

The Document Corner: The Newly Found Manuscript of D&C Section 65

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John W. Welch and Trevor Packer

McLellin's early copy of Section 65 significantly links it with the words in the Lord's Prayer "Thy kingdom come."

Among the papers of William E. McLellin recently discovered in the Church archives are handwritten copies of four revelations long included in the Doctrine and Covenants as sections 22, 45, 65, and 66. These texts, along with McLellin's six journals ranging from July 18, 1831, to June 6, 1836, will be published by *BYU Studies* in the near future in a supplementary volume. This note features Section 65.

As a new convert, McLellin arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, in October 1831. There he copied by hand several of the revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹ Making such copies for use in study, preaching, and missionary work was a common practice among the early members of the Church before the Book of Commandments (1833) and the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) were printed.

The text of the McLellin manuscript of Section 65 follows:

A revelation of Joseph the Seer 30 Oct 1831
on the 6th Matthew 10 verse —

Herken and lo a voice as one sent down from *Heaven* on high who is mighty and powerfu[l] whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth yea whose voice is unto all men prepare ye the way of the Lord make his paths strait. The keys of the kingdom of God is committed unto man on the earth and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is hewn from the mountain without hands shall roll forth until it hath filled the whole earth. Yea a voice crying prepare ye the way of the Lord prepare ye the supper of the Lamb Make ready for the comeing of the bridegroom Pray unto the Lord. Call upon his holy name Make known his wonderful works among the people. Call upon the Lord that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth that the inhabitants thereof may receive it and be prepared for the days to come in the which the son of man shall come down in *Heaven* Clothed in the brightness of his glory to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. Wherefore may the kingdom of God go forth that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou O God may be glorified in heaven so on earth that thine enemies may be subdued for thine is the honor, power and glory for ever and ever Amen. Jo^s Smith Revelator

The most interesting detail about this document stands in its heading. The 1981 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* identifies Section 65 as a “revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Hiram, Ohio, October 1831,” and notes, “The Prophet designates this revelation as a prayer.” The McLellin manuscript, however, gives two further details. First, it gives the exact date: “A revelation of Joseph the Seer 30 Oct. 1831,” and second, it specifies that this revelation is “on the 6th Matthew 10 verse.” This information allows us to recognize, for the first time, that Section 65 is not simply an ordinary or spontaneous prayer, but is deeply related to the Lord’s Prayer, especially Matthew 6:10, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

This insight provides readers with a valuable key to unlock and appreciate the meaning of this revelation. Several words in Section 65 are, in fact, related to phrases in the Lord’s Prayer. Following the introductory verses which invoke texts from Isaiah 40:3, Daniel 2:45, Matthew 3:3 and 22:2, and Revelation 19:9, the revelation focuses on Matthew 6:9–13. The revelation exhorts all people to “pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name” (65:4); this acknowledgment of the holiness of God’s name compares with the initial instruction of the Lord’s Prayer, “after this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matt. 6:9). The revelation then pleads, “May the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth” (65:6), which echoes the main text mentioned in the McLellin heading (Matt. 6:10). Much as the revelation expresses the hope “that thine enemies maybe subdued” (65:6), the Lord’s Prayer also prays for deliverance “from evil” (Matt. 6:13). Finally, Section 65 and the Lord’s Prayer both conclude with similar doxologies: “for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen” (65:6) and “for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matt. 6:13). Identifying these relationships between the Lord’s Prayer and Section 65 imbues both of these scriptures with new meanings relevant to the present dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While Section 65 is clearly related to the Lord’s Prayer, it is also a separate text. It is neither a commentary on the Lord’s Prayer nor a new translation of it. Furthermore, it does not appear that this section, like so many others from this time period,² was prompted by the Prophet’s work on his inspired translation of the Bible.³

The text of the McLellin version of Section 65 is very similar to the four other early manuscripts of this revelation as well as the present published version. Apart from punctuation, the only differences between the 1981 edition and the McLellin manuscript are these:

1981 Edition

Verse 1

Hearken and lo, a voice as **of** one sent down from on high . . . whose voice is unto men—prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Verse 2

keys . . . are committed

the stone which is cut out of the mountain . . . until it has filled

Verse 3

make ready for the Bridegroom.

