



“In the beginning
was the word . . .”

GOD’S PLAN FOR HIS CHILDREN. THE PREMORTAL,
DIVINE WORD
Abraham 3:22–28; Moses 1; 4:1–4; John 1:1–18; D&C 93:1–11.

“O Thou, Before the World Began” (hymn no. 189)

1. O thou, before the world began,
Ordained a sacrifice for man,
And by th’eternal Spirit made
An off’ring in the sinner’s stead;
Our everlasting Priest art thou,
Pleading thy death for sinners now.

2. Thy off’ring still continues new
Before the righteous Father’s view.
Thyself the Lamb forever slain;
Thy priesthood doth unchanged remain.
Thy years, O God, can never fail,
Nor thy blest work within the veil.

3. Oh, that our faith may never move
But stand unshaken as thy love,
Sure evidence of things unseen;
Now let it pass the years between
And view thee bleeding on the tree:
My Lord, my God, who dies for me.

Text: William H. Turton, 1856-1938

Music: Frank W. Asper, 1892-1973

<https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/o-thou-before-the-world-began?lang=eng>

God's Plan for His Children



Abraham 3:22–28

- “intelligences organized before the world began” = **spirit beings**
- The spirits around God were good, **he chose some (like Abraham) to be his rulers**
- **“There stood one among them that was like unto God . . .”** (Abraham 3:24)
- Purpose of the earth that they planned for the spirits:
 - **“we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them”** (Abraham 3:25)
- Those who keep **their first “estate”** would be added upon, i.e. receive **a second estate** and **added glory**
- “Whom shall I send?” (Abraham 2:27–28)
 - **One like unto the Son of Man**
 - Another, who was angry when not chosen (cf. Moses 4:1–4)

Moses encounters God and Satan (Moses 1:1–23)

- **God's revelation to Moses**

- “Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years . . .” (Moses 1:3)
- “there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all” (Moses 1:6c)
- Moses needed to be transfigured to be in his presence

- **God's Only Begotten**

- Moses is in his image
- “mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth” (Moses 1:6b)

- **Moses and all humankind**

- “Now, for this cause I know that **man is nothing**, which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10b)
- Response to Satan: “For behold, **I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten**” (Moses 1:13b)

- **Satan**

- No glory, Moses could look on him as a natural man
- Rants and raves but in the end has no power over Moses

Moses' Vision of All Creation (Moses 1:24–42)

- **Moses' call (Moses 1:24–26)**
- **Moses sees every particle of the earth and every inhabitant**
- **God creates all through the Son**
 - “For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me. *And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.* And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and ***by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten***” (Moses 1:31b–33)
- **God's infinite creations**
 - “there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but *all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.* . . . the heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; *but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine*” (Moses 1:35b, 37)
- **God's purpose**
 - “*For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man*” (Moses 1:39)
- **Moses writes only about this earth (Moses 1:40)**

The Divine Word of God



JOHN ¹ AND THE *LOGOS* HYMN

The *Logos* Hymn of John 1:1–18

- A poetic introduction in the form of a **hymn**
 - Poetic sections separated by prose asides or explanations
- Focuses on Jesus as “*the Word*” (Greek, *logos*)
 - Semantically rich in Greek, it means “word, expression, rational thought,” etc.
 - Sc. The New Translation: “In the beginning the gospel was preached through the son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.” (John 1:1 JST)
 - Just as words are the way people communicate with each other, *Jesus is the way that the Father communicates and interacts with his children*, linking the divine mind with the human
- In several poetic statements, the hymn establishes the following points:
 - **The preincarnate Word was divine**
 - **The Word** is the source of **Light and Life**
 - **The Light of the World** was not accepted by his own
 - **The Word** makes those who accept him sons and daughters of God
 - **The Word became flesh and his glory was seen in witnesses**
 - *Prose asides stress that first among these witnesses was John the Baptist*

The Divine Word

First Poetic Stanza (John 1:1–5)

¹ Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,
καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
² οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
³ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,
καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν, ὃ
γέγονεν
⁴ ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν,
καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.
⁵ καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει,
καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

¹ In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
² The same was in the beginning with God.
³ All things were made by him;
and without him was not any thing made
that was made.
⁴ In him was life;
and the life was the light of men.
⁵ And the light shineth in darkness;
and the darkness comprehended it not.

- **High Christology: the Word is divine and has been *since the beginning!***
 - **What is the beginning (Greek, *archē*)**
- **The Word was the creator** (i.e., God effected creation through the Word, and the Word is the means by which he continues to communicate with it)
- The Word is “**Life**”
- Duality of “**light**” and “**darkness**”

The Witness Sent from God

Prose Aside 1 (John 1:6–8)

“There was **a man sent from God, whose name was John**. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.”

