

Podcast 120: One Heart First

In this episode, Denver discusses the process that groups of people have followed in the past and need to follow today to achieve unity when working together on a project.

DENVER: Several years ago there were a number of people who were independently interested in trying to do something to reclaim the Scriptures in a more accurate and authentic way. I heard rumors about the existence of this project—people had talked about it—and the existence of the project came to my attention by rumors, for some time. But it was late in December of that year (and I right now don't recollect what year it was... No, it was—this was when the very thing began)... It was late in December, and it was almost within a two-week time period that one group finished what they believed to be a completed project on the Scriptures, getting them back into shape. And they turned that product over to me.

When they turned it over to me, I was surprised to learn the identity of the people that I had heard the rumors about, and I was interested in looking at what they had completed and what they turned over. But within a two-week time period, a second group stepped up who had likewise completed a Scripture project and turned that project over to me for me to look at. And neither of these groups who'd been working on it had been working together or were even aware that they had independently started on and were working toward the same end.

So, I wind up now in possession of two different sets of the same objective, which is to get a better set of Scriptures put together. And it... The thing that occurred to me was that it really should not be something that I go through and read and compare the two with one another, but it made a whole lot more sense to get the two groups together. And so, the projects that were now done resulted in a meeting (in the same room that we're in right now) of representatives from both groups. Some of the people that were involved in it chose to be anonymous and remain behind the scenes. But both groups were well represented by getting together to talk about "the projects."

They were identical in the objective, and they were very different in the content. Because as you go through and you have to reconcile problems that you find with the version of the Scriptures that are in existence, what you find is that one group discovered some set of problems and resolved those, while another group found a different set of problems and resolved those—but neither group had identical problem-recognition or problem-solving. There were many places where they were identical, but there were also many places in which there was a dissimilarity between the two. And in the meeting that began (in the early discussions), what we learned was that sometimes the same problem had been identified and grappled with by both groups, but for different reasons they had reached a different method to resolve the scriptural problem. And so, the discussion became detailed

and lively and interesting. And both sides were willing to take a look at the whys and wherefores of the manner in which the dilemmas had been reconciled. And both sides were very interested in seeing what they had not had come to their attention that the other group had done. And so, a project these two groups had worked on (literally for more than a year, a couple of years)—and both of whom thought their project was now done—in coming together realized that nothing had yet been accomplished, and it all had to start over again.

And so, the work of both groups (that was originally envisioned as having been 100% completed) now turns into the starting point for a combined effort to try and work this problem through. So, the Scripture project had now three beginnings, and it started over again.

There were **numerous** issues that came up. Both groups had strong personalities. Some of those strong personalities were also eccentric people whose strong feelings and eccentricities lent themselves to not merely lively debate, but also conflict and disagreement. One of the things that we confronted, time and time again, were strongly held opinions in conflict with one another that required people to come together and reason with one another.

Now, not everyone was involved in every single part of problem identification. Instead, someone would be trusted to go do and resolve something. (I say “someone”... It was usually a group—two, three, four people working on something.) And then, what was not agreed to with unanimity, the problem was then presented to everyone. And we get together with everyone in the same room (or in the same room with a number of people joining by Zoom or online), and we’d hash it through. The way in which a problem was resolved was by **unanimous** agreement. If there was not unanimous agreement, then the issue was discussed, the opinions were laid on the table, the disagreement was exposed, and then it was tabled. And we would come back at a later point, and we would approach it again—but it required unanimity in coming to a resolution for the problem in order for that issue to be put to bed and things to move on.

Well, the project advanced far enough and the attention to the project had been spoken about widely enough that we began to talk about it publicly and openly and inviting other people to participate. Any number of volunteers... I think at one point we had as many as 200 people that were trying to help out on the project, but any number of volunteers looked, worked, cross-checked, double-checked, worked with manuscripts.

We learned a hard lesson in that process—because the entire objective of the Scripture project was not to innovate. It was to do the hard research work in order to identify (as accurately and completely as it is possible to do so) what it was that Joseph Smith did with the translation of the Book of Mormon/with the revelations as they tumbled out when they were originally given and originally recorded and what Joseph Smith had done with his revision to the Bible (the Old and the New Testament). So, it was a research project; it was

not a drafting, or it wasn't an "innovating" project. It was a reclamation project that was trying to strictly get back what it was that Joseph had originally given to us.

