the corporate Church if necessary. You realize that this event is the basis for all "fundamentalist claims to authority" and look square in the eyes and say "Prove it!" We look you back in the eyes and say "We can't." You then ask us "If you can't prove it then how do you know it?" And the only thing we can say is "Through the miraculous power of God." When we respond with such a ridiculous answer you immediately accuse us of being deluded by some strange burnings or vain imaginations and tell us that you can prove beyond doubt that the events of 1886 never occurred and then ask "How do you explain that?" Again we say "We can't." And you ask "Then how come you still believe that which I can prove false?" And again our only response is "Because we know by the manifestations of the Holy Ghost that they are true regardless of your proof." And so you conclude: "these fundamentalists are amazing; they believe in fairy tales that have no basis in intellectual fact with so much conviction they are willing to risk the penalties of breaking the laws of men to obey the hardest laws of God and are willing sacrifice all that they have (i.e. the Church, their families in the Church, their good name among men, their professions, etc . . . ) and no matter what I present they remain steadfast and sure. Truly (you continue) these are the most deluded people I have ever run across, they obviously have never 'studied it out in their minds'."

It reminds me of an interesting exchange between Amulek and a man named Zeezrom. Alma and Amulek, as you will recall, were preaching the gospel to the people of Ammonihah when the leading lawyers confronted them. The most skilful of the lawyers was Zeezrom and it was he that took the lead. Zeezrom said to Amulek "Will ye answer the questions which I shall put to you?" Amulek responded "Yea, if it be according to the Spirit of the Lord, which is in me; for I shall say nothing which is contrary to the Spirit of the Lord." A series of questions ensue from Zeezrom one of which was:

. . . Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And Amulek said; Yea there is a true and living God.

. . . Now Zeezrom said unto him again; How knowest thou these things? And he (Amulek) said: An angel hath made them known unto me.
In other words, Brian, Zeezrom wanted proof but not so he would believe but so he might catch Amulek in a snare. Zeezrom knew Amulek could not prove his claim. How do you prove that "an angel of the Lord hath made them known?" There is only one way such things are proven, and that is by and through the miraculous power of God. For the faithful such proof gives them conviction to sacrifice all things for Christ's sake. For the faithless such proof condemns them unless they repent.

Fortunately, Zeezrom eventually did recognize the miraculous power of God and repented. But another Book of Mormon character did not. Korihor sought opportunity to debate with Alma because he knew Alma's position could not be proven. Consider Alma's testimony:

...I am called to speak after this manner...yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers...And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days and I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.

And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God (Alma 5:44-47).

Again, how do you prove that "the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit?" Korihor, by contrast, asked the people:

O ye that are bound down under a foolish tradition and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things?...Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold they are foolish traditions of your fathers.

How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see;...it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

...And it came to pass that the high priest said unto him: Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord?...Why do ye speak against all the prophecies of the Holy Prophets?

...And Korihor said unto him: Because I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers, and because I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance...who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries etc...

(Alma 30)
Korihor is basically telling the high priest that he is a cultist! He is also arguing from ignorance (Argumentum ad Ignorantiam). Apparently his fallacious argument had some influence with the people but not with Alma. Alma turned the table on Korihor and asked:

...what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only.

Behold, ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you: but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry you about, working devices that he may destroy the children of God

And now Korihor said unto Alma: If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then I will be convinced of the truth of thy Words.

...And now it came to pass that Alma said unto him: Behold I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart, yea, that ye will resist the spirit of truth, that thy soul may be destroyed (Alma 30).

And you know the rest of the story. Korihor got his proof but did it help him? I think not.