- The **hymn format** seems to break whenever the subject moves from “**the Word**” to **John or mortal witnesses**
- D&C 93, the Lord’s own expansion on the *Logos* Hymn, stresses the role of John, presumably the Baptist and/or perhaps the Beloved
 - “And John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John’s record is hereafter to be revealed. And he bore record, saying: ***I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was***; Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—**The light and the Redeemer of the world**; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, **because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men**. The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him.” (D&C 93:6–10)
 - “***I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was***,” however, sounds much like **the Transfiguration**, which John the Beloved witnessed (cf. 2 Peter 1:16–18)

The Incarnate Word

Second Stanza (John 1:6–14)

- “. . . **the true Light**, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” (1:9)
 - **D&C 84:46**, “**the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.**”
- His own things/creation (neut. pl.), his own people (masc. pl.) did not accept him
- The **Word** was Made **Flesh**
 - **Mosiah 15:3**, “. . . **the Son because of the flesh.**”
 - “dwelt among us” (*eskēnōsen*, literally “pitched his tent): tabernacle imagery—Jehovah dwelling among his people

⁶Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης· ⁷οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ. ⁸οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ’ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

⁹ Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.
¹⁰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ᾔγνω.
¹¹ εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.
¹² ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.
¹³ Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

⁹ *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:
¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John's Witness

Third Stanza (John 1:15b–18)

15 Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων· οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον·

ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν,
ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

16 ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν
καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος·

17 ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη,
ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
ἐγένετο.

18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς
ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος
ἐξηγήσατο.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This
was he of whom I spake,

He that cometh after me is preferred before me:
for he was before me.

16 And of his fulness have all we received,
and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time;
the only begotten Son,
which is in the bosom of the Father,
he hath declared *him*.

- Starts as a second prose aside in 1:15, but John's prophecy about the coming Jesus is the third poetic stanza
- The law of Moses contrasted with the grace (gifts) and truth that comes through Christ
- No man has seen God? (1:18)
 - **JST John 1:19, "And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son."**
 - "What John actually taught was that the Father has never appeared unto any man except for the purpose of introducing and bearing record of the Son" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1.77)

Preview of Creation Narratives



Sources

- **Old Testament (Hebrew Bible, First Testament)**
 - The *received* version of early scripture received by Israelite lawgivers, prophets, historians, and poets
 - Often has a complex compositional and literary history (sometimes the text has been changed, rewritten, or reinterpreted by subsequent scribes)
 - The Law (*Torah* or “teaching”), Prophets (both histories and named prophetic books), Writings (poetic and later books)
- **New Testament (Greek New Testament)**
 - Letters of Paul and other early church leaders, four gospels, history of the early church (Acts), Revelation
- **Joseph Smith’s New Translation (Inspired Version, JST)**
 - “translation” in the early nineteenth century has broader meanings than today—could include transmission, revisions, and renditions
 - Begun in 1831, largely completed by 1833, but Joseph Smith did not consider it “finished” at his death in 1844
 - Types of changes: restoration of lost text; inspired commentary, correction, additions, and expansions; common sense changes, grammatical changes and clarifications, harmonizations
- **Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price/esp. Abraham** (revealed text about Abraham and his prophetic experiences)

Sources for the Creation

- **Received biblical account(s): Genesis 1–2**
 - Complex compositional history, with the original story perhaps having come to us through the hands of different editors and versions
 - Two accounts differentiated by **the names of God used** (see Brown article)
 - Each with **different emphases and themes**
- **Moses 1–3**
 - Joseph Smith’s New Translation (JST), including both a restored “preface” in Moses 1 and an inspired rendition of the creation accounts in Moses 2–3 (revision or expansion?)
- **Abraham 4–5**
 - Restored account of the creation story given to Abraham that *emphasizes planning and collaboration*
- **Various Book of Mormon References**

2

APPROACHES TO THE PENTATEUCH

S. KENT BROWN

The text of the Bible preserves the richest continuing sacred literature in the world. And Latter-day Saints have beneficiaries of this abundant heritage, seeing connections throughout our modern scriptures. For instance, the Book of Mormon traces the history of three groups of people whose roots lay in the ancient Near East and the world of the Bible: the Jaredites, the Nephites, and the Mulekites. Moreover, the Doctrine and Covenants, in specific passages, both adds to and explains not only problematic also deficient passages in the Bible.¹ In this essay I wish to mention two important items. The first has to do with the distinctively biblical view of what was important in Israel's origins. The second has to do with contemporary views of the composition of the Pentateuch.

As we read the pages of the early books of the Bible, we find ourselves following this special family, through trials and triumphs, from one generation to another, a story told at times in rather detailed sequence and at other times only sketchily. Jewish tradition says that it was the Prophet Moses who was responsible for that story and its compilation.⁴ Interestingly that view has been challenged so seriously that today very few biblical scholars believe that Moses was responsible for its composition, opting instead to accept the notion that the materials in the Pentateuch were gathered and compiled in a much later age. Let us turn to review the major hypotheses concerning how the early books of the Bible came to be.

[Start reading here](#)

Theories About the Composition of the Pentateuch

The Documentary Hypothesis

This theory affirms that there was a series of documents drawn up in antiquity which, through an editorial process, finally became the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. This view—articulated by scholars during the late nineteenth century—was based on the discovery of

2. "In the beginning was the word . . ."