

Doctrine and Covenants CONTEXTS



Steven C. Harper

BYU Studies
Provo, Utah

Copyright © 2021 Steven C. Harper. All rights reserved.
Published by BYU Studies, 2024

Opinions expressed in this publication are the opinions of the author, and his views should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young University, or BYU Studies.

No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, digital, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording or in an information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. To contact BYU Studies, write to 1063 JFSB, Provo, Utah 84602, or visit <http://byustudies.byu.edu>.

All graphics are public domain unless otherwise noted.
Cover image © BYU Studies; temples courtesy Derek Gurr.

Print ISBN 978-1-958854-17-4
Ebook ISBN 978-1-958854-22-8
Library of Congress Control Number: 2024951324

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Section 1...	1	Section 25...	36
Section 2...	2	Section 26...	39
Section 3...	3	Section 27...	41
Section 4...	6	Section 28...	42
Section 5...	7	Section 29...	44
Section 6...	8	Section 30...	46
Section 7...	10	Section 31...	48
Section 8...	11	Section 32...	49
Section 9...	12	Section 33...	50
Section 10...	13	Section 34...	52
Section 11...	16	Section 35...	53
Section 12...	18	Section 36...	55
Section 13...	19	Section 37...	56
Sections 14–16...	21	Section 38...	57
Section 17...	22	Sections 39–40...	60
Section 18...	26	Section 41...	61
Section 19...	28	Section 42...	64
Section 20...	30	Section 43...	67
Section 21...	31	Section 44...	69
Section 22...	32	Section 45...	71
Section 23...	33	Section 46...	73
Section 24...	34	Section 47...	74

Section 48...	75	Section 72...	119
Section 49...	76	Section 74...	121
Section 50...	80	Section 75...	122
Section 51...	83	Section 76...	124
Section 52...	85	Section 77...	128
Section 53...	86	Section 78...	130
Section 54...	87	Section 79...	131
Section 55...	88	Section 80...	132
Section 56...	89	Section 81...	132
Section 57...	90	Section 82...	133
Section 58...	92	Section 83...	136
Section 59...	95	Section 84...	136
Section 60...	97	Section 85...	139
Section 61...	99	Section 86...	140
Section 62...	101	Section 87...	143
Section 63...	102	Section 88...	146
Section 64...	103	Section 89...	150
Section 65...	104	Section 90...	154
Section 66...	106	Section 91...	156
Section 67...	108	Section 92...	157
Section 68...	111	Section 93...	158
Section 69...	112	Section 94...	162
Section 70...	114	Section 95...	163
Sections 71 and 73...	117	Section 96...	165

Section 97...	166	Section 120...	219
Section 98...	168	Section 121...	220
Section 99...	171	Section 122...	225
Section 100...	172	Section 123...	227
Section 101...	174	Section 124...	229
Section 102...	177	Section 125...	232
Section 103...	179	Section 126...	233
Section 104...	181	Section 127...	234
Section 105...	186	Section 128...	236
Section 106...	189	Section 129...	240
Section 107...	190	Section 130...	243
Section 108...	193	Section 131...	245
Section 109...	194	Section 132...	248
Section 110...	197	Section 133...	252
Section 111...	200	Section 134...	254
Section 112...	201	Section 135...	255
Section 113...	203	Section 136...	258
Section 114...	205	Section 137...	261
Section 115...	206	Section 138...	265
Section 116...	208	Official Declaration 1...	268
Section 117...	210	Official Declaration 2...	272
Section 118...	214		
Section 119...	217	Notes...	279



The John Johnson Home in Hiram, Ohio. Photograph by Jon Ridinger, 2009, Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

Section 1

The Doctrine and Covenants is a problem solver. Every section in it resolves a problem or a dilemma. Joseph Smith learned as a youth that when he had a dilemma he could not resolve, he could ask God in faith and be answered, not upbraided (Joseph Smith—History 1:10–19).

In the case of Doctrine and Covenants section 1, the problem was how to preface the Book of Commandments. By November 1831, Joseph had dictated dozens of revelation texts. John Whitmer had hand copied many of them into the Book of Commandments and Revelations. The missionaries and their converts needed copies, so Joseph gathered a group of elders at the Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, and together they determined to publish the revelations in a book: the Book of Commandments.

