

**Our Christian Ancestry
and
the Gathering of Eagles**

by

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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Table of Contents

Background	1
Our Eagle Ancestors	2
Turley Ancestors were gathered from Great Britain	3
Tolton Ancestors were gathered from Great Britain	4
Eyring Ancestors were gathered from Germany	5
Bommeli Ancestors were gathered from Switzerland	10
Gratitude to Our Ancestors and to the Forerunners of Religious Liberty	12
Looking Back at our Ancestors and the Origins of the Christian Churches ...	13
Why Mormons are labeled as Non-Christians	13
The Response of our Christian Ancestors to the Restoration	15
My Reaction to the Story of the Beginnings of the Restoration	16
Several Distinct Characteristics of the Various Dispensations of the Gospel ..	18
An Apostasy took place after Christ and his Apostles departed from Earth ...	22
The Restitution of All Things spoken of by Peter has Occurred	26

Appendices

- A A brief summary of the reform movement within the medieval Catholic Church which led to fragmented Protestantism.
- B A brief historical background of Saxe-Coburg from German History
- C An English Translation of the Athanasian Creed

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Background

In the 24th Chapter of Matthew in the New Testament, Jesus is quoted as having given some of the signs and happenings that will take place prior to his Second Coming. As a part of his prophesy, Jesus gave his apostles the following metaphor or parable:

“For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”
[KJV, Matthew 24:28]

Joseph Smith in his inspired translation expanded the parable to read as follows:

“Behold, wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth.” [Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:27]

Francis M. Gibbons and Daniel Bay Gibbons in their book *A Gathering of Eagles* state the following with respect to the above parable:

“In this parable the eagles represent the elect members of the House of Israel, who will appear from the four quarters of the earth to hover over and find the life giving nourishment of the body of the Church [of Christ]. They gather to the body, often from great distances, in a sudden, mysterious and almost inexplicable manner.”¹

Francis and Daniel in their book testify of the literal fulfillment of this parable. They have included in their book over 50 examples of individuals whose conversion stories illustrate the literalness of the parable. Undoubtedly there have been tens of thousands of examples which they could have included in their book.

One of my purposes in preparing this brief account of our religious heritage is to show that our ancestors also have indeed been gathered from far away places in literal fulfillment of this parable of the eagles. In conjunction with this parable we have to remember as stated previously that Jesus said, “And again, this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked.” [JST, Matt 24:31] In other words, the gathering of eagles, resulting from the message of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, would **not** take place without the help of messengers. The messengers’ message has always included the principle taught by George Albert Smith:

¹ *A Gathering of Eagles, Conversions from the Four Quarters of the Earth*, Francis M. Gibbons & Daniel Bay Gibbons, p. xv, Writers Club Press, iUniverse, Inc., 5220 S. 16th St., Suite 200, Lincoln, NE 68512, www.iuniverse.com

“The gospel of Jesus Christ was restored in the year 1830, after centuries of darkness had passed. When the call was given, the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints went out into the world—not to criticize others, not to find fault, but to say to our Father's other children: 'Keep all the good that you have received, keep all of the **truth** that you have learned, all that has come to you in your homes, in your institutions of learning, under your many facilities for education, keep it all; and then let us divide with you **additional truths** that have been revealed by our Heavenly Father in our day.’”²

I have put in bold the words **truth** and **additional truths** because certainly the Lord would not want false doctrines to be retained by anyone as he or she searches for and accepts the **truth**. The Apostle Paul said,

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” [KJV, 1 Thessalonians 5:21]

The word “prove” has many synonyms, e.g., examine, prove formally, establish, test, etc. In other words, examine all things and hold fast or retain that which can be proven to be good and true.

There were many precursor happenings prior to the formal commencement of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in 1830, namely, the translation of the Bible, the invention of the printing press, the Protestant reformation, the establishment of the United States, etc. Those who would carry the message were likened to fishermen and hunters by the prophet Jeremiah's reported word of the Lord:

“Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” [Jeremiah 16:16]

Thanks to those messengers, our ancestors were introduced to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Eagle Ancestors

Since the 1830's, the most recent generations of our family have been members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as Mormons. For the purposes of this brief account, we will review the religious background of four of our common ancestors whose surnames were Turley, Tolton, Eyring, and Bommeli. Prior to accepting the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, they were Christians of several denominations. Knowing of their background should make us more tolerant and patient with others who belong to those other denominations and do not yet see things the way we do. Although we know and understand that the Light of Christ “giveth light to every [person] that cometh into the world,”³ not every individual will respond positively to the message

² *The Teachings of George Albert Smith, Eighth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Edited by Robert and Susan McIntosh, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1996, p. 158.

³ Boyd K. Packer, *The Light of Christ*, Ensign Magazine, April 2005, pgs. 8-14.

of the restoration. The Savior taught this principle when he gave the parable of the Sower. As he said, some of the seed will fall

“by the way side, and it [would be] trodden down, and the fowls of the air [would devour] it. Some [would fall] upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it [would wither] away, because it lacked moisture. [Some would fall] among thorns; and the thorns [would spring] up with it, and [choke] it. And other [would fall] on good ground, and [spring] up, and [bear] fruit an hundredfold.” [Luke 8:5-8]

Without question, our ancestors can be likened unto the “good ground,” and as Jesus taught, they have borne “fruit an hundredfold.”

Turley Ancestors were gathered from Great Britain

Our great-great-grandfather, Theodore Turley, and his wife Francis Amelia Kimberly were Methodists who had immigrated to Canada from Birmingham, Warwickshire, England; Theodore served as a lay Methodist minister. Methodism had its origins in England dating back to 1729 with John and Charles Wesley. Preaching “the doctrines of Christian perfection and personal salvation through faith, John Wesley quickly won an enthusiastic following among the English working classes, for whom the formalism of the established Church of England had little appeal.”⁴ We do not know just when our Turley ancestors left the Church of England to become Methodists. We are grateful that they believed in Jesus Christ which facilitated their acceptance of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Six years after the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt was sent on a mission to Canada. The following historical account tells of some of those eagles who received the message of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ:

“Within months of the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in upstate New York in 1830, Mormon missionaries were preaching their newfound gospel in nearby Canada (or British North America, as it was then known). In the 1830s and 1840s, some 2,500 Canadians joined the Church, many of whom gathered with other converts in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and eventually the Great Basin. Several of these Canadian converts, such as John Taylor, William Law, Mary Fielding, and Theodore Turley, figured prominently in the later rise of the Church.”⁵

One of these Canadian converts, John Taylor, was as well prepared intellectually and spiritually as anyone could be prepared to receive the message of the restored gospel. The following account describes preparations that took place before the messenger arrived in the Toronto area:

“John Taylor . . . was a Methodist minister. He and a small group of very sincere,

⁴ "Methodism." *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

⁵ Historical Atlas of Mormonism p.108

educated gentlemen in Toronto had become dissatisfied with the churches of the day, and had fasted and prayed that if God had a true church on the earth, he would send a messenger to them. Elder Parley P. Pratt came in answer to that prayer. John Taylor, his wife Leonora, and her cousin Elizabeth Kaighin after a rigid scrutiny of the doctrines laid before them, believed, and were baptized on the 9th day of May, 1836.”⁶

As stated, Theodore and Francis were converted to the Mormon faith in the Toronto Area of Canada in 1837. They along with others who were well versed in the Bible and Christian theology were ready to receive the message of the restored gospel when the messenger, Parley P. Pratt, arrived in Canada in 1836. John Taylor who also was raised in the Church of England and later became a Methodist minister is one of the “eagles” included in the accounts given by Francis and Daniel Gibbons in their book cited above. John Taylor and others were influential in sharing the restored gospel with their friends including Theodore and Frances Amelia. The spirit of gathering was with them as Theodore and Frances Amelia followed John Taylor and others and migrated to the United States in 1838 and settled with the Mormons at Far West, Missouri.