While reading the Book of Mormon a few years ago I recognized that one major consistent or recurring theme throughout was that from Lehi to Moroni all those who gained eternal life were led to it by the miraculous power of God. Every story seems to portray exactly what happens to those who subscribe to the miraculous power of God and what happens to those who do not. Interestingly, all the respective characters be they faithful or faithless demonstrate common characteristics. For example, those who are faithful are always considered by the faithless as "deluded" or "deceived" as in the case of Laman and Lemuel who constantly accused both Nephi and their father as "visionary" and "led away by the vain and foolish imaginations of their hearts." Further, the faithless very often take offence at, mock, and deride the proclamations of the faithful and they almost always seek their lives. This rejection is always precipitated by the unreal, superstitious, and unfounded claims of the faithless which, to the faithless, clearly lack even basic common sense. The faithless are moved to such anger as to seek the faithful's blood not because the faithful's claims are "unfounded" but because their "unfounded" claims enter with force into the hearts of the faithless. Truth "pierces to the very center." The ensuing persecution by the faithless often serves as a catalyst to the faithful in their faithfulness. The faithful increase their reliance upon God and are led, by His miraculous power, out of danger, through dark and dreary wildernesses and into "lands of promise."

When once exposed to the miraculous power of God the faithful find themselves in a precarious predicament. None of the faithless believe or understand the miraculous experiences of the faithful yet the faithful cannot deny that which they know beyond dispute and which they can only attribute to the miraculous power of God. As the faithful "speak by the power of the Holy Ghost" their message is carried forth into the hearts of the children of men, but, the faithless resist the "spirit of truth" and reject their claims. The faithless resort to all manner of subterfuge and rationalization even if such subterfuge is self contradictory and totally void of any proper reasoning. If, and as soon as, the faithful resort to argument, or "some other way," to exonerate their position they lose the miraculous power of God and the faithless have won. The only hope the faithful have for exoneration is if they can communicate by means of God's miraculous power with those who, unlike the faithless, have "ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that feel and know" the voice of God. Only those who recognize the miraculous power of God, which recognition is in itself a demonstration of God's miraculous power, can comprehend the position of the faithful. All else are left in the dark. And so we have the faithful who exhort others to be faithful because
they know things they cannot prove and we have the faithless who demand proof before they will be faithful and who, without conscience, deny the marvelous power of God.

Lehi, being weighed down by the spirit of God and by the words of Jeremiah and others of the "self proclaimed" prophets, fell down before God and in the depths of his soul pled for understanding. As the Holy Ghost opened up the visions of eternity to his mind his heart was overpowered and he realized that to gain eternal life he had to follow the directing influence of the Holy Spirit or perish. The instant Lehi tried to convey the message he had received by miraculous means to others he was violently rejected. Even his own children held him and his "vain imaginations" in derision and contempt. They considered him deluded precisely because his claims were unfounded, unbelievable, and unprovable. They wanted to kill him because his message pierced their hearts.

The weight of Lehi's understanding was no easy burden. Despite the love he had for his people and his brethren who were "elders in the Church" he knew and was sure that salvation can only be obtained by hearkening to the words of Christ. Eternal life is not obtained by being a good church member, or by being a good citizen, or by following the precepts of men. Eternal life (God's Life) is only obtained by becoming as a little child and submitting to the will of God as he directs every step of your journey by His miraculous power.

Alma, in recounting Lehi's journey to the promised land, compared the Liahona, (which interpreted means a compass) to the words of Christ. Alma said that by small and miraculous means God leads the willing back into his presence. He also said ". . . behold, it is as easy to give heed to the words of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land." (Alma 37:44)

Moroni promised that if a person would contemplate "the miraculous power of God" which He mercifully bestows upon all those who seek him with real intent, a sincere heart, and with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that if a person would ask in humble prayer they too would experience this miracle. And the whole point of Lehi's dream is that by clinging to the iron rod (which is the word of God or this miraculous power of which I am speaking) one can, despite the "mists of thick darkness," lay hold of every gift of God even eternal life (See also 2 Nephi Chapters 31-33).