Joseph referred to his effort to recover the Bible in its original form as "the fullness of the Scriptures." So, the Bible—the Old and the New Testament—was what was referred to as the fullness of the Scriptures. The Book of Mormon was the "Book of Mormon," and the revelations given to Joseph was referred to generically (very often) as just the "commandments." And so, when the term "the fullness of the Scriptures" got used by Joseph, he was referring to the work that he was doing in recovering the Joseph Smith translation.

So, we move along happily to the point that we think we've got this project in a robust enough state of completion that it went into print, and it was circulated (as a result of the conference that was held down in St George), and hard copies of these things became available (print-on-demand through Amazon), and people bought them.

One of the folks in whose hands a copy of those Scriptures wound up is in here in the room today. (I'm not naming names today because I don't wanna embarrass anyone.) But one of the people that's sitting in the room happened to have spent years of work on the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, in which he learned things about the JST version that no one on the committee had had brought to their attention. And so, after they were in print and available in print-on-demand and the JST (that everyone on the committee was so proud of) came to the attention of someone that knew more, he (fortunately) was willing to volunteer; he joined the committee. And so, the project that was complete enough to call it done and "Now we can put it out in print," we find out is not only not complete enough, but it needed to start all over again from scratch. And so, the project—which had been done now another time in its fourth state of completion—began anew because attention had been paid to details that had not yet come to the attention of the committee.

Then we find out that not only was the JST version incomplete and the version we were working with had been modified before its publication by the RLDS Church (who felt at liberty to eliminate some of the changes that Joseph Smith made and also to add some additions to it that the publication's committee at Herald House—the RLDS Church—felt at liberty to make), and so the text had become something other than the Joseph Smith translation. Fortunately, there was resources available and someone who had spent the time invested in those resources to guide through that.

But we also found that the original publication of the Book of Commandments, which was done in Missouri by Oliver Cowdery and W.W. Phelps... That's the version that got destroyed by the mob, and copies (unbound copies) of those got smuggled out by women in their skirts. The Book of Commandments (that was assembled from that printing) later was bound—at a later time, in another place—and the do-over of the Book of Commandments was accomplished in 1835 back in Kirtland where they had a press.

And so, the original expectation was that the Book of Commandments had a better version than did the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. (They changed the name from Book of Commandments to Doctrine and Covenants for the first time in 1835.) However, what we learned upon further research ('cause this is a research project) is that Oliver Cowdery—who had been given permission in a revelation to write (but not by way of commandment) for the Church—felt at liberty to take the revelations of Joseph when he put it into the Book of Commandments and make changes there. That Book of Commandments version was what the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants teed off of. So, they began with an altered document.

And then the committee that worked on the publications also felt at liberty... 'Cause now you had (in addition to Oliver Cowdery's changes) Sidney Rigdon making changes, and Sidney felt very much at liberty to interject his views into things. And so, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants included substantially-yet-more revisions to the revelations that have been made. We—after publishing it the first time—discovered that there were fundamental problems with how the revelations or commandments had been incorporated into the Scriptures. And so, that project had to start all over again and ferret out how that would happen.

A couple of brothers, both of whom had strong opinions, were leading up that portion of the effort, and they would come back to the committee with frequent disagreements, in which they felt at liberty (because they're family members, after all) to—you know—verbally spar with one another in a robust and uninhibited fashion, and then we were called upon to referee that. But it was... It was a bunch of strong personalities.

Nevertheless, coming out of all that was a consensus about how we resolve things. And the Doctrine and Covenants project—which has now turned into the Teachings and Commandments (we've retitled it 'cause it's very different from a Doctrine and Covenants)—that project restarted, and then it ran into a few hiccups and restarted yet again. So, now what are we? Five or six times into the thing?

There were times when it was almost impossible to referee and peaceably resolve what was going on among brethren working side-by-side to get the project done. So, I sent an email (and I didn't realize this was gonna show up in the foreword to the Teachings and Commandments), but I sent an email out at one point—when we needed group therapy because we were at impasse and hadn't gotten to unanimous agreement—and this shows up now in the forepart of the Teachings and Commandments as just some background noise. But it was written in the heat of battle, trying to get consensus among people. This is the email:

I would rather submit to the decision of the group than insist that my view be followed. For me, harmony between brethren is more important than getting what I think [the] best to be followed. I believe harmony can lead to much greater things than can merely enforcement of even a correct view. I know how difficult it is to have a correct view, because of how often [I've] been corrected by the Lord.