The Turley family along with the rest of the Mormons suffered terrible persecutions in Missouri as well as in Illinois where they had fled from the Missourians in order to preserve their lives. Theodore and his family helped to build the beautiful city of Nauvoo, but because of lawless violent persecution, they along with the rest of their fellow Mormons became frontier refugees as they departed Nauvoo along with thousands of others in February, 1846. They crossed the Mississippi River and made their way westward across Iowa in the cold of winter. We lived in Iowa for 4 years during the mid-1960's and we know that the winters are severe especially if you were a homeless refugee like our ancestors without a roof over your head. Theodore and Francis with their family, along with thousands of other refugees, made it across Iowa, crossed the Missouri River and settled in the Nebraska territory where Francis later became ill and died on the 30th of August, 1847. Several of their children and many others died also in their “Winter Quarters.” Theodore subsequently crossed the plains with other pioneers to settle in the Utah Territory. Later the Turley family pioneered again and journeyed on to California in 1851 to settle in the San Bernardino area. During the so-called Utah War in 1857, Theodore and his family along with others returned from California to the southern Utah area where Theodore lived out the rest of his life.

Tolton Ancestors were gathered from Great Britain

Our great-grandfather, Isaac Turley, who was born in Canada in 1837, as a child went through all of the hardships and persecution with his parents, Theodore & Francis Amelia Turley, and their family as they were persecuted and uprooted so many times. After leaving the Midwest, Isaac accompanied his father and other family members as they pioneered across Iowa and the plains into Utah, subsequently into California and then back to Utah where they settled in the Beaver area of south central Utah.

Isaac's 2nd wife, Clara Ann Tolton, our great-grandmother, was born on April 13, 1852 at Monticello, Illinois. Her family crossed the plains and also settled in Beaver, Utah, where she met

⁶ B.H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor*, p.476

Isaac to whom she was married on October 4, 1867. Clara Ann Tolton's parents both immigrated to the United States from England. Clara's grandfather, John Tolton, was a Baptist minister who

“occupied the pulpit on Sundays and other special occasions, feeding his congregation the “bread of life” as he saw the light, and during the week overseeing the brick-making plant.”⁷

A brief synopsis of the formation of the Baptist Church in England is as follows:

“John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, English separatists of Congregational persuasion, founded the first Baptist church on Dutch soil at Amsterdam in 1609. Smyth eventually applied to join the Mennonites, and Helwys returned to an unfriendly England. There, in 1611 or 1612, he led a small group of Christians in establishing the first Baptist church on English soil, at Spitalfields, near London. As they grew in number, English Baptists came to be divided between General Baptists and Particular Baptists. The former, who were Arminians (*see* Arminianism), believed that the spiritual benefits of the death of Jesus applied potentially to all people; the latter believed, with the Calvinists, that those benefits applied only to the elect (*see* Predestination). Eventually these two groups united in the 19th century, when theological issues had changed and the need of an effective missionary advance helped to draw them more closely together.”⁸

As is the case with the Turley family and Methodism, we do not know when the Tolton family left the Church of England to become Baptists. We are grateful, however, that they believed in Jesus Christ which facilitated their acceptance of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Isaac and Clara Ann gave birth to their first child, our grandfather, Edward F. Turley, in Beaver, Utah, on the 26th of March, 1869. Isaac & Clara Ann along with their family moved into the Arizona Territory and eventually pioneered into Old Mexico in the mid-1880's.

Eyring Ancestors were gathered from Germany

Our great-grandfather, Heinrich Eyring, was born March 9, 1835, at Coburg, Germany. His father, our great-great-grandfather, Edward Christian Eyring, was in the apothecary or pharmacy business. Heinrich's mother, our great-great-grandmother, was Ferdinandine von Blomberg, the daughter of Viscount George Louis von Blomberg. Heinrich in his journal⁹ states:

⁷ “That Their Children May Know,” A record of the descendants of Edward Tolton, by Lula Tolton Tanner, p. 9

⁸ "Baptists." *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

⁹ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, a copy of a transcription by Clara Pearson of Heinrich's original diary which was placed in the University of Utah Library, Special Collections; the transcription was dated May 7, 1951 and signed

“She descended from an ancient aristocratic family and was herself raised in the refined style of the nobility of Germany.”¹⁰

Heinrich noted the following in his journal about his father, Edward Christian Eyring:

“In regard to religion he might be said to have been a free thinker and to have shaken off the shackles of sectarianism. He was liberal and generous to a fault and too confiding for his own personal interest.”¹¹

I am sympathetic towards our great-great-grandfather Edward Christian Eyring inasmuch as the doctrines and practices of the Catholic and spinoff churches, with their post-biblical creeds, espoused and taught doctrines which were illogical and based on the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. Edward’s ancestors could have been Lutherans and/or Catholics. During those “dark ages” men of reason had to be forced into acceptance of dogma, e.g.,

“Galileo, in June of 1633, was condemned to renounce, in the presence of a tribunal, the truths he had maintained as a result of his discoveries. The Christian "astronomy" that then triumphed, however, proved as unreliable as some of what then passed for "theology." As to the latter, for example, the Renaissance with its skeptical scholarship produced the argument, now generally accepted, that the Apostles' Creed "could not have been composed by the Twelve Apostles." (Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers* [New York: Random House, 1983], pp. 320,577.)¹²

The inquisition and other absurdities are evidence of why thinking men and women turned from apostate Christianity. I believe that Edward Christian Eyring was such a man, and had he been given the opportunity to evaluate the restored gospel of Jesus Christ he would have accepted it as did his son, Heinrich.

A summary of the reform movement within the medieval Catholic Church which led to fragmented Protestantism is included as **Appendix A**.

Heinrich as a young man was influenced by relatives other than his father. He wrote about his Uncle Jacobi, the husband of his maternal grandfather's sister, as being an educator in addition to being a minister. Uncle Jacobi was “chief chaplain to the Duke of Coburg and Privy Counselor of the Consistory of the Duchy.”¹³ A brief statement of Saxe-Coburg in German History is included as

by Heinrich's grandson and namesake, Dr. Henry Eyring, Distinguished Professor and Dean of the University's Graduate School.

¹⁰ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 5

¹¹ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 7

¹² Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light*, p.5

¹³ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 7

Appendix B.