Every book needs a preface to guide readers and tell them what the author intends. A committee of the Church's best writers drafted a preface for the book, but it was not suited to the task of introducing the Lord's latter-day revelations. The Lord then revealed what he called "*my* preface unto the book of *my* commandments" (Doctrine and Covenants 1:6, emphasis added). Joseph sat down near a window and dictated the words slowly as Sidney Rigdon wrote them down.¹

What does section 1 say about what the Savior intends to accomplish by giving the latter-day revelations? It tells why the Lord opened the last dispensation. He saw the consequences of broken covenants. People had "strayed from [his] ordinances" (Doctrine and Covenants 1:15), gone off in their "own way," and created their own gods (v. 16). Calamitous judgments were therefore inevitable and imminent. Knowing all that, the Lord desired to spare as many people as possible by inviting all to repent and return to him. He called and authorized Joseph Smith and others "that mine everlasting covenant might be established" (v. 22), the living Church of Jesus Christ restored, and his gospel taken to all people everywhere.

In section 1 the Lord applies the ancient archetype for wickedness—Babylon—to the world of Joseph Smith and the earliest Saints. The Savior’s restored Church is the vehicle out of Babylon. The Lord is pleased with his Church and its mission, which is not the same as being pleased with its members.

Section 1 was not the Lord’s first revelation to Joseph. It belongs at the beginning of the Doctrine and Covenants because it outlines the Lord’s purposes for all the subsequent sections. When Joseph finished dictating and Sidney Rigdon finished writing, the problem was solved—the Book of Commandments now had a preface that was equal to the task of introducing the Lord’s latter-day revelations.

Section 2

When Joseph Smith left the grove after seeing the Father and the Son, he was not a prophet. He had no calling—and had no idea that he ever would. That calling would come three and a half years later. Joseph’s journal tells the story:

When I was about 17 years, I had another vision of angels; in the night season, after I had retired to bed; I had not been asleep, but was meditating on my past life and experience. I was well aware I had not kept the commandments, and I repented heartily for all my sins and transgressions, and humbled myself before him, whose eye surveys all things at a glance. All at once the room was illuminated above the brightness of the sun; An angel appeared before me.

“I am a messenger sent from God,” he told Joseph, introducing himself as Moroni. He said that God had a vital work for Joseph to do. There was a sacred book written on golden plates, buried in a nearby hillside. “He explained many of the prophecies to me,” Joseph said, including the fourth chapter of Malachi.²

Moroni appeared three times that night and again the next day, emphasizing and expounding the same prophecy. Clearly, there was something vital in Moroni’s paraphrase of Malachi, something central

to Joseph's calling.³ In his manuscript history, Joseph remembered that Moroni's version of Malachi's prophecy varied from the King James Version text. Speaking on behalf of the God of Israel, Moroni explicitly mentioned *priesthood*: "Behold I will reveal unto you the Priesthood by the hand of Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Joseph said Moroni quoted the next verse differently too: "And he [Elijah] shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming."⁴

In the Doctrine and Covenants, angels are sent to solve problems that Joseph doesn't know exist. In section 2, Joseph knew he needed forgiveness, but he didn't know that the earth was on track to be utterly wasted unless Elijah came soon and things took a dramatic turn. President Russell M. Nelson taught that "eternal life, made possible by the Atonement, is the supreme purpose of Creation. To phrase that statement in its negative form, if families were not sealed in holy temples, the whole earth would be utterly wasted."⁵ Section 2 is the Lord's announcement to Joseph that Elijah will endow him with priesthood powerful enough to seal families forever, reverse the trend toward death and the disintegration of families it causes, and thus fulfill the purpose for which the planet was created (see section 110).

Joseph just prayed for forgiveness. He received it in section 2, along with a calling to save the earth. From the earliest revelation in it, the Doctrine and Covenants points us to the temple, the Savior's priesthood, and the ultimate purpose of sealing families.

Section 3

A respected and prosperous farmer from Palmyra, New York, Martin Harris left his home in the spring of 1828 and traveled southeast until he crossed into Pennsylvania. There he wrote as Joseph Smith Jr., who

was about half Martin's age, translated the abridged book of Lehi by the gift and power of God.