Sometimes I am humiliated by my foolishness when the Lord reproves me. Humiliation can lead to humility, but my experience is that...humiliation is accompanied by shame, whereas humility can proceed with a clean conscience.

My experience with others leads me to conclude that if we can have one heart first, eventually we can likewise come to have one mind. But if we insist on having one mind at the outset, we may never obtain one heart together.

That was written to try and persuade the Scripture committee to come together at a difficult point when we were high-centered. And apparently, folks valued it enough—that email mattered enough—that it wound up in the forepart of the Teachings and Commandments.

Well, as people had been invited to help proofread, one of the proofreaders apparently misunderstood what the project was. They were entrusted to work on the Book of Isaiah, 'cause that was a hobby horse sort of thing with them. And what we got back from the proofreader was a complete rewrite of the Book of Isaiah—not tacking from the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, but adopting Avraham Gileadi's explanation of what ought to go into the content of the Book of Isaiah.

Well, Avraham Gileadi is not a dispensation head (however much he may contribute to someone's understanding). He's not Joseph Smith. He was not given the commandment by God to accomplish a specific work, and Joseph Smith was. Therefore, our now boogered-up version of Isaiah comes back from the proofreader, and there's some degree of dismay—I mean, depending upon which member of the committee you talk to, it could be shock and horror. And there's a scramble to find out: Did we keep an electronic version of where we started? Because that was a whole lot closer than what we've got now in the return from our ostensible proofreader.

There's an example of an Isaiah passage that Avraham Gileadi made that I **really** like, 'k? I think Avraham's statement is worth taking the time to illustrate. In the JST version, the passage talking about... In the time period after there has been a period of turmoil—a period of destruction and judgment—and now on the other side of this awful ordeal, Isaiah is looking forward, and he's prophesying what you'll see on the other side of that. In the Joseph Smith translation of the passage, he says (God's speaking says), *I will make a man more precious than fine gold* (Isaiah 6:2 RE). So, the reasonable conclusion that you would reach from that is that those people who go through the ordeal will have gained so much character and so much value from the experience that they will be refined; they will be appreciative, humble, good, good people. That same passage is rendered by Avraham Gileadi quite differently. He says, *I will make man scarcer than fine gold, men more rare than gold of Ophir* (Isaiah 13:12, Isaiah Institute Translation), meaning (in this view of that same language) men will be dead. There will be so few men left occupying this post-apocalyptic society that you'll have to search the earth to find a man in the same way that you now have to search the earth in order to find gold as a precious metal. Two fundamentally different views.

Well, because Joseph Smith reviewed and Joseph Smith corrected the Bible, the version that we ought to have in our standard text is the one that the dispensation head operating under a commandment from God rendered the passage. And so, *I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir* (Isaiah 6:2 RE) is the way it appears in the JST, and it's the way it appears now in what is rendered as the Old Covenants.

Well, Joseph Smith got the original commandment to work on this (the revision to the Scriptures) in a revelation that was given in December of 1830. This is almost at the very beginning of Joseph Smith's acquaintance with Sidney Rigdon (Sidney Rigdon being an experienced biblical preacher from a Campbellite tradition, coming to Joseph Smith and meeting him, and converting after he'd been proselytized by the first set of missionaries—including Parley Pratt, himself a Campbellite). So, he traveled to meet Joseph, and a commandment is given on the seventh of December of 1830 which says: *And a commandment I give unto you....* (This is directed at Sidney Rigdon.)

...a commandment I give unto you that you shall write for him, and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in [mine] own bosom, to the salvation of [mine] own elect, for they will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep, and shall abide the day of my coming. (T&C 18:6)

So, Sidney Rigdon meets Joseph Smith, and a commandment comes: "Sidney Rigdon, you write for Joseph. I'm giving a commandment: you're gonna work on the Scriptures. The Scriptures shall be given."