Heinrich wrote that under the influence of his Uncle Jacobi he joined the Lutheran Church:

“[I] received preparatory lessons from my uncle Jacobi to fit me to receive my confirmation in the faith of the Lutheran Church. On the 15th April 1849 I was confirmed by uncle Jacobi in the Church of the Duke of Coburg and thereby became a full member of the Evangelical or Lutheran Church.”¹⁴

Thus we learn that Heinrich became a Lutheran when he was 14 years old. Since the 16th Century the citizens of Germany were free to join the church of their choice. B. H. Roberts included the following in his Outline of Ecclesiastical History concerning the establishment of a degree of religious liberty in Germany:

“At last the emperor [Charles V] persuaded the pope [Leo X] to reassemble the Council of Trent, and gave notice to the Protestants to attend, promising to use his best endeavor to have everything done in a Christian manner and without passion. But before this council could assemble the Protestant princes revolted, took the emperor by surprise, and forced him into signing a treaty at Paussau, in 1552, which guaranteed religious liberty to the Protestants. This treaty was reconfirmed by the emperor in the diet at Augsburg, 1555. By that treaty all who had accepted the Confession of Augsburg were declared free from all jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, and his bishops. They were to be permitted to live in peace and the quiet enjoyment of religious liberty. Men were to be left free to join either the Reformed or the Catholic Church, and any person making war upon others, or molesting them because of their religion was to be accounted the public enemy of Germany.”¹⁵

Heinrich mentioned in his journal that when he was 18 years old he had been visiting a friend in Vienna when he decided to migrate to America. He returned to Coburg from Vienna and with his sister, Bertha,

“set out for America on June 27th 1853. We embarked at Bremerhaven on July 1st on the Bark 'Diana' and reached New York after a very tedious voyage on September 8th.”¹⁶

Heinrich's journal continues:

“ . . . leaving Bertha at New York, where she had obtained employment in the millinery business. I left New York on the evening to obtain employment at most anything I thought I could do, but to no purpose. Consequently I concluded to try my luck in

¹⁴ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 9

¹⁵ B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, p.241

¹⁶ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 11

the west, leaving Bertha at New York, where she had obtained employment in the millinery business. I left New York on the evening of March 1st 1854 going by rail to Pittsburgh and from there by water to St Louis, which place I reached on the evening of March 8th [1854].”¹⁷

Heinrich obtained employment with a wholesale apothecary or pharmacy business and remained in St Louis. While living in St. Louis, Heinrich

“read at different times articles about the Mormons, representing them to be a set of thieves, cut-throats and the very off-scouring from the earth. . . . Feeling a curiosity to see some of those desperate characters I went to their meeting on the evening of [December 10, 1854].”¹⁸

In short, he was surprised by what he found as he became acquainted with the Mormons and was convinced that the articles he had read were nothing more than false propoganda, a pack of lies. He met at his work a Mormon who shared with him literature about the Church. Heinrich stated in his journal

“when I was a zealous Protestant I prayed and went to meeting and had an inward peace and joy which I measurably lost after becoming an infidel and although I could not possibly return to my former christian convictions, yet I felt a something lacking which infidelity could not possibly furnish me. I was in that condition when I heard the truth and I fully believe that Providence so led me as to hear it at the right time, when my mind was susceptible to good impressions.”¹⁹

In the quote above, Heinrich writes about “becoming an infidel” which means that several years after becoming a Lutheran and thinking more on his own he began to dissent from the Lutheran doctrines. I most likely would have done as did Heinrich. He apparently retained his basic belief in Jesus Christ and once he was introduced to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ he was able to obtain answers to the many questions and enigmas in Christian doctrine that had caused him to become “an infidel.” Once he inquired, studied, and opened his mind and heart to the Light of Christ and to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit, the doctrines and principles which had been restored through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith brought back into his life the faith that he once had as a child. We are grateful that he believed in Jesus Christ which facilitated his acceptance of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bommeli Ancestors were gathered from Switzerland

Our great-grandmother, Mary Bommeli, was born March 20, 1831, at Weingarten, Thurgau, Switzerland. Her father, our great-great-grandfather, was Hans George Bommeli, and her mother,

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 12

¹⁹ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 13

our great-great-grandmother, was Anna Barbara Ammann. Because of the economic circumstances of Mary's family, she was only able to finish Grammar School. Her close friend, John Keller, was able to continue his studies at the next level, and he would help Mary in her quest for more learning.

“Mary contrived a way whereby she could learn, even though she could not go to school. She persuaded John [Keller] to bring his books home and let her read them and study with him. She had learned early to spin and weave and now that she was not in school she was kept busy at the loom where she became a very proficient weaver. Her father allowed her to keep a certain percentage of her earnings and she was slowly saving so that she might have a year or two in the higher schools of her canton.²⁰ . . . When she didn't have any books that she hadn't already read, she read the Bible over and over, for she loved above everything else to read the words of our Savior and His followers until she could recite whole chapters of the New Testament. As she read, she pondered, 'Oh, if I could only have lived when Christ was on the earth,--if I could have been baptized like Peter and John.' She belonged to the Lutheran Church and she found herself comparing the things the minister said were necessary to enter Christ's kingdom with what Jesus said in the Bible, and she decided it wasn't the same. The minister said, 'God is only a Spirit, He hasn't flesh and bones.' Yet Christ said when his friends asked him what God looked like, 'If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.' . . . The more she read the Bible and pondered the meanings of Christ's teachings the more she felt and longed to belong to His church, and His only.’²¹

As stated previously, the message to be taken to all the world must be taken by a messenger. Mary told her children and grandchildren the following story of how such a messenger found the Bommeli family:

“It was a dark stormy night in early fall [probably 1854]. All the family had retired as they were early risers . . . The newspaper had warned the community against some men representing those wicked Mormons from Utah, the men who persuaded young girls to join the church, then enticed them to Utah where they were made slave wives, who must plow the fields, cut the wood, and do other odd chores for their husband-masters.

“John Keller had brought the magazine article for Mary to read. However, George, her brother, had told her that he didn't believe all those stories about the Mormons for he had listened to one of them speak that very evening in Zurich as they preached from a street corner. “If I hadn't felt I should bring home the merchandise I had bought for Father, I would have stopped to talk to him,” he said, “It sounded like he had a very interesting story to tell.”

²⁰ A canton is a small territorial division or state in Switzerland.

²¹ *Mary Bommeli Eyring Stories*, written by her granddaughter, Theresa Snow Hill, Logan, Utah, November 24, 1949, p.2,3

“As Mary read the fanciful story of a city in that faraway country of America where a wall was built high around to hold prisoners in who might want to run the gauntlet of the wilderness to escape, she smiled, for it sounded too much a story of the imagination to ring true. She closed the magazine and began to move the loom faster and faster, for she did want to finish this particular piece of cloth before she went to bed.