Meanwhile, Martin's wife Lucy told neighbors that Joseph had duped her husband into giving him money. She dramatically moved her favorite pieces of furniture out of the house, claiming she did not want Martin to give them away too. Martin resented the damage Lucy was doing to his good name, and he asked Joseph to let him take the translated manuscript home to prove that he was no fool.

"The Lord said unto me that he must not take them," Joseph recalled, "and I spoke unto Martin the word of the Lord." Dissatisfied, Martin told Joseph to ask again. "I inquired again and also the third time," Joseph said, "and the Lord said unto me let him go with them."⁶

The Lord knew what was about to happen. Martin was sure he knew better than Joseph, and Joseph feared to disappoint him. Joseph struggled to please both Martin and the Lord. He made Martin vow solemnly to show the pages only to his wife, Lucy; her sister Mrs. Polly Cobb; his brother; and his parents. The Lord's answer made them free agents, but with agency came accountability. They could do their own will instead of God's, but making that choice meant that Joseph could no longer be the seer chosen to bring forth the marvelous work. Moroni confiscated the seer stones. Sincerely but unwisely, Martin left for a brief trip to Palmyra with the translated manuscript. He did not return as promised.

Finally, Joseph went to Martin and learned that he had lost the manuscript.

"It is gone and I know not where," Martin confessed.

"Oh, my God, my God," Joseph uttered humbly, "all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned. It is I who tempted the wrath of God by asking him for that which I had no right to ask." And he wept and groaned and paced the floor, forsaken. "How shall I appear before the Lord?" Joseph wondered. "Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?"⁷

Back home in Pennsylvania, Joseph went to the woods and prayed for redemption, poured out sorrow, and confessed weakness. Moroni

appeared and returned the seer stones. Joseph looked and saw these strict words:

Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men; for although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him. (Doctrine and Covenants 3:3–4)

It's not clear whose words they were. They could have been Moroni's. They could have been from the Lord, speaking in third person.

The words pierced Joseph. "You have been entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments and remember also, the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them." Joseph recalled Moroni's commission to be responsible for the sacred records and powers and the warning that "if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them . . . they should be protected."⁸ Joseph had let Martin persuade him to transgress these commands. "You should not have feared man more than God," the revelation said. Historian Richard Bushman wrote that these words "were hard for a young man who had lost his first-born son and nearly lost his wife, and whose chief error was to trust a friend, but there was comfort in the revelation as well."⁹

Indeed, notice the way the tone of the revelation changes about halfway through. "Remember," it says, "God is merciful." It tells Joseph he is still chosen to translate if he will repent. Then it teaches him why the manuscript is sacred and can't be taken for granted. The plates were preserved so the Lord could keep his promise (Enos 1:15–18). And by keeping his promise to give Lehi's descendants their ancestors' knowledge of the Savior, "they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ" (Doctrine and Covenants 3:20), exercise faith, repent, and be saved.

The revelation in section 3 marked a turning point in the life of the young seer. This was the first time Joseph committed one of his

revelations to writing. Only twenty-two years old, he had learned to use the prophetic voice to foretell the fulfillment of the Lord's promises to the house of Israel. He was the seer chosen to bring forth the marvelous work that would eventually teach all nations "to rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ," as the revelation said, "and be glorified through faith on his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved" (Doctrine and Covenants 3:20).

Moroni kept the plates while Joseph acted on the revelation's command to repent. Then in September 1828, one year after he first received them, Joseph received the plates again. By choosing to obey the revelation, Joseph was still chosen and again called to the work.

Section 4

Joseph Smith said he was born to good parents who worked hard to instruct him in the Christian religion.¹⁰ It was general Christianity that Joseph got from his parents, not a particular version of it. They had no church—and that worried them both.

Shortly after moving his family yet again, this time to a new farm in Manchester, New York, Joseph Smith Sr. dreamed he met a peddler who promised to tell him the one thing he lacked. He jumped up to get some paper and awoke before learning the secret. Though he toiled hard and wanted badly to know God's will, Joseph Smith's father had a gnawing feeling that something vital was missing in his life.¹¹

As his understanding of Joseph's mission grew, Father Smith began to believe that God would reveal the answers through Joseph. Early in 1829, Joseph Sr. visited Joseph in Harmony, Pennsylvania, longing to know what the Lord wanted him to do.¹²

In the revelation, the Lord spoke the language of a God-fearing farmer who, by his own admission, sometimes drank too much and who wanted to be blameless. Section 4 sounds like it applies to everyone, but it is also perfectly adapted to Joseph's father. For example, the command to be temperate meant that he should not drink excessively.