In this last dispensation the path back into the presence of God is no different than in any other dispensation. The Prophet Joseph Smith sealed this testimony with his precious blood. He, like every person who has ever sought to know the things of God, was faced with contradiction impossible to reconcile. He realized that if he remained dependent upon the knowledge of men or their arguments for a knowledge of the truth he would never obtain it. Every person who seeks salvation will eventually find themselves in the exact situation that the young Joseph Smith found himself. I know I sent these words to you in my previous letter but I implore you to look again—very carefully—at what the prophet is saying.

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?

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

The prophet Joseph's life was as nearly a perfect example of one being led by the miraculous power of God as any ever recorded in Holy writ. I believe this fact to be the very essence of his testament. He told us in language impossible to misunderstand; "It is the first principle of revealed religion to know for a certainty the character of God, ... that a man may converse with him as one man converses with another." It is the "first principle" because no man can embrace the fullness of the gospel until he knows by personal experience how to recognize the "miraculous power of God." And, paradoxically, the only way to recognize the "miraculous power of God" is by and through the "miraculous power of God." It takes a miracle to know a miracle! The Lord himself has said:

But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifieth unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils (D&C 46:7).

Without the miraculous power of God there is no salvation. The Saviour told the Prophet that the abomination which he abhorred was that all the religions on earth "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." President Benson told us that the whole church was under condemnation and would remain under condemnation unless we repented and remembered the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon (Conference May 1986). What does the Book of Mormon say?

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

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 foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

...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 to 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.

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 (2 Ne. 28: 26-31; see also Mormon chapter 8 & 9).

A few questions for you to contemplate: How did Lehi prove to his peers that he had seen the pillar of fire? (See 1 Nephi 10:17) How did Nephi prove to his unbelieving brothers that he had been commanded by God to build a ship? How much sense do you think it made to Laman
and Lemuel when Nephi explained the reason God commanded him to build the ship so they could cross the ocean? Do you think Laman and Lemuel honored Nephi because he could produce intellectual evidence that it was so? (See 1 Nephi Chapter 17)

How did Jesus prove he had authority? (See Matthew Chapter 7 Inspired Version) If the "reality" of his authority was dependent upon a "smooth and identifiable succession of ordination" why didn't none of the "current authorities" recognize him as the Son of God? How did Peter know Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, when the Saviour asked him "Whom do ye say that I am?" (See Matthew 16:15-17) How did Joseph Smith prove the first vision or that Peter, James, and John had given him authority? How did the saints know that Brigham Young was the "Authorized" successor of Joseph? How do you prove that the Book of Mormon is true? How do you prove that there is a "True and Living God?"

V. If you are sincere about "coming to a knowledge of the truth," as you say you are, you must realize by now that it can only come through the Holy Ghost.

Brian, I have not intended to offend you. You argue that since everyone is receiving "burnings" of their respective doctrines, authority, and priesthood leaders that all the "burnings" cannot be coming from the same source. You claim to have received a "witness" and you justify your witness as the only true witness because, as you say, "most fundamentalists have not studied it out" as properly as you have. You are right when you say "I can't explain where all the burnings come from" perhaps not even your own. The manifestations of the Holy Ghost are the means through which God communicates with his children. When you have experienced them you know their source. The power of the Holy Ghost is undeniable and unlike any other "burning." It is not difficult for those familiar with the workings of the Holy Spirit to discern truth from error. For those who are not familiar, the world is a frightening place. I agree with you that "studying it out" is a key factor but studying what? My point is this: If you are searching for truth then search truth!

Consider again what Brigham Young said:

I have proven to my satisfaction, according to the best knowledge I can gather, that man can be deceived by the sight of the natural eye, he can be deceived by the hearing of the ear, and by the touch of the hand; that he can be deceived in all of what are called the natural senses.

But there is one thing in which he cannot be deceived. What is that? It is the operations of the Holy Ghost, the spirit and power of God upon the creature (Journal of Discourses 18:230).