“The rain pattered softly in tune with the thud, thud of the loom. Then out of the rhythm came a sharp knock, knock at the door. Wondering who could have such an urgent message to bring that he dared to be out on such a stormy night, she jumped down from her stool and ran to the door, unlatched it and called, “Come in, come in.” Then she stopped abruptly, for there stood a man as pictured in the paper, with a long Prince Albert coat held tight against the wind.”²²

To make a long story shorter, Mary invited the man into the home. She gave him something to eat and provided a place for him to spend the night by the fireplace. Mary told her parents and other family members about the man from America who would spend the night by the hearth. The next day was a work day and the family were all busily engaged in their various labors in the vineyard and Mary at the loom. Father Bommeli invited the man to return in two days on the Sabbath and they would listen to him then. The man’s name was Miller. Elder Miller left literature for the family to read and study and he returned on Sunday to deliver his message. Mary stated that from the time Elder Miller arrived and left them the literature to read their lives changed. In short, as in the case of Peter of old, the Spirit testified to them that the message that Elder Miller had brought to them was true and members of the Bommeli family were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to our records, Mary was baptized on November 4, 1854 and her father, on December 24, 1854, which dates correspond to our supposition that Elder Miller came to their home in 1854.

We are grateful that Mary and members of her family believed in Jesus Christ and that they took the time to listen to the messenger and read the materials he brought them. As the Spirit testified to them that the message brought to them by Elder Miller was true, they accepted the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bommeli family were a part of the gathering of eagles spoken of in the parable Jesus gave his disciples. The story of how they would gather to America is fascinating, especially the manner in which Mary stayed behind in order to enable the family and younger children to go to America. Mary was able to earn a living with her weaving expertise and when she had earned sufficient for the journey, she came to America. As she crossed the plains she met a young man who spoke the German language, namely, young Heinrich Eyring. Heinrich in his journal wrote

“I enjoyed myself excellently while crossing the plains, walking nearly the whole distance and to me it was more like a pleasure trip, than a toilsome pilgrimage. I arrived in S. L City Aug. 29th 1860 . . . ”²³

²² Ibid, p. 4

²³ *The Journal of Henry Eyring, 1835-1902*, p. 22

Of course he enjoyed the journey having met his sweetheart and future bride! Heinrich & Mary were married in Salt Lake City later that year on December 14th, 1860.

Gratitude to Our Ancestors and to Those Who Were the Forerunners of Religious Liberty

So, for those of us who descend from these 4 great-grandparents, we have as our Christian heritage links to the Methodists, the Baptists and the Lutherans; and, prior to those Protestant sects, we most likely could trace our heritage to the Church of England, to the Catholic Church, and very likely to the remnant church of Israel. When we think about the restoration of the gospel in these latter days, we should remember and give thanks to the many individuals who made intellectual and spiritual progress possible by shaking off the chains of ignorance, tradition, and man-made dogmas. We should also be grateful to Gutenberg for inventing the printing press, to Luther for his courage, to Wesley for his music, as well as Handel, Bach, and so many others.

Looking Back at our Ancestors and the Origins of the Christian Churches

As we look back at what we know of our ancestors, we know that they came from the British Isles and Europe. We know something about their religious backgrounds, but not a lot. As mentioned above, they were Christians of several denominations: Methodists, Baptists and Lutherans. But surely their ancestors were associated with the Anglicans, Calvinists and Catholics. The doctrines and principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ clarified many of the doctrines of the Christian churches and answered many of the unanswerable questions that existed then and still exist amongst the Christian sects of today.

As Christians our ancestors supposedly subscribed to the doctrines and tenets of Christian churches including the post-biblical creeds which were developed by councils of Christian philosophers and priests during the 4th Century A.D. From these councils, such as the Nicene Council in 325 A. D., creeds were developed including the Nicene Creed and the so-called Athanasian Creed which most Christian churches subscribe to even today. And, prior to Christianity, some of our ancestors were most likely part of the diaspora of Israel.

Why Mormons are labeled as Non-Christians

Some Christian churches today have labeled the Mormons as non-Christians because we do not subscribe to the post biblical creeds, such as the Athanasian Creed, which were developed centuries after Christ organized his Church during the Meridian of Time. Such post-biblical creeds were developed much like we pass legislation today through debate, controversy, consensus, and compromise. If our critics today would only take time to study the history of Christianity they would come to understand, for example, that during the reign of the emperor, Constantine the Great, such creeds were developed as a part of the political process in order to bring peace to Constantine's reign. Later the post-Biblical Christian Church divided into the Eastern Orthodox and the Western Roman churches with both holding on to the man-made post-Biblical dogmas.

The Athanasian Creed **to which we do not subscribe** is a statement of Christian doctrine traditionally ascribed to St. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, who lived during the 4th century after Christ. **From the Internet**, I obtained an English translation of the Athanasian Creed to give

you an idea of what was devised as a statement of “Christian” belief by clerics and philosophers through the process of consensus, and compromise, **not by revelation from God.**²⁴ The translation of the Athanasian Creed is included as **Appendix C.**

To reiterate what I have written above, **we do not subscribe to the above stated creed nor to any other post-biblical uninspired creed.** Because of this, some in the Christian community label us as non-Christians which is ridiculous because we as Latter-day Saints “are made alive in Christ because of our faith; we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”²⁵

The Response of our Christian Ancestors to the Restoration

I have wondered how our Christian ancestors responded when they heard about the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these last days. They were able to see for themselves as someone once said that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is simply beautiful and beautifully simple. Jesus Christ himself surely must have been disappointed in those who contrived the post-Biblical uninspired, unintelligible and verbosely entangled creeds. As Mary Bommeli noted, it was Jesus who told his disciples “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” [John 4:9] It has been said that one of the great catholic theologians once stated that the beauty of the creed lies in not being able to understand it! As B. H. Roberts states:

“No wonder that Athanasius himself . . . candidly confesses that whenever he forced his understanding to meditate on the divinity of the Logos (and which, of course, involved the whole doctrine of the Godhead), his "toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended: and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts!"²⁶

Compare the story of the appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith in 1820 with the theories and dogmas that men had devised about the nature of God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. It did not take consensus or debate for Joseph Smith to understand the nature of God because they both appeared to the young man; they both spoke to Joseph. Here is what Joseph wrote of his experience:

²⁴ Citation Reference and Disclaimer: “Content on this web site is provided for informational purposes only. We accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person resulting from information published on this site. We encourage you to verify any critical information with the relevant authorities. ©2004 Encyclopedia4U.com | Privacy . This article is licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License. It uses material from the Wikipedia article "Athanasian Creed".”

²⁵ *Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, 2 Nephi 25:25,26, p. 100.

²⁶ B.H. Roberts, *The Seventy's Course in Theology*, Second Year, p.197

“I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other--This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!

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

“I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."²⁷ .

Joseph did not expect to receive such a vision nor did he expect the message that he was given. But, when he came out of that grove of trees he knew more about the nature of God the Father and Jesus Christ than any other man alive. There was nothing mysterious or difficult to understand; he saw, questioned and spoke to them, i.e., to God the Father and to His son, Jesus Christ. Compare Joseph's experience with the creeds that resulted from an attempt to define in conflicting ways the nature of God. What a wonderful simple message it was. The Lord's prayer must have meant so much more to Joseph after his sacred grove experience. Jesus had taught and shown his disciples how to pray and address their Father in Heaven, as their father and not as some incomprehensible philosophized being or essence. He said, and we say, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” [Matt 6:9] We can also say to the Father in our prayer, “Hallowed be the name of thy beloved son, Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.”