The Lord's metaphor of a ripe field ready for harvesting made perfect sense to Father Smith, whose life as a farmer depended on reaping successful harvests and who knew exactly what it meant to thrust in his sickle and reap all day long.

This revelation turned Father Smith into a farmer of souls. He had been tight-lipped to Oliver Cowdery, the school teacher who was boarding with his family, but when Joseph Sr. returned home to New York, he told Oliver about the marvelous work about to come forth.¹³ As soon as the Book of Mormon was off the press and the Church of Jesus Christ was restored, Father Smith spent the harvest season visiting his parents and siblings. He found most of them ripe and his ministry brought salvation to their souls and his.¹⁴

Section 5

About a year after Martin Harris went to Pennsylvania to scribe for Joseph, he arrived there again in spring 1829. This time he said his neighbors were gathering evidence for a lawsuit and threatening to put him in jail if he did not condemn Joseph for deception. Martin said he needed to know, really know, that Joseph had plates engraved with ancient, sacred writings.¹⁵

The Lord spoke to that situation but not to Martin. In sections 4 and 6 and dozens of others, the Lord spoke through Joseph to his father or Oliver Cowdery or others. In section 5, it seems like the Lord was not on speaking terms with Martin. Rather, the Lord told Joseph that Martin's desire for more evidence could be granted if Martin chose to meet the conditions of humility, faith, and patience.

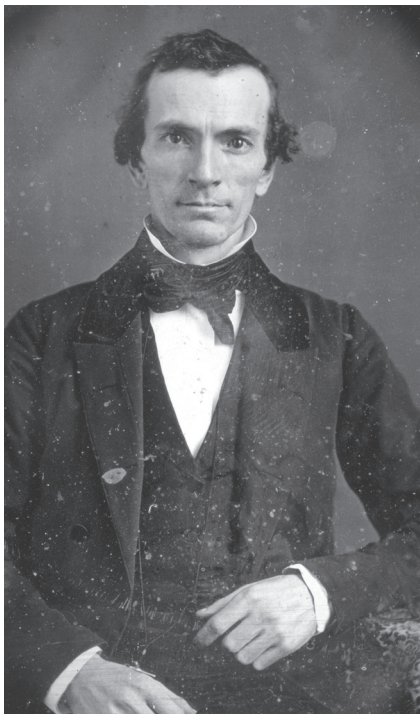
The Lord told Joseph to remind Martin that Joseph was under covenant not to show the plates to anyone unless commanded, implying a stinging reminder to Martin, the covenant breaker who showed off the translation manuscript and lost it, contrary to his solemn promise.

The Lord told Joseph he intended to select three witnesses to testify. He would show them the plates and their witness would accompany

His words to all mankind. However, the Lord made it clear that seeing is not believing.

This revelation reoriented Martin. He came to the Lord saying, “Show me and I’ll believe. And let me prove to others so they’ll believe.” With Joseph as mediator, the Lord responded that he would show Martin after he chose to believe and to be humble, not before. Martin eventually received the greater witness he sought. He became one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates and artifacts. That happened after he chose to meet the conditions the Lord set in section 5, not before.

Section 6



Daguerreotype of Oliver Cowdery.
Library of Congress.

Early in 1829, Joseph’s father-in-law was about to evict him. Joseph “cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me to accomplish the work whereunto he had commanded me.”¹⁶ This prayer was answered on a Sabbath evening when Joseph’s younger brother Samuel arrived with a twenty-two-year-old schoolteacher named Oliver Cowdery.

Oliver had learned about the marvelous work from Joseph’s family. He had prayed to know the truth of the matter, and the Lord showed him the Book of Mormon plates in a vision and told him of the translation Joseph had begun.¹⁷ Oliver probably

brought with him some money for Joseph to use to make a payment to his father-in-law.

On the second day after his arrival, Oliver began scribing as Joseph translated the Book of Mormon. Oliver had a normal inclination to fear and doubt things that had been revealed to him before. He wanted to know if he could believe what he was seeing and experiencing. The Lord responded with the reassuring revelation in section 6.