Verse 6

that thou, O God, mayest be

McLellin Manuscript

Herken and lo a voice as one sent down from on high . . . whose voice is unto **all** men prepare ye the way of the Lord make his paths **strait**.

keys . . . **is** committed

the stone which is **hewn from** the mountain . . . until it **hath** filled

Make ready for the **comeing of the** bridegroom

that thou O God **may** be
Jos. Smith Revelator

The four other early sources of Section 65 are (1) Manuscript #1 (RLDS), date unknown;⁴ (2) a copy found in the Kirtland Revelation Book (87), recorded before August 18, 1834; (3) a version published in the *Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 4, September 1832; and (4) a reprint of the same in the Kirtland publication of the *Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 4, April 1835. All these texts are similar to the newly found McLellin document in the following ways: They all state that the revelation was received on October 30, 1831, whereas all later sources say only “October 1831.” In verse 1, all five use the spelling “strait.” In verse 6, all five read “That thou, O God, may.”⁵

Each early document, however, has its own peculiar points of agreement or disagreement with the McLellin text. In most sources, verse one reads “a voice as of one,” but the McLellin document, Manuscript #1, and Kirtland Revelation Book all read “a voice as one.” Likewise, the word “forever” appears as two words only in those three manuscripts.

Manuscript #1 often capitalizes nouns, such as “Earth” (vv. 1, 2, 5, and 6), “Gospel” (v. 2), “Mountain” (v. 2), and “Clothed” (v. 5), but these nouns are not capitalized in the McLellin document. Also, “and” is signified by “&” throughout Manuscript #1, while it is spelled out in McLellin. In Manuscript #1, “powerful” is spelled “powerfull,” “until” is spelled

“untill” (v. 2); “wonderful” is spelled “wonderfull” (v. 4); and “honor” is spelled “honour” (v. 6). It also contains the crossed-out word “kingdom” in the final verse.

The Kirtland Revelation Book reads “one sent down from ~~above~~ on high,” where the McLellin document also has the words “on high,” but they are written on top of the word “Heaven.” In verse 1, only the Kirtland Revelation Book and the McLellin document read “whose voice is unto *all* men,” making the revelation more emphatically universal; all other sources lack the “all.” In verse 2, the Kirtland Revelation Book reads “hewed from,” whereas McLellin and the *Evening and the Morning Star* publications read “hewn from.” Most other sources read “cut out of,” while Manuscript #1 reads “~~hewn from~~ cut out of.” In verse 3, the Kirtland Revelation Book is the only other source to agree with McLellin’s “coming of the bridegroom” and in not capitalizing “son of man” (v. 5).

In spite of several close similarities, the Kirtland Revelation Book also differs from McLellin in certain respects. In verses 1, 2, and 5, respectively, the Kirtland Revelation Book says “*and* make his paths,” “committed unto *men*,” and “set upon the earth,” while all other sources, including McLellin, do not contain the “and,” do not have the plural “men,” and put a space between “up” and “on.”

Finally, some aspects of the McLellin document are unique: It alone contains the information “on the 6th Matthew 10 verse,” and uses the spelling “Herken” (v. 1). “Sent down” (v. 1) is not found in any of the four early sources, although it appears in D&C (1844–46, 1852–1920) and *Millennial Star* 5 (April 1845): 163. McLellin alone reads, “keys . . . *is* committed” (v. 2); likewise, the words “which is” (v. 2) are not found in any of the early sources, but first appear in the Manuscript History of the Church (1841–43). In verse 2, only McLellin reads “until it *hath* filled”; all other sources use the word “has,” although Manuscript #1 says “~~hath~~ has”; and in verse 5, “Heaven” is not capitalized in any source besides McLellin.

In light of the fact that all of these manuscripts have points at which they are similar to and different from each of the other sources, it is virtually impossible to determine which is earliest or which was copied from which. For all students interested in textual criticism of the Bible and other important records, this nineteenth-century textual history of Section 65 of the Doctrine and Covenants provides a sober reminder that textual history is an imprecise science often dealing with minute differences that have little effect on the meaning of the text, and that the discovery of a new manuscript often complicates, rather than simplifies, the textual analysis of the document.

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1. William E. McLellin to M. H. Forscutt, October 1870, RLDS Archives, published in *Saints' Herald* 19 (July 15, 1972): 435–37 and (August 1, 1872): 472–74, states, “In 1831, I wrote off a number of the revelations as originally given, and have them now” (436). The mark that appears under some of the s’s (represented in the text by a subscripted comma, s) occurs often in McLellin’s journals and is distinctive of his holographs.

2. See Robert J. Matthews, “The ‘New Translation’ of the Bible, 1830–1833: Doctrinal Development during the Kirtland Era,” *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 400–422.

3. See Joseph Smith, Jr., *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 1:218; and Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 31–32.

4. Woodford considered this manuscript the earliest of these four. Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 2:830.

5. The information in this article about these four manuscripts is based on Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 2:830–37.