VI. Some doctrinal points worthy of discussion

I would enjoy talking Authority with you since I totally agree that it is the central issue. We agree that one must have access to proper authority before one can enter into plural or any marriage that will endure into the eternities. The question, from a gospel standpoint is; "how does one recognize true messengers or God's authorized servants?" It is by "a smooth, uninterrupted, and easily identifiable line of ordination" or is it as the Saviour said "by their fruits"? What are the "fruits" spoken of? Another good question worthy of discussion is: "Can a person enter into the highest degree of the celestial kingdom without living all the laws and receiving all the ordinances pertaining to that degree of exaltation? Additionally, I would enjoy your views on the following: "Can a perfectly just God who is not a respecter of persons allow his requirements for entrance into the highest degree from one generation to the next and remain just? What do the scriptures say? Explain and analyze the following:

What of harumites vs nephites (Jacob)

There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated.
And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

Can God change his laws? Can prophets change God's requirements for exaltation?

What about D&C 58:30-33 which states;

Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and not fulfilled?

I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for His promises are not fulfilled.

Can a man pass on the Melchizedek priesthood if he himself has not received it? Would the Melchizedek priesthood be lost from the earth if for an entire generation no one who had it was allowed to pass it on before they died? Must we have all the "keys" upon the earth when the winding up scene occurs? If, as you say, there is no authority to perform higher ordinances in the Church today are we going to have another "restoration of all things" for yet another "last time"? What is "authority" as defined by D&C 121?

VII. In closing, you ask me not to be "selective to accept Joseph Smith and reject those who came after." I ask you in all solemnity don't be selective to accept the living prophets and reject Joseph Smith.

I can testify to you that the faithful do believe all God has revealed, all that he does now reveal and that God will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But I perceive an inability on your part to receive all that God has revealed through Joseph Smith. This may be a hard saying but a more accurate rendition of the Ninth Article of Faith from your viewpoint would be "We believe some of what God has revealed, that God can change what he has revealed even if the change contradicts what has previously been revealed, and that God will yet change, alter, or otherwise disregard many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Joseph Smith said:

... we never can comprehend the things of God and of heaven, but by revelation. We may spiritualize and express opinions to all eternity; but that is no authority (TPJS 292).

I cannot deny that which has been given me through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost. The whole experience fills my soul with wonder and amazement. I do not expect you to comprehend or believe that which has been given me. If I had not experienced what I have I wouldn't believe it either. Who am I that I can withstand God and deny the Holy Ghost?

I apologize that this letter is so long. I did not intend for it to be. Please continue to research and correspond with Vance as you have been. The dialogue is very interesting. I hope both of you will be as objective as you can be and bring to light as much history as you can. I feel, however, as valuable as it is, that it is futile to believe that such research can result in "absolute reality." I would like to hear from you if you have time. If you do not I will understand.

Sincerely,

Bill Black
15 June 1991

Dear Bill,

I wish to write and thank you for your correspondence of 5 May 1991. The letter was well-organized and contained several interesting items. It appeared you had taken more than just a few minutes to answer my letter and I appreciate that. The sincerity of your response and observations was obvious. Thanks.

I must admit your letter caught me a little by surprise. In fact, I had to re-read the letter that I had sent to you to try and understand what you were responding to. Do you know that in your epistle you used the word prove 12 times, proof 7 times, infallible 9 times, irrefutable twice and reality 22 times? As I scanned my letter I discovered that I had not used any of those words with the exception of "reality" which was found 6 times. Several pages of your letter were devoted to proving to me that "the things of God cannot be proven 'intellectually' but are only known by the spirit of God." Your treatise was exquisite. I will keep it around should I ever encounter anyone who thinks you can prove the things of God intellectually or historically. So far as I am concerned, however, I agree with you one hundred per cent on that point.

Understanding that I had referred to "reality" six times, it is likely that you assumed that my reality came from study alone... not so. You see, I have taken the Lord quite literally when he instructed us to pray and study. I did both and the witness to the misconception of the 1886 ordinations came. A suggestion for Fundamentalists generally is that they learn a little more of the 1886 ordinations before they dash off a-praying about its validity. Possibly more is expected of us since we have been given so much.