Speaking to Oliver through Joseph, the Lord assured Oliver that his gifts were indeed divine, as well as the revelation he received before. This had the effect of convincing Oliver once and for all that Joseph, however unrefined or lacking in literacy, was the Lord's chosen seer, for out of Joseph's mouth came the words of Jesus Christ, telling Oliver things Jesus knew but Joseph didn't. Oliver wrote to David Whitmer, saying that Joseph had "told him secrets of his life that he knew could not be known to any person but himself, in any way other than by revelation from the Almighty."¹⁸

Section 6 foreshadows sections 7 and 8 by telling Oliver about records that have been kept hidden due to wickedness and that Oliver can have the gift to translate if he desires it. The revelation foreshadows martyrdom, but it is encouraging and empowering to Oliver. It also bears a beautiful autobiographical witness of Christ, perhaps even in a visual way for Joseph and Oliver, the two young seers. The Lord invited them to "look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not. Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:36–37). Like Peter, beholding the risen Christ gave Joseph and Oliver apostolic courage.

What we have in section 6, then, is a document of the Lord's lovingly employed omniscience. He is not the arbitrary sovereign Oliver's ancestors imagined him to be.¹⁹ He uses his limitless power to address the needs of those who desire and ask. He proved to Oliver that Joseph Smith, whatever his "faults" (v. 19), is the Lord's chosen seer. The revelation not only says those things, but by its delivery through Joseph and its secrets known only to the Lord and Oliver, it illustrates them.

Section 7

In the spring of 1829, as they translated and scribed the Book of Mormon, nothing excited the young seers Joseph and Oliver more than the idea of sacred ancient writings that had not yet come to light. The Book of Mormon was not just the best example of this; it mentioned many other texts. The Lord told Oliver in section 6 that he could, like Joseph, translate records like these if he desired.²⁰

As they translated, they discussed John 21:20–23. What did the words “that that disciple should not die” mean? Was John still alive? The text itself is ambiguous. Bible scholars had been “puzzled with this passage,” and Joseph and Oliver couldn’t agree on its meaning.²¹ They agreed to seek clarifying revelation through the seer stones Joseph used to translate the Book of Mormon. There they saw a parchment John had written and hidden.²²

The parchment was apparently the original source for the Gospel of John in the New Testament. The revelation of the parchment to Joseph and Oliver restored much that was lost from the final few verses of John 21. The Lord did give John power. As the revelation was originally recorded, this was power to bring souls to Christ. When Joseph reviewed the revelations for publication in 1835, he clarified that John asked the Lord for “power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee.”²³ The Lord granted John’s desire. Joseph also added to the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants the words in verses 6–7. The Lord said of John, “I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel: he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth.” The Lord said to Peter, “And I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James: and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come.”²⁴

This section clarified an ambiguous Bible passage and satisfied Joseph and Oliver’s curiosity. It did more work than that, however. It restored to the scriptures the fact that Jesus gave keys of salvation to Peter, James, and John. The revelation confirmed both that the Bible

is true and that the Bible is not complete, nor is it sufficient for salvation. We don't just have the incomplete records of dead Apostles. Jesus Christ sent Peter, James, and John back to earth to confer their keys on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery not too long after they received this revelation.

The modern Apostle Boyd K. Packer stood with President Spencer W. Kimball, other Apostles, and local church leaders in the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, Denmark, admiring Thorvaldsen's *Christus* and his sculptures of the twelve Apostles. Peter holds symbolic keys in his hand, given him by Jesus Christ. President Kimball pointed them out and then charged the Copenhagen stake president to "tell every prelate in Denmark that they do not hold the keys. I hold the keys!" As the party left the church, President Kimball shook hands with the caretaker, "expressed his appreciation, and explained earnestly, 'These statues are of dead Apostles.'" He then said, "You are in the presence of living Apostles."²⁵

Section 8

The Lord told Oliver he could translate ancient records in section 6, then showed him an ancient record in section 7. Joseph said Oliver "became exceedingly anxious to have the power to translate bestowed upon him," so Joseph asked the Lord and received section 8.²⁶

In the revelation the Lord told Oliver the conditions on which he would be able to translate. He would have to seek the necessary knowledge honestly, in faith, believing in the Lord's promise. The Lord, in turn, would tell Oliver this knowledge in his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. This spirit of revelation guided Moses in leading the children of Israel safely through the Red Sea. It was now Oliver's gift. "Apply unto it" (Doctrine and Covenants 8:4), the Lord commanded him.