Well, the Scriptures that are to be given are not the commandments. It's this new revision of the Bible, which they began in this time period in the way that the LDS Church brought the book of Moses into print—originally in England and then later adopted as Scripture—but it was printed in the same format it had been in England. The book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price tells you the date on which various chapters of the book of Moses were recorded. This is the text that includes the Enoch passages. This is the text that includes, *This is my work and my glory: to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man* (Genesis 1:7 RE). This is the text that Enoch is caught up to heaven, and he's weeping, and he's saying, "I refuse to be comforted." And then the Lord shows him the day of the coming of the Son of Man, and he wants to know when will the Son of Man be lifted up, and when will we be relieved of the burden of our sin, in effect? And he rejoices and is overjoyed at seeing the crucifixion of the Lord—which, to us, it sounds like he's celebrating the wrong thing. But in the heavenly condition that Enoch was when he observes this, he's overjoyed because of what it means, because of salvation coming. This is the text that includes the earth being pained, "Woe is me because of the wickedness of man that is upon my face. When shall I rest from this wickedness?" (see Genesis 4:20 RE). This text is what comes out in the Pearl of Great Price in December of 1830, as the **beginning** of the Joseph Smith translation of the Scriptures that he was commanded to do.

Now, I've gone through and read the Teachings and Commandments. Everywhere the "fullness of the Scriptures" or the revision to the Bible appears, I've put a little yellow tag on it. I haven't counted them, but there's probably 19 or 20 of them—those of you who are here can see all the tags. But they go from the command to begin to a... Section 20 of the Teachings and Commandments (also in December of 1830) that it says (to again, Joseph and Sidney Rigdon): *Behold, I say unto you...it is not expedient in me that you should translate anymore until you shall go to the Ohio, and this because of the enemy and for your sakes* (T&C 20:1) So, the work was interrupted later in December, but they were very productive. Much of what we have—in fact, I think all of what we have in the book of Moses of the Pearl of Great Price—existed between the starting point when the commandment was given in December and the ending point when the command was said to them, "Okay, stop for now, and we'll pick this up again in Ohio—that was given on the 30th of December 1830. The first commandment to commence the work was given on the 7th of December. So, in 23 days, they managed to produce what we've got in the book of Moses.

Then the next commandment to deal with it is given on the 9th of February of 1831. *You shall be directed by the spirit, which shall be given you by the prayer of faith, and if you receive not the spirit, you shall not teach. And all this you shall observe to do as I have commanded concerning your teaching, **until** the fullness of my scriptures are given* (T&C 26:5, emphasis added). Now, we read that first part (in the Latter-day Saint community) as referring to something about how you teach a gospel doctrine or a Sunday school class. But it's all based upon: When you teach, you need to know something, and you teach by the Spirit until I get the fullness of the Scriptures out there—because then you can base what you have to say upon something that is more accurate and more complete. And so, the fullness of the Scriptures gets mentioned again in February.

And then the next reference is made that same month of February. Oh, no. This one is in March. This one is in March. This one says, *Now behold, I say unto you, it shall not be given unto you to know any further than this until the New Testament be translated, and in it all these things shall be made known. Wherefore, I give unto you that you may now translate it* (T&C 31:13). So, by the time you get to the March 1831 time-period, the effort that had been devoted to getting the Old Testament completed gets shifted—they'll return to the Old Testament—but it gets shifted to the New Testament, and they're told to proceed with the translation of the New Testament.

In all of these revelations that deal with the Scriptures/the fullness of the Scriptures/the revision of the Bible by inspiration through Joseph Smith under the direction of the Lord to give us the Scriptures as they are in the bosom of the Lord, the word that gets used continually to describe that effort is "translate." So, the word "translate" has a highly particularized meaning. It does not mean taking an ancient text and working it through with Hebrew (or working it through—in the case of the New Testament—with New Testament-era Greek language) and making it more accurate as moving it from one language into another. The word "translate" means "operate under the power of the Spirit through revelation to restore that which has been lost and to clarify that which is in the Lord's own bosom." So, when the word "translate" gets used in the context of this project,

it's likely that that very same use of the word “translate” (in the vocabulary of Joseph Smith) means exactly the same thing when it comes to the book of Abraham. It would really help sharpen the focus if people were willing to concede that what Joseph Smith was doing was to operate under the spirit of inspiration in order to render what was lost **back** [into] something that is now in view and in a language that we can comprehend.