My Reaction to the Story of the Beginnings of the Restoration

Although I was baptized a member of the Mormon Church when I was eight years old, I knew very little and had very little interest in the Church's doctrines and theology until I was a Junior at Texas A&M. I had a roommate who was a devout Roman Catholic and in our discussions I discovered that he seemed to know more about some aspects of the Mormon Church than I did. He had traveled to Salt Lake City with his mother and he shared with me the story of Joseph Smith and the founding of the Mormon Church. Not too long after that, my father gave me a pamphlet to read which contained a brief story of Joseph Smith and the marvelous things that transpired with Joseph in the early 1800's in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. As I read the brief account, I had the same experience that Peter had when he came to know that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. Jesus explained to Peter that the Spirit had born witness to him and that was how Peter knew that Jesus was the Christ. We have visited the place where that scriptural account took place, namely, Caesarea Philippi in northern Israel. In my case, I knew that Jesus was the Christ, but I did not know Joseph Smith had been selected by God as an instrument to initiate the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ until I read the brief history; and, as I read the account, the

²⁷ Joseph Smith History 1:17-19

Spirit bore witness to me that what I was reading was true. I am sure that our ancestors had a similar experience. The Spirit is the “still small voice” referred to by Elijah, the Old Testament prophet. The Spirit testifies of the Father and of the Son; and, the Spirit helps us to know the truth of all things. From that day until now I have worked to overcome my imperfections and to study the scriptures in order to learn more and to solidify my faith. My testimony is reaffirmed each day as I study and experience life in these latter days.

One of the doctrinal dilemmas that the other Christian churches have is in regards to the fate of those good people who did not have the opportunity to hear about or to accept the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. A common response from those who are not acquainted with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is either “that is too bad,” or “that’s the roll of the dice!” The restored gospel of Jesus Christ responds to this dilemma in that we believe that man will be judged according to that which he has received and as Peter wrote “[Christ] went and preached unto the spirits in prison; . . . For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” [1 Peter 3:18-20] Such doctrinal dilemmas along with many scriptures are like enigmas or riddles which uninspired interpreters will never solve. That is why the heavens need to be opened to man, not closed; that is why true prophets are necessary. As it says in the book of Amos, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” [Amos 3:7] Scriptures written by prophets are much like the encryption methods used today in Internet communication between people and/or computers. Without a key, one cannot understand an encrypted message; similarly a prophesy or message spoken by the power of the Holy Ghost may not be able to be understood without the key, i.e., without that same power of the Holy Ghost. That is why Peter said, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.” [2 Peter 1:20, 21]

An example of one good Christian comes to my mind. Blaise Pascal [1623-1662] was one of France’s most notable philosophers and mathematicians. He was also a true Christian in thought and in deed. His logical methods of persuasion to entice a friend to consider the benefits of becoming a Christian have been entitled “Pascal’s wager.” In my mind, I see Pascal’s argument as being equivalent to a truth table as follows:

↓ Your Decision ↓	The gospel is True	The gospel is False
You accept the gospel.	Your decision is a good one. You will win everything!	You have made a bad decision, but your loss is really negligible.
You reject the gospel.	You have made a bad decision and you will lose everything.	Your decision is a good one. You neither win or lose anything.

Pascal argued that a person has two choices, i.e., to accept or reject the Christian faith. If you accept the gospel and it is false, you have erred, but your loss could be negligible. If you reject the gospel and it is false, you have made a good decision and you neither win or lose anything. If you accept the gospel and it is true, you have made a good decision and you will win everything! On the other hand, if you reject the gospel and it is true, you have erred big, and you will lose everything you

could have had! His argument could similarly be used today, i.e., if the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true and you reject it, you err big and you will lose everything you could have achieved.

Blaise Pascal, in addition to being one of the fathers of mathematical probability theory, was an entrepreneur and a marvelous and charitable man. He was a co-founder (in 1662) of a company in Paris that provided a new system of public transportation. (p. 45, Hazelton) It proved very profitable; Pascal directed that his part of the proceeds "be distributed among the poor people of Blois, then suffering from famine, and he signed over his interest in the company to the hospitals of Paris and Clermont." Blois is a town approximately 100 miles southwest of Paris. Clermont is the chief city of Auvergne where Pascal was born and is approximately 225 miles south of Paris. Bus tickets sold in Paris up to the time of World War II contained small pictures of Pascal.²⁸

Several Distinct Characteristics of the Various Dispensations of the Gospel

I would like to describe to you what my studies have shown me since that day in 1950 which changed my life for the better. As I have studied the Bible and the various dispensations of the gospel, I have found several distinct characteristics associated with each dispensation. A dispensation of the gospel may be defined as a period or time when God has spoken to man through a prophet, instituted saving ordinances of His plan of salvation or gospel, organized what might be called a church, and recorded for mankind that which we call scripture. In other words, there are common characteristics of each dispensation of the gospel.

A Dispensation of the Gospel has at least the following characteristics:

1. God speaks to man through a prophet to establish or restore religious truths which have been lost because there occurred an apostasy or falling away from what God had previously revealed as His plan of salvation.
2. The priesthood is restored to man and ordinances are once again performed for the benefit of mankind making it possible to accomplish the purpose of earth life.
3. An organization is established to administer the ordinances of salvation and to carry out the work of the ministry which includes sharing the "good news" with others.
4. There is opposition to the work of the ministry by the adversary and his fellow travelers.
5. A record is kept which becomes known as scripture.

Major dispensations of the gospel occurred during the time of the following major prophets: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus of Nazareth. After each of these dispensations it can be shown that there was a falling away or apostasy from the principles established by the Lord through

²⁸ Roger Hazelton, *Blaise Pascal: The Genius of His Thought*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1974. ISBN 0-664-20999-8, [B1903, H33, U of U] This little book is the author's "response to the genius of Pascal." The author in this small volume covers the many different facets of Pascal's life.

His prophets. The occurrence of an apostasy would require a subsequent restoration just as the day follows the night.

In order to illustrate the above characteristics of a dispensation, let us refer to the dispensation in which John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were the initial prophets, i.e., during the Meridian of Time:

1. God speaks to man through a prophet to establish or restore religious truths which have been lost because there occurred an apostasy or falling away from what God had previously revealed as His plan of salvation.

As we read the New Testament account of the ministry of Jesus and his apostles, we can readily see that there had been a falling away from the doctrines and principles which had been revealed to the major prophet, Moses. A residual or resemblance of what had been established by God through Moses existed when Jesus was born, but only in form, not in substance. Otherwise, Jesus would not have had to reestablish his gospel as he did. The governing religious body in Israel at the time of Christ was the Sanhedrin whose members were political appointees and not all were righteous men. The presiding high priests, Caiaphas and Annas, were political appointees! They were evil and designing men in robes of the priesthood who had no real understanding of the principles of the gospel as restored by Jesus of Nazareth. Otherwise, they would not have falsely tried Jesus and had him crucified. As you study the life of Christ, you can come to understand how unhappy he was with his own people, the Jews, because they worshiped God with their tongues, but not with their hearts; their doctrines were doctrines developed by men based on tradition, consensus, and that which was expedient, but not by revelation from God.