The Lord also reminded Oliver of his other gift, the gift possessed by Moses's brother Aaron—the gift of working with a divining rod, or,

as the earliest extant manuscript of this revelation puts it, “the gift of working with the sprout.”²⁷ It had already told Oliver many things and may be what the Lord alluded to in Doctrine and Covenants 6:11–12. The Lord affirms and validates this gift and commands Oliver not to trifle with the gift or ask for things that he ought not.

So what should he ask for? He should ask to know the mysteries of God. He should ask to translate and receive knowledge from ancient records that have been kept hidden. The Lord would grant these desires according to Oliver’s faith, just as he had done all along.

Means of revelation, including Oliver’s rod, Lehi’s “miraculous directors,” and Joseph’s seer stones (or the brother of Jared’s; Doctrine and Covenants 17:1) were apparently much more common anciently and in Joseph’s day than in ours. By 1829, when this revelation was given, such gifts were being questioned. Skepticism of “means,” as the scriptures call supernatural gifts, was beginning to be explained in naturalistic terms instead.²⁸

Before publishing this revelation in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph took out the explicit mention of Oliver’s rod and referred to it vaguely as “the gift of Aaron” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:6). This revelation neither denied nor discouraged either of Oliver’s gifts, however. As commanded, Oliver did not trifle with his rod or make it known to unbelievers (Doctrine and Covenants 6:11). Little is known about it in our naturalistic culture. Perhaps the equally marvelous, supernal gift of the Holy Ghost remains nearly as mysterious. It is widely available, yet few “apply unto it” as the revelation commands (Doctrine and Covenants 8:4).

Section 9

Oliver couldn’t translate. Why not, after the Lord had said he could? He wanted to know, and the Lord answered him in section 9.²⁹ Oliver did not understand what it took to translate by the gift and power of God, and the only way he was going to gain understanding was to try it. He made a start but could not continue.

His efforts were undermined by his assumption that all he had to do was ask and the Lord would do the rest. Not so, the Lord explained. Oliver learned a lesson about revelation that is best understood through experience. Revelation is an active, not passive, process, requiring a combination of spiritual sensitivity and intellectual exertion. Before Oliver arrived on the scene, Joseph had also struggled to learn the process of revelation. Joseph worked hard to translate, to tap the gift and power of God. As a result of Oliver's failure to translate and the Lord's explanation, Oliver gained respect for Joseph's gift that he would never lose and knowledge about the process of revelation that he would never forget.³⁰

The process of revelation is usually learned after wrestling with it for a while, gaining experience with how it feels in both the heart and the mind and then applying it, as the Lord told Oliver to do in section 8. This revealed recipe for receiving revelation is all contrary to the common refrain "just pray about it." Revelation seldom comes so cheaply. The Lord promised Oliver other opportunities to translate later, but for now he was to finish what he had started: scribing the Book of Mormon. Oliver was faithful to that charge, as the manuscripts in his handwriting attest.³¹ Years later he testified, "That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the prophet."³²

Section 10

With Oliver as scribe, Joseph began translating in the Book of Mosiah, where he and Martin had left off before losing the manuscript. As they made progress toward the end of the book, Joseph worried about the lost beginning. Should he translate it again?

No, the Lord answered in section 10, along with instructions about how to proceed, an omniscient explanation for this answer, and assurance that nothing vital was lost with the manuscript.³³

The Lord described in detail a conspiracy against Joseph and the Book of Mormon. He said much about Satan's attributes and tactics

as he described the actions of the “servants of Satan” who “uphold his work” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:5). Satan inspired conspirators to steal the manuscript from Martin, the Lord explained. They were waiting to see if Joseph published the same manuscript. If so, they would alter the stolen manuscript and claim he had no gift. If not, they would publish the stolen manuscript and claim Joseph had no gift. They would steal and lie for the glory of the world and destroy Joseph in the process. But the Lord clued Joseph in to the conspiracy and helped him thwart it.