Well, the commandments about the Scripture translation process continue apace until—and I'm gonna skip all the intermediate ones—until we get to a commandment that was given in January of 1841 that approved Joseph Smith's offer of sacrifice—his prayer on behalf of the Saints—and allow the Saints to go forward with one more opportunity. If they would build a temple and complete it on time, then they would be not moved out of their place. But if they didn't do what was commanded, then they were warned that they would be rejected as a Church and as a people (along with their kindred dead), and they **would** be moved out of their place. And instead of the blessings and the prosperity of remaining anchored in what had been changed to the cornerstone of Zion in Nauvoo, they were warned that they would be cast out, they would be sent off in a place where they will experience plagues and difficulties and challenges, and that very same revelation in January of 1841—a lot of people are very familiar with—the revelation includes: If you will do it, *let him from henceforth hearken [unto] the counsel of my servant Joseph, and with his interest support the cause of the poor, and **publish the new translation of my holy word unto the inhabitants of the earth.** And if he will do this, I will bless him with a multiplicity of blessings...* (T&C 141:31, emphasis added) and so on. This is a statement to *my servant William* (ibid).

The effort to publish the new translation of the Scriptures (as it was directed in January of 1841) did not happen. There had been earlier commandments given (you can see them in the Teachings and Commandments) where this work was supposed to come out. And Joseph Smith said that if this publication of the revised translation of the Bible did not occur, then the Church would go into apostasy. It was essential for the salvation of the Church that it be given access to the fullness of the Scriptures.

Okay, so the New Testament translation that began in that March of 1831 time-frame apparently influenced how Joseph Smith revised the New Testament. We know that what was Doctrine and Covenants section 76 came as a result of the work having progressed to the book of John and him looking at (you know) the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust and how there had to be more than one condition in the afterlife. And so, D&C section 76 about the three degrees of glory in the afterlife come as a consequence of the translation of the book of John. So, you can fix exactly where they were in the New Testament effort by the date that D&C section 76 was given.

But before that, they were going through the book of Luke. In the book of Luke, Joseph Smith revised the warning that the Lord gives to the scribes and Pharisees that were confronting Him and questioning Him, and he changes the language of condemnation to read this way: *Woe unto you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scriptures. You enter not in yourselves into the kingdom, and those who were*

entering in, you hindered (Luke 8:17 RE). So, He's talking to the scribes and Pharisees and condemning them. And in the original condemnation that was in the bosom of the Lord—telling you what He was upset about when He confronted them in this passage of condemnation—what He was upset about was they had taken away a key of knowledge, as it had once appeared in the Scriptures, before they were corrupted.

So, the revision work that Joseph did—the research necessary to recover it all—got completed, and the Scripture project has now gotten to the point that it has been completed. Everyone on the committee had unanimously agreed that it was completed. The proposal was that we present it to the Lord. Because the presentation of this issue for acceptance to the Lord was a milestone event, it was my conclusion that you don't just get together and spontaneously pray about something like that. It rather requires the same kind of respect and formality that you would have, for example, in the prayer for the dedication of the Lord accepting the Kirtland temple (which appears in the Doctrine and Covenants as section 109). And so, in response to the committee's desire to have prayer, I sat down one evening to compose a prayer that I had thought, "I could write something good to that end." And instead, when I sat down, the "Prayer for the Covenant" was given by revelation. The content of the prayer for acceptance of the project was given as what the Lord wanted to be said in connection with the presentation.

So, it's not—much like the Kirtland temple dedicatory prayer, which was given by revelation—it's not the work of a man or men. It's a revelation of what the Lord expected for the prayer to be. I've written hundreds of thousands of words trying to describe accurately the history of the Restoration and what went awry. The prayer that asks for acceptance in the covenant is far more succinct and far more accurate and far more impressive a statement than all of the words that I've written. And they tell you... I tried to re-create the history based upon what men had furnished and preserved and what could be uncovered in the record, and much of what I wrote was my best conclusion from study of what I think is a likely scenario to have happened. The "Prayer for the Covenant" is an actual statement by revelation of what in fact did happen. So, if you wanna know the history of the Restoration, read that revelatory prayer.

Well, as soon as the prayer was composed, the answer tumbled out. And so, when we got together as a committee, the prayer was approved by everyone unanimously. And then I read the "Answer to the Prayer" to everyone, and everyone unanimously approved it. There was one missing fellow from the committee who wasn't present when that got done. And so, after it had been approved unanimously with one missing vote, he happened to become available and to call in. And so, I took the call, left the meeting, read him everything, and he approved it as well. So, it was unanimously approved by everyone that was involved in the project. And so, it was a happy day for those that are involved.