In summary, an apostasy occurred some time during the 400 years before Christ, i.e., from the time of the prophet Malachi in the Old Testament to the time of Christ, making it necessary for Jesus Christ to restore what had been lost during that apostasy.

2. The priesthood is restored to man and ordinances are once again performed for the benefit of mankind making it possible to accomplish the purpose of earth life.

John the Baptist was of priestly descent, the son of Zacharias. During the Mosaic dispensation, the priests descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses, and they had the rights to the priesthood of Aaron by lineage coupled with the requirement of worthiness. One of John's messages was that the people had departed from the requirement of worthiness and were worshiping God in form only. They offered sacrifices, but knew not why. For example, the doctrine and principle instituted from the time of Adam of the sacrificial lamb being in the similitude of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God apparently had been lost. What they were offering as a sacrifice was in form only!

What cannot be thoroughly understood from the biblical account is that Moses and the other prophets before him possessed the higher priesthood which was passed down from father to worthy sons over generations. During the time the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, the religion of the Israelites deteriorated to the point where it was necessary for God to call Moses to bring the once covenant people out of Egypt. Moses tried to prepare the people to stand in the presence of God as Moses himself had done, but the children of Israel rebelled

and therefore were denied that privilege as we are told in the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament. From that time on, the higher priesthood was held only by the prophets and not by Aaron and his descendants. The distinction between the higher and lower priesthoods is that the name of the higher priesthood was originally “called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood.” [D&C 107:3] When the men of Israel failed to qualify themselves spiritually for the higher priesthood, they were given the opportunity to participate in carrying out the work of the Lord at a different level of responsibility; thus, the Holy Priesthood was partitioned with regards to authority and function. Those brethren who possessed the Melchizedek Priesthood, although able and authorized to perform all of the functions of the priesthood, were responsible for the more spiritual aspects of the labor. The more temporal or physical responsibilities were relegated to the Aaronic Priesthood which included the Levitical Priesthood. This subordinate priesthood dealt with the physical ordinances as performed by the descendants of Aaron and by the descendants of Levi who administered certain temple rites from the time of Moses on down to more current times. Because the priesthood was a patriarchal order, the Jews keep their genealogies in order to prove that they had certain priesthood rights by lineage.

“Had the Church of God been in existence with the Jews in that day, instead of the Jews being in a dreadful state of apostasy, then John the Baptist would have taken his proper place as the presiding priest of the Aaronic order. But they recognized him not and failed to understand his authority, even as they failed to comprehend the authority of our Lord. The authority of John was that which was conferred upon Aaron and which came down by right of lineage to Eleazar and his posterity after him; but the Jews failed to recognize John and rejected him. By right of his authority John laid the foundation for the overthrow of their kingdom, or power, which was based on a false foundation. Had they accepted John then also would they have accepted Christ, the Lord, their rightful King and the great High Priest of their salvation.”²⁹

John held the keys to the Aaronic Priesthood and was able to be the forerunner of the Messiah; and, in order to fulfill all righteousness, John performed the ordinance of baptism for Jesus. Through Jesus the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored and conferred upon his apostles and others. Certain keys of the priesthood were restored during the Savior’s ministry, for example, on the Mount of Transfiguration. [Matt 17:1-3]

In summary, the priesthood and the keys of the priesthood were restored during Jesus’ ministry and dispensation because they had been lost due to apostasy.

3. An organization is established to administer the ordinances of salvation and to carry out the work of the ministry which includes sharing the “good news” with others.

Jesus developed the organization of his Church by first calling twelve apostles and later he called 70 others to help in the ministry. The organization grew even after the death and

²⁹Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol.3, p.89

resurrection of Jesus. Paul wrote of other officers and teachers who were needed and called to serve:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” [Ephesians 4:11-14]

In summary, Jesus and his apostles established an organization to administer the ordinances of salvation and to carry out the work of the ministry.

4. There is opposition to the work of the ministry by the adversary and his fellow travelers.

All during the ministry of Jesus, he met opposition from his own people, the Jews. In the end according to Bible and legal scholars he suffered the consequences of an illegal Jewish trial.

As Talmage stated,

"The pages of human history present no stronger case of judicial murder than the trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, for the simple reason that all forms of law were outraged and trampled under foot in the proceedings instituted against Him."³⁰

John Taylor summarized the acts of those who opposed the Lord’s work; they “beheaded John, crucified Jesus, killed his apostles, and persecuted his followers; and their temple, nation, and polity were destroyed.”³¹

In summary, there was opposition to the work of the Jesus’ ministry by the adversary and his fellow travelers. In fact, the apostles themselves prophesied that this would happen and eventually lead to apostasy within the church.

5. A record is kept which becomes known as scripture.

The restoration and establishment of the Lord’s Church during the meridian of times resulted in the New Testament. B. H. Roberts states the following regarding the New Testament:

“The twenty-seven books collected in the New Testament were written by a number of authors, eight at least (nine, in case the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by Paul). For each book there was some special occasion, each had its distinct purpose, and between the

³⁰ James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, Ch.34, p.648

³¹ Journal of Discourses, Vol.11, p.222 - p.223, John Taylor, April. 7, 1866

writing of the earliest and latest parts nearly half a century intervened. The agreement, under these circumstances, is truly wonderful, and the adaptation of a volume, thus penned, for all ages and classes is not less so. Nothing will account for such agreement and adaptation save a supernatural element in the composition; but we are now concerned with the human conditions which called forth these writings. Christ wrote nothing; but is himself the book of life to be read by all. He is written on the world's history and on men's hearts, and furnishes an unending theme of holy thoughts, discourses, and songs of praise. ... No book of the New Testament was written until about twenty years after the resurrection of Christ, and more than half a century had passed before John wrote the fourth Gospel.”³²

In summary, the New Testament was written as a scripture or testament of what transpired during the dispensation of Christ and his apostles. Thus, the coming forth of the New Testament satisfied another of the five characteristics of a dispensation of the gospel.

To summarize the above we can say that unmistakably we have shown that the dispensation of Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Apostles satisfied the 5 characteristics of what we call a dispensation of the gospel. As we know from each of the preceding dispensations, there occurred a falling away from that which had been established. Similarly, following the dispensation of the meridian of times, there was an apostasy which began even during the time of the ministry of the apostles.