The point that I am trying to impress upon you, Vance, my sister etc. was stated ever so clearly in your letter when you said:

"With regard to your view of 'personal revelation.' [sic] Since when has the Lord's injunction to 'study it out in your mind' meant search for proof through every obscure source you can possibly find, be careful not to miss anything, and 'then ask me if it be right?'... Brian, if your interpretation of 'study it out in your mind' is correct then only historians and scholars can have testimonies." (Page 5.)

You have somewhat exaggerated my opinion (which you did several times), but essentially your observation is entirely correct. To understand the history of Fundamentalism, its claims to authority, its priesthood leadership and its "external priesthood" organization, you pretty much have to be a scholar or a historian because no LDS or fundamentalist author has chosen to write anything on those topics. Therefore, one must search through "obscure sources" to understand these things because no one has bothered to make them available generally. Putting together a reliable history and publishing it is my desire.

Having just reviewed my letter to you, I fear that you have resorted to the "Straw Man" argument in stating what you think I believe and then quite eloquently destroying that idea. This occurred several times in your letter, but the worst example was your assumption that I believed God's truth could come through intellectual or historical study. That is silly. Remember in my letter when I wrote:

"It seems to me that you may actually be saying that since the evidence is compelling that Woolley and the others never received authority, I will excuse it because I don't wish to believe it. I know that that is a hard statement and please don't be offended. You see, the Lord expects us to study (intellectually?) and pray about Woolley's claims. I assure you there is sufficient evidence to support a position intellectually as well as through the spirit."

That hardly seems like a declaration meriting your powerful response. Even my conclusions
For example, you may have a testimony that Lorin Woolley did not give his priesthood keys to an Indian Prophet in the Yucatan, but many reliable sources combine to suggest that he indeed taught others that his keys were given to someone down there.

One additional thought: If a sincere, but misguided anti-Mormon wrote to me with a "character assassination" of Joseph Smith, I would write back using better sources (like individuals who believed in him) and give the better side of Joseph... the one I believed to be more accurate. With respect to Lorin Woolley, I invite you (and anyone interested) to show where my compilation of teachings are in error or need to be improved upon.

Another bothersome claim in your letter was the idea that I would ever look you "square in the eyes and say 'Prove it!'" with respect to your priesthood line of authority. I have not said that nor would I. What would be the utility? What I have done is invited you and all Fundamentalists to contribute to a historical analysis. You well know that some documents are hard to acquire. I would love to gain access to journals of J. Leslie Broadbent, John Y. Barlow etc. if any exist. Early in my study of fundamentalism, I requested that my brother-in-law obtain (at any reasonable price) a copy of Musser's journal for my instruction. He inquired and was told that they are not making them available because of the sacred things contained within. I have obtained a copy. Through reading and studying it, I have grown to love Joseph Musser and his desire to "carry on" and continue with his maxim, "The Kingdom of God or nothing". However, the history contained within the pages of Brother Musser's journal suggests significant evolution to your present leadership and priesthood organization. There are some things within that might be classed as sacred, but generally not. It is my belief that certain fundamentalist leaders don't what the history of their group made general knowledge. Regardless, I personally am not asking for you or anyone to "Prove it", but I do invite collaboration on an accurate history of the fundamentalist movement.

The last citation I will mention from your letter where you inaccurately quote me was on the last page where you recorded:

"Must we have all the 'keys' upon the earth when the winding up scene occurs? If, as you say, there is no authority to perform higher ordinances in the Church today are we going to have another 'restoration of all things' for yet another 'last time?'" (Underline in original.)