Time and time again throughout the process, because we learned something that we didn't know before, greater intelligence necessitated starting over. We wound up restarting this project at least a half a dozen times. When people thought they had reached a conclusion, it restarted because greater light and understanding necessitates that you start again. The

objective was never to produce a book. The objective was always to try and find—as best as humanly possible, through the most sincere and humble efforts of those involved—the most accurate retelling of what was originally intended.

Well, the truth is that despite all of our best efforts, we all knew that there were areas in which it was no longer possible to recover what might have been recovered when the original condemnation was made and the warning was given that the Church was under condemnation, 18 months after it had been organized. If they had acted on that **then**, they could have recovered all of it.

The original translation manuscript was put into the cornerstone; water damage made it rot. The printer's manuscript was copied; it was still available. But the copying of the printer's manuscript from the original translation manuscript can only be done in a comparison of about 22% of the text, because the original rotted. And so, when the two could be compared, we find that there were copying errors made at a rate of about 1 1/2 errors per page from trying to copy the original revelation into the translation. Joseph Smith made an effort to revise and bring it back more into conformity to the original revelation and was working on that in the 1842 timeframe, but he never finished his revisionary work to try and get the Book of Mormon back into print.

Well, we know there are things that we can't fix. So, when the prayer to the Lord was offered, we did not expect anything other than approving it. We didn't expect an "Attaboy." We didn't expect a "You've delighted Me." And we certainly didn't expect Him to say, "Perfect." And He didn't say that. What He said was that what has been done is adequate for the purposes that He has in mind to finish this up.

Long, arduous trek—everything got approved, not only by committee but by vote of people. Everyone accepted it. The Covenant was presented. The people voted on it, and the Scripture committee (as it turns out) and the effort that they produced led in turn to a Covenantal Restoration that the Lord apparently had intended all along when He inspired people to begin the process (a couple of years before the two groups got together, and we started on the Scripture project).

So, that's a background for what I want to talk about. So, having given the background, there are a couple of other projects that the covenant itself obligates those people who enter into the covenant are supposed to undertake. Those two projects that have been languishing since the time of the Restoration are taking the Book of Mormon—The Stick of Joseph in the Hands of Ephraim—to the remnant of the Jews, "mine ancient covenant people," and to take the Book of Mormon to the remnant of His covenant people that were in the Americas. So, we have a Scripture project that has been brought successfully to a conclusion, as concerns the Gentiles, and it has been made available in covenantal agreement between the Lord and the people to reclaim Gentiles and alter their status. But now the Gentiles who are in possession of this material have an obligation that the Lord imposes, by covenant, to take this same material to His ancient covenant people of the Jews and to take it to the Native American people.

Well, the work on the Hebrew version has taken two steps. One step is essentially an English-language version—because the majority of the Jewish people in the world can read and speak English. That work has been completed and is in publication, and people are aware of that—that's *The Stick of Joseph*. But a second effort is being undertaken to translate it into a biblical Hebrew version. Because that requires such extraordinarily particularized competency and familiarity with biblical Hebrew, we do not have the competency to accomplish that work through volunteer work. We have to hire that work to be done. We've found wonderfully capable people, and there are those who are donating to have professional people spend their time accomplishing a competent work into ancient Hebrew.

That doesn't mean that questions haven't arisen, because questions necessarily do arise. Some of the language that has been rendered into English (that have been provided in, for example, the *Allegory of Zenos*) present translation questions because of Hebrew options. And so, the work is being shepherded along as the translation process is undertaken—the objective being to have it be as accurate as possible to achieve a restatement of what the message was that's intended to go to that audience. But it's required from time to time in consultation, prayer, and revelation, and guidance from above, in order to get instructions to the translators correct so that the output reflects accurately what's needed. And that work is ongoing. And there are people who are supporting that financially, and it will continue apace. And when done, both the English version and the Hebrew version are going to be made available to the remnant of the Jews as something we can vouch for and, presumably, something that the Lord will accept before we take it to them, so that **it** operates to achieve covenantal status, again, for the ancient people.

There is also now an effort that has been put together to try and get a project done in order to take a version to the Native American people. And that's really what I wanna talk about. And all of this is just background for the moment we find ourselves there.

Unlike the effort that the Scripture project underwent (where we started with divergent groups, and then we brought it together to form a singular group—and to have, by unanimous agreement, a completed project), the work on a product for reaching out to the Native Americans **began** as a single group, and it has now fractured into multiple groups with, apparently...