An Apostasy took place after Christ and his apostles departed from Earth

An apostasy from the church and the teachings of Jesus and his apostles was predicted and witnessed even during the ministry of the apostles making it necessary for a restoration to later occur. James E. Talmage stated it this way, referring to quotes from both Paul and Peter:

“After the departure of Christ from earth His apostles continued to warn the people of the darkness to come. In that memorable address to the elders at Ephesus, when, as he told them, they were looking upon his face for the last time, Paul reminded his hearers of the instructions he had previously given them, and then charged them with this solemn warning: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

“In a Second epistle to his beloved Timothy, while laboring under the premonition that his martyrdom was near at hand, Paul urges zeal and energy in the preaching of the gospel; for the shadows of the apostasy were gathering about the Church. His admonition is pathetic in its earnestness: "I charge thee, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine; for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

³²

B.H. Roberts, The Seventy's Course in Theology, First Year, p.75

“In addressing the Thessalonian saints, Paul warns them against the error strongly advocated by some that the day of Christ's second advent was then near at hand. It appears that deception was being practiced, and that even forgery was suspected, for the apostle instructs the people that they be not deceived "by word nor by letter as from us." The admonition is forceful: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. **Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God." We shall see how painfully literal has been the fulfilment of this prophecy in the blasphemous assumptions of the apostate church, centuries later.

“The Apostle Peter prophesied in language so plain that none may fail to comprehend, concerning the heresies that would be preached as doctrine in the period of the apostasy; and he reminds the people that there were false teachers in olden times, even as there would be in times then future: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."³³

Spencer W. Kimball summarized the apostasy which led to the Dark Ages this way:

“Men turned from truth. Lucifer turned men from the truth to fables. He changed men from revelation to human logic and mental gymnastics and convinced them that man was on his own, to make all his own determinations without the aid of God and his prophets and apostles. This earth, already much in darkness, slipped into the Dark Ages when the Holy Ghost was not available to men, when no prophets led the people, when men's minds were darkened, when few inventions came to benefit mankind.

“Philosophy replaced revelation. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the apostasy came not through persecution, but by relinquishment of faith caused by the superimposing of a man-made structure upon and over the divine program. Many men with no pretense nor claim to revelation, speaking without divine authority or revelation, depending only upon their own brilliant minds, but representing as they claim the congregations of the Christians and in long conference and erudite councils, sought the creation process to make a God which all could accept.

“The brilliant minds with their philosophies, knowing much about the Christian traditions and the pagan philosophies, would combine all elements to please everybody. They replaced the simple ways and program of the Christ with spectacular rituals, colorful display,

³³ James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, p.27 - p.30

impressive pageantry, and limitless pomposity, and called it Christianity. They had replaced the glorious, divine plan of exaltation of Christ with an elaborate, colorful, man-made system. They seemed to have little idea of totally dethroning the Christ, nor terminating the life of God, as in our own day, but they put together an incomprehensible God idea.

“They thus reached the point of muddled mysticism called "the mystery of mysteries," with contradictions that Gods are separate yet combined, substance yet without substance, anthropomorphic yet only spirit, the Son begotten yet unbegotten.

“It took them years to develop this incomprehensible mysticism, and after many centuries the Christians are still mystified, and this has led in no small measure to the "Death of God" theorists, for as one modern thinker said: "It is easier to think of a dead God than one who is mystified, disembodied, inactivated, powerless, unimpressive."

“The Reformation reacted to apostasy. The apostles were killed and the saints were driven by the Roman emperors, and with the death of these important people, the authority went with them and authority was lost.

“About A.D. 300 Constantine, who was not a Christian, organized the great worldwide church. Men with keen intelligence got to [at] Nicea and created a God. They did not pray for wisdom or revelation. They claimed no revelation from the Lord. They made it just about like a political party would do, and out of their own mortal minds created a God which is still worshiped by the great majority of Christians. They took away all his physical properties, they took the Father and the Son and made them into one undefinable spirit, and they changed baptism to sprinkling, they changed other ordinances and doctrines, so by the time the great Luther came, there had been a great apostasy from the Church. Luther knew that. He did not expect to organize a new church. He just wanted to cleanse the old church, of which he was a priest. Now, we believe Luther was a great man. He was courageous. Yet, he did not claim revelation, as far as I have found; but he did a great service to mankind. He turned the key in the lock that opened the door of mental serfdom. For hundreds of years before Luther, there had been mental slavery. People did not read their Bibles, they listened only to the priest. They were in spiritual bondage. But beginning with this break of Martin Luther from the church of which he had been a member, freedom of thought and freedom of religion began to be a nearer reality. We know that Luther came as a servant of the Lord to open the way, just like Columbus discovered America in the part of the great program of our Heavenly Father, and just like the Puritans and Pilgrims who found their way to the new world.

“Beginning with Martin Luther there came a flood of new reformers, and hundreds of Protestant churches have grown up, and not one of them claimed a new revelation from God. They went their own ways. They interpreted the scriptures according to their own minds and, of course, there are marvelous people in all of those organizations, but God did not reveal those new organizations.

“Spiritual darkness was a desolation. We are pilgrims upon this earth, sent here with a mission to perform, a great work to do, for which we need guidance from the Lord. The fact that I was not born in the times of spiritual darkness in which the heavens were silent and the

Spirit withdrawn fills my soul with gratitude. Truly, to be without the word of the Lord to direct us is to be as wanderers in a vast desert who can find no familiar landmarks, or in the dense darkness of a cavern with no light to show us the way to escape.”³⁴

In summary, the gospel in its purity did not last long amongst the people before and especially after the departure of the Apostles. There is no mistake about it, an apostasy took place which means that it would be necessary to have a restoration or restitution of what had been lost during what has come to be known as the Dark Ages. Did Jesus and the Apostles foresee the apostasy and an eventual restoration? The answer is “Yes,” and the scriptures attest to this conclusion. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ people wondered when his “second coming” would occur. Following the healing of “a certain man lame from his mother's womb . . . whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple” a crowd gathered in awe at the healing and Peter declared to them the following:

“And when Peter saw [it], he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let [him] go.

“But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

“And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

“And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

“And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did [it], as [did] also your rulers.

“But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

“And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

“Whom the heaven must receive **until the times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” [Acts 3:12-21]

³⁴ The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.425

This last verse states that all of the prophets since the world began had spoken about the “times of the restitution of all things” which Peter says would occur prior to the second coming of the Lord. **So, at some time between the dispensation of the meridian of times and the 2nd coming of the Savior there would be a restoration or restitution of all things; and, it has happened!**

The Restitution of All Things spoken of by Peter has Occurred and is still Occurring

The restitution or restoration of “all things” as has been stated already had its formal beginning in the Spring of 1820 when Joseph Smith experienced his theophany with the Father and the Son. This is what attracted the attention of our Christian ancestors. The Holy Ghost bore witness to our ancestors that the restoration of all things had begun. They were willing to change their lives and gather with the other “eagles” to America and to the place prophesied by Isaiah:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, [that] the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
[Isaiah 2:2,3]

Our ancestors did come to “the mountain of the Lord” and they were taught “of his ways” and they did “walk in his paths.” How grateful we should be that they had the courage and strength of character to act on those impressions given to them by the Spirit. How grateful I am that they were not “past feeling.” How grateful I am that I was not “past feeling” in 1950 when the Spirit testified to me that the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ was true and that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.

May we follow in our ancestors footsteps. May we be true and faithful to our covenants and to the religious heritage our ancestors have given us.