I am much perplexed that you (or any Fundamentalist) would assume that any Church member has ever taught or believed that "there is no authority to perform higher ordinances in the Church today." This is rather bothersome. You might assume that since we are not performing polygamous sealings for the living, that the LDS Church President doesn't have the authority. But this is not true. You see Bill, the Sealing Keys discussed in D&C 132:7, 18, 19 are all for "a man who marries a wife." The text is clearly monogamic and the promise is "eternal increase". Fundamentalists wish to add a footnote to verse 19 to demand polygamy, but the Lord did not so pronounce. Likewise, we do perform polygamous marriages for men with their several wives in our work for the dead. That requires the same keys and authority as performing polygamous marriages for the living. Pres. Benson holds the keys, he, under divine inspiration, is just not allowing others to use them to perform living polygamous unions. (Check out the 1933 First Presidency's Statement on the Keys.) I know that Church Leaders continue to perform second anointings as well.

Getting back to my desire to write about the history of your "Priesthood" and all that goes with it. Many, including you and Robert Openshaw, have suggested that there are things that are not to be written. Openshaw quotes the "unwritten keys" statement by Brigham Young which was (I believe) referring to the Temple Endowment to suggest that Brigham was talking about your external priesthood. You alluded to "things too sacred to write" on page five. Again, not specifying, but implying that my inquiry might fall into that category. The reason I am not too impressed by this attempt to avoid discussing these
While we can't disprove ordinations simply because they are not mentioned historically, the likelihood of their having occurred diminishes because the evidence we do have may exclude them. I am not just referring to Bateman's diary, but to the actions of the five supposedly ordained etc.

I don't wish to be critical, but your affirmation that we should look to the "fruits" to find the truth again supports the temple-building and missionary work of the LDS Church. I have had some interaction with modern polygamists and I suggest that quite likely their levels of righteousness is no greater than that of the 1890 polygamists or of obedient Latter-day Saints. I can tell you that there are members of my quorum (I serve as Elder's Quorum President) that have had marvelous manifestations. I know others in our stake have had views that were glorious. This I witness to you. It is true that right here in Utah we need greater holiness before the Lord, but we are trying and the Lord is directing us. It has never been in the Lord's program to change the Church from without. Likewise, I would like to testify that the "External Priesthood" was the idea of Joseph Musser (with the help of J. Leslie Broadbent) and nothing more.

Your paraphrasing of the ninth article of faith was interesting. I assure you that just as God commanded Abraham to be a polygamist and did not allow Jacob (brother of Nephi), the Lord can command Joseph Smith and remove the command through Wilford Woodruff. Fundamentalists often suggest that God couldn't suspend the practice of plural marriage, but it has happened before. The salvation available to non-polygamist Jacob (brother of Nephi) is available to non-polygamist Latter-day Saints today. Likewise, a testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that plural marriage is a divine principle does not authorize one to be a polygamist.

In your letter you placed me in the position of the anti-Christ Korihor. I take no offense but wonder if you might misunderstand or just get caught up in your writing. Regardless, I hope that my orientation to history is a little clearer for you now.

Notwithstanding, I desire to discuss with you the "hard questions" whatever you might deem them to be. Likewise, I admit that without the witness of the Holy Ghost our knowledge is worthless. In communing with the Lord, one of my favorite quotes of Joseph Smith is:

"A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of; because the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man, if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity -- thou must commune with God." (TPJS p. 137)

I really love that quote.

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Bill, I wrote the above response prior to my receiving a 52 page letter from Brother Vance. I had intended to complete a chapter tracing the origin of the "Priesthood" organization and send you a copy of the rough draft so you might comment on the historical aspects (your back ground is far superior to mine). However, as I review Vance's letter (I have only completed the first 20 pages), I am humbled by the tone of Vance's words. Apparently I have written or said or done something in the recent past that has caused him to rebuke me. Coming from a man of his stature I am quite concerned. He criticizes my writings as well as me personally. He even goes so far as to condemn my profession (we have never discussed medicine or healings). It is likely that I will be spending some time with his letter. I am not sure what spirit prompted his writing. He jumps from one topic to another through page after page. He has misunderstood me and my desires so fully that I worry