I've tried to get the people together, in order to sit down and discuss—in an amicable and open exchange—a free flow of ideas to try and reach a unanimous agreement. And what I've been told is that while one of the fractions is willing to come in and sit down and talk, others are unwilling to do so; and so, the project is at an utter impasse. And apparently, right now the expectation is **multiple** versions of something is going to be put into print, and I can guarantee you that that will not be acceptable. In fact, I wouldn't even... I wouldn't even dream of presenting that to the Lord. That's the kind of thing that runs absolutely contrary to the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant. It runs absolutely contrary to the revelation about building the Master a house. It shows disunion; it shows disunity.

I believe, as I reflect back upon the original Scripture project, that the reason why it was acceptable to the Lord is because very strong personalities were able to come together and become one, that it was more important to the Lord that unity and oneness be achieved through that remarkable process than it was that the final product be absolutely better than it is. I think it was the learning experience of taking strong personalities approaching a difficult assignment and reaching agreement and unanimity by subordinating (as that email I wrote and read to you a minute ago helped facilitate, in the process of going from disunity to unity to enlightened output). In short, the book is evidence of an achievement of oneness, and therefore, the book stands as a symbol of acceptance of the Lord, acceptance of His way. Subordinating our disunity to come to agreement—it is a milestone achievement that represents exactly what the Lord is trying to achieve.

Now, there's a revelation in the Teachings and Commandments that says (this is T&C 138; it's the letter from Liberty Jail—this is the relevant part of that letter):

How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world. (T&C 138:18-19)

We should never view our ambition to achieve a work as more important than submitting to the will of God. When we do that, no matter how well-intentioned we may be, we are trifling with the souls of men.

This whole thing is critically important because of what we learn about last-days' covenantal status of different groups which God is intending to bring back aboard. Now, I'll tell you the punchline before going through the Scriptures. The punchline is this:

The Jews, in their present ignorance, are the covenant people of God. And they are heirs of that covenant and will remain so until they are presented with ~~the Book of Joseph~~ The Stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim. At that moment, they must make a decision. If they choose to accept that, their covenant status is not only affirmed but also renewed. But if they reject that, they walk away and cease to be numbered with His Covenant People.

The exact same thing happens to the Native American people. They are currently under covenantal status. If you take the Book of Mormon to the Native Americans in the form that we have it (that has been accepted by covenant) and you present it to them and they accept that, then their covenant status is renewed and affirmed, and they are among the Covenant People of God. But if they reject it, then they are no longer numbered among the Covenant People.

We are trifling with the souls of men when we do a half-assed job to hurry into print a product that is going to cut one way or the other in the salvation of a group of people—

remnant people—that the Lord Himself intends to redeem. None but fools would be trifling with this stuff. It is extraordinarily serious.

Gentiles become numbered with the House of Israel based upon their willingness to accept the covenant Book of Mormon that has been sustained and approved by God that was adopted by the people in the conference up in Boise and that is now available for people to look at. But you can't trifle with these things.

So, here's a passage from Second Nephi, the Lord speaking (this is a “Thus saith our God” passage):

*I will soften the hearts of the gentiles, that they shall be like unto a father to them. Wherefore, the gentiles shall be blessed **and numbered** among the house of Israel. Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto thy seed, **and they who shall be numbered among thy seed**, for ever, for the land of their inheritance; for it is a choice land, saith God unto me, above all other lands. Wherefore, I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me, saith God. (2 Nephi 7:4 RE, emphasis added)*

So, if the Gentiles are willing to accept the Book of Mormon because their hearts are soft, they get numbered among Israel, and they inherit the land. That's the status that people achieved when they accepted the Book of Mormon as a covenant.

The book of Alma... It talks about a group of people—these were particularly odious Lamanite people who had engaged in what they themselves viewed as a whole lot of bloodshed, a whole lot of murder. They were convicted in their hearts about all the blood that they had shed. But they repented. They buried their weapons. They would refuse then to fight further. (They would parent children who would fight further. They just themselves thought that there was too much blood that had been lost as a consequence of their own behavior to ever again risk going contrary to the will of God by shedding blood yet again.) So, this group of Lamanites (who were particularly bloody) converted, and then they came over after their conversion, and this is what the Book of Mormon records:

*They were called by the Nephites, the people of Ammon; therefore, they were distinguished by that name ever after. And **they** [these Lamanites who converted—**they**] were numbered among the people of Nephi, and also numbered among the people who were of the church of God. And they were...distinguished [by] their zeal. (Alma 15:9 RE, emphasis added)*

So, when they converted and when they accepted it, they ceased to be numbered with the Lamanites, and they became numbered with the Nephites.