----- Richard E. Turley, Sr., Salt Lake City, Utah, June 13, 2005

APPENDICES

- A A brief summary of the reform movement within the medieval Catholic Church which led to fragmented Protestantism.**

- B A brief historical background of Saxe-Coburg from German History**

- C An English Translation of the Athanasian Creed**

APPENDIX A

**A brief summary of
the reform movement within the medieval Catholic Church
which led to fragmented Protestantism.**

“**Reformers of different kinds**—including John Wycliffe, John Huss (Jan Hus), and Girolamo Savonarola—denounced the moral laxity and financial corruption that had infected the church “in its members and in its head” and called for radical change. Profound social and political changes were taking place in the West, with the awakening of national consciousness and the increasing strength of the cities in which a new merchant class came into its own. The Protestant Reformation may be seen as the convergence of such forces as the call for reform in the church, the growth of nationalism, and the emergence of the “spirit of capitalism.”

“**Martin Luther** was the catalyst that precipitated the new movement. His personal struggle for religious certainty led him, against his will, to question the medieval system of salvation and the very authority of the church, and his excommunication by Pope Leo X proved to be an irreversible step toward the division of Western Christendom. Nor was the movement confined to Luther's Germany. Native reform movements in Switzerland found leadership in Huldreich Zwingli and especially in John Calvin, whose *Institutes of the Christian Religion* became the most influential summary of the new theology. The English Reformation, provoked by the troubles of King Henry VIII, reflected the influence of the Lutheran and then of the Calvinistic reforms, but went its own “middle way,” retaining Catholic elements such as the historic episcopate alongside Protestant elements such as the sole authority of the Bible. The thought of Calvin helped in his native France to create the Huguenot party (*see* Huguenots), which was fiercely opposed by both church and state, but finally achieved recognition with the Edict of Nantes in 1598 (ultimately revoked in 1685). The more radical Reformation groups, notably the Anabaptists, set themselves against other Protestants as well as against Rome, rejecting such long-established practices as infant baptism and sometimes even such dogmas as the Trinity and denouncing the alliance of church and state. *See also* Calvinism; Lutheranism; Presbyterianism.

“That alliance helped to determine the outcome of the Reformation, which succeeded where it gained the support of the new national states. As a consequence of these ties to the rising national spirit, the Reformation helped to create the literary monuments—especially translations of the Bible—that decisively shaped the language and the spirit of the peoples. It also gave fresh stimulus to biblical preaching and to worship in the vernacular, for which a new hymnody [the singing of hymns, the composing or writing of hymns] came into being. Because of its emphasis on the participation of all believers in worship and confession, the Reformation developed systems for instruction in doctrine and ethics, especially in the form of catechisms, and an ethic of service in the world.

“The Protestant Reformation did not exhaust the spirit of reform within the Roman Catholic church. In response both to the Protestant challenge and to its own needs, the church summoned the Council of Trent (*see* Trent, Council of), which continued over the years 1545-63, giving definitive formulation to doctrines at issue and legislating practical reforms in liturgy, church administration, and education. Responsibility for carrying out the actions of the council fell in considerable measure on the Society of Jesus, formed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (*see* Jesuits). The chronological

coincidence of the discovery of the New World and the Reformation was seen as a providential opportunity to evangelize those who had never heard the gospel. Trent on the Roman Catholic side and the several confessions of faith on the Protestant side had the effect of making the divisions permanent.

“In one respect the divisions were not permanent, for new divisions continued to appear. Historically, the most noteworthy of these were probably the ones that arose in the Church of England. The Puritans objected to the “remnants of popery” in the liturgical and institutional life of Anglicanism and pressed for a further reformation. Because of the Anglican union of throne and altar, this agitation had direct—and, as it turned out, violent—political consequences, climaxing in the English Revolution and the execution of King Charles I in 1649. Puritanism found its most complete expression, both politically and theologically, in North America. The Pietists of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches of Europe usually managed to remain within the establishment as a party instead of forming a separate church, but Pietism shaped the outlook of many among the Continental groups who came to North America. European Pietism also found an echo in England, where it was a significant force in the life and thought of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement.”³⁵

APPENDIX B

A brief historical background of Saxe-Coburg from German History

“Saxe-Coburg[saks-kOburg] Pronunciation Key, Ger. Sachsen-Coburg, former duchy, central Germany. A possession of the Ernestine branch of the house of Wettin, it was given by Ernest the Pious (d. 1675) of Saxe-Gotha to his son Albert. On Albert's death (1699) it passed to his younger brother, John Ernest, duke of Saxe-Saalfeld, whose descendants ruled the duchy of Coburg until 1918 and the duchy of Saalfeld until 1826. The extinction (1825) of the related line of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg resulted in a general redivision of the Ernestine possessions in 1826. The duchy of Saalfeld passed to the duke of Saxe-Meiningen, while Ernest III of Saxe-Coburg received the duchy of Gotha and assumed the style Ernest I, duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Ernest I's brother was crowned (1831) as Leopold I, king of the Belgians, and Ernest's son Albert married (1840) Queen Victoria of Great Britain. Thus the house of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha became the ruling dynasty of Belgium and of Great Britain (where the name was changed to Windsor during World War I). Ernest II, son of Leopold I, sided with Prussia in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. He was succeeded (1893) by Alfred, duke of Edinburgh, a son of Queen Victoria and the father of Queen Marie of Romania. On Alfred's death (1900) the duchy passed to his nephew, Charles Edward, who abdicated in 1918. In 1920 Saxe-Gotha was incorporated into Thuringia, and Saxe-Coburg into Bavaria.”³⁶

³⁶ *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* Copyright © 2003, Columbia University Press. Licensed from Columbia University Press. All rights reserved.

APPENDIX C

An English Translation of the Athanasian Creed

The Athanasian Creed **to which we do not subscribe** is a statement of Christian doctrine traditionally ascribed to St. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, who lived during the 4th century after Christ. **From the Internet**, I obtained an English translation of the Athanasian Creed to give you an idea of what was devised as a statement of “Christian” belief by clerics and philosophers through the process of consensus, and compromise, **not by revelation from God.**³⁷ The creed follows:

“Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith; Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this:

- That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.
- For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
- Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.
- The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.
- The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
- The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
- And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal.
- As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
- So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
- So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
- And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
- So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
- And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.
- For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;
- So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say; There are three Gods or three Lords.

³⁷ Citation Reference and Disclaimer: “Content on this web site is provided for informational purposes only. We accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person resulting from information published on this site. We encourage you to verify any critical information with the relevant authorities. ©2004 Encyclopedia4U.com | Privacy . This article is licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License. It uses material from the Wikipedia article "Athanasian Creed".”

- The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
- The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.
- The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
- So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.
- And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another.
- But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal.
- So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.
- He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
- Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.
- God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world.
- Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
- Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
- Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.
- One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of that manhood into God.
- One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.
- For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
- Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
- He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God, Almighty;
- From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
- At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; and shall give account of their own works.
- And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
- This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.”

To reiterate what I have written above, **we do not subscribe to the above stated creed nor to any other post-biblical uninspired creed.** Because of this, some in the Christian community label us as non-Christians which is ridiculous because we as Latter-day Saints “are made alive in Christ because of our faith; we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”³⁸

³⁸

Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, 2 Nephi 25:25,26, p. 100.