Then, in a passage later in Alma... This is Alma the Younger who is recording a visionary experience that he has had, talking about what he sees happening among his people many,

many generations later and how that will eventually turn out. He's talking about the people that will be left after the ultimate collapse and slaughter of the Nephite people:

Yea, and then shall they see wars and [pestilence], yea, famine and bloodshed, even until the people of Nephi shall become extinct. Yea, and this because they shall dwindle in unbelief and fall into the works of darkness, and lasciviousness, and all manner of iniquities. Yea, I say unto you that because they shall sin against so great light and knowledge, ...I say unto you that from that day, even [unto] the fourth generation shall not all pass away before this great iniquity shall come. And when that great day cometh, behold, the time very soon cometh that those who are now, or the seed of those who are now numbered among the people of Nephi, shall no more be numbered among the people of Nephi. But whosoever remaineth and is not destroyed in that great and dreadful day shall be numbered among the ~~Nephites~~ [Lamanites]. (Alma 21:2 RE)

They are genealogically descended from Nephites. They lose their status. They cease to be numbered among Nephites; they become numbered among the Lamanites. Genealogically they are Nephite. They are no longer numbered among them in the eyes of God. They lose that status.

And then in the Third Nephi:

It came to pass...before this thirteenth year had passed away, the Nephites were threatened with utter destruction because of this war which had become exceeding[ly] sore. And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites, and their curse was taken from them. (3 Nephi 1:11 RE)

So, status changes based upon what one does with a covenantal offering presented to you under the direction and approval of God.

Perhaps you think that the Lamanite remnant aren't ready. And so, maybe fracturing the effort to present something to them that might offer them the hope of being renewed and restored to covenantal status is not going to succeed. So, let's present a fractured, divided, unapproved version that may as well be offered by an LDS missionary, and it won't matter anyway 'cause we're not gonna succeed. But if you figure that's the way to approach this project, then you're setting at naught, and you're defying the opportunity that has been presented through the covenant and the command that has been given to seek after and seek to reclaim these people.

We have a divinely inspired obligation. You can't rush that, and it doesn't matter if you have to start your project over a half a dozen times—or more. The output has to mirror the nobility of the objective that we have in mind. I think there are words to that effect (or I'm paraphrasing; they're better than I just said) in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant. The cause you seek and the way you go about it both have to be equally noble. If you don't pursue it nobly, then it doesn't matter what your output is. Hastily putting together

something that you're expecting to result in "covenantal opportunity" and "restoration" (to be extended to a remnant of people that God particularly had in mind at the time that the Book of Mormon first came out) should never be done in haste, should never be done carelessly, should never be done in a way that represents trifling with the souls of men.

And so, if we cannot come together in agreement to pursue a project as nobly and as unified and in conformity with the expectations the Lord imposed at the time of the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, then I would say let's leave it for another generation more noble than us to accomplish the work and to do it then. And we'll focus our effort on trying to reach out to the remnant of the Jews. Because that work is proceeding apace, in a unified way (that represents the best efforts we can make with the financial help and support of those that are undertaking the direct work), and with the counsel, and with the inspiration, guidance, and revelation necessary to see that through to a successful completion. It's being pursued without trifling with the souls of men.

But if we can't do it for the Native peoples, then we can't do it. And some other people in some other day can undertake to accomplish a work that reflects the nobility of the purpose and what is in the heart of God. 'Cause if we can't do it the right way, then we ought not attempt it at all. We oughta just confess our sins, our shortness, and our inadequacy, and say, "Yea, so be it."

But if we want to achieve something, then the manner in which you go about attempting to achieve it must be as noble as the attempt to accomplish the work. The work has to be mirrored by the effort in the output and in the process. You can't go about accusing one another like Satan and say, "...And God bless this work, because by damn, we're gonna get you a book. And it's gonna be the best book I can do!" When under the inspiration of God (everyone that worked on the Scriptures knows), there were times when the output was far greater because of the inspiration, guidance, and light from heaven than anything we on our own could ever have achieved. If you expect the inspiration, guidance, and help/assistance from heaven, then you have to approach heaven in a meaningful way.

The foregoing was recorded on August 15th, 2020 in Sandy, Utah in front of a live audience.