The Lord cautioned Joseph not to reveal his knowledge of the conspiracy until the Book of Mormon was translated. He could not always tell whom to trust. With that caution, the Lord revealed to Joseph that the Book of Mormon plates contained a backup copy of what was lost. “Remember,” the Lord said, “it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:39). Joseph should therefore translate the small plates of Nephi until he got to the reign of King Benjamin. The conspirators only stole a translation of part of Mormon’s abridgment of Nephi’s writing. Publishing the translation of Nephi’s own small plates would derail the conspiracy, demonstrating in the process that God’s “wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (v. 43).

The last part of the revelation explained what the Lord planned to do with Christianity, which he affectionately called “my church” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:55). By calling Joseph Smith and keeping promises made to the Book of Mormon engravers to bring forth their words, the Lord was building his church, not destroying it. True Christians did not need to fear. They would inherit God’s kingdom. It was those who “build up churches unto themselves to get gain” whom the Lord promised to disturb (vv. 55–56).

Once translated, the Book of Mormon would do this work. It would corroborate the doctrine Joseph had received from the Lord, who would use the Book of Mormon to establish his gospel and minimize the contention over doctrine that Satan stirs among those who twist the scriptures and do not understand them. The Lord will gather

those who choose to believe his doctrine as a hen gathers her chicks. He will not coerce. If they will come of their own will, they may partake freely of the living water he offers. What is his doctrine? All who repent and come to Christ are his church. Those who preach their own doctrine are not his church. Christ establishes his church on rock, safe from hell, if Christians endure in his doctrine.

Section 10 gives us Christ's embracing view of Christianity. It was revealed well before the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ. With this revelation, we should understand the restoration of the Church to be the redemption of all of Christianity.

Section 10 illustrates that God is both omniscient and benevolent. Where Satan uses his influence to blind, to enslave, and to deceive, the Lord uses his power to bless, to save, and to preserve our agency. Theologians have long wrestled with the assumption that if God is all-knowing, there can be no such thing as individual agency. The whole script of human action must have been predetermined, this assumption goes, and therefore we have no power to stray from it. One alternative is to believe in a less-than-omniscient God. Section 10 presents a refreshing alternative. The Lord showed how he used his foreknowledge to preserve and protect individual agency and keep his promises.

The Lord promised the Book of Mormon engravers that their descendants would receive their writings. He called fallible free agents, Joseph Smith and Martin Harris, to bring to pass that promise. Joseph and Martin chose to disregard the Lord's will and lost the manuscript as a result. Could God keep his promise to the Lehite prophets and still allow Joseph and Martin freedom to obey or disobey his commands?

Section 10 answers yes and illustrates how. Knowing that Joseph and Martin might choose to disobey him and that, if so, Satan would likely seize that opportunity to undermine the Book of Mormon's power to bring souls to Christ, the Lord commanded Nephi to prepare alternative plates without his knowing exactly why (1 Nephi 9). Nearly a thousand years later, the Lord commanded Mormon to include those plates with his edition of the others. "I do not know all

things,” Mormon wrote about that, “but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will” (Words of Mormon 1:7).

Joseph and Martin did not have to disobey the Lord, but now, in case they did, the Lord could keep his promise without compromising their agency. How many permutations are in the intricate plan of salvation? How many backups has the Lord prepared? Who knows? Only an omniscient God could truthfully assure us in such certain terms that “the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught” (Doctrine and Covenants 3:1). Section 10 not only restates that guarantee but shows how God fulfills it. The Lord could have told Joseph what to do with a few words: “Don’t retranslate the part you lost.” To our delight, however, the Lord uses section 10 to show, not just tell. “I will *show* unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:43, emphasis added).

Joseph relied on section 10 to write the preface to the original edition of the Book of Mormon. Imagine the conspirators’ disappointment when they opened the book and found their whole plot exposed.

Section 11

Father Smith returned home from his spring 1829 visit to Joseph with a revelation in hand saying he was called to the marvelous work. Joseph’s younger brother Samuel returned home a few weeks later having been baptized and “greatly glorifying and praising God, being filled with the Holy Spirit.” Joseph’s older brother Hyrum wanted to get in on the action. He went to Joseph’s place in Pennsylvania and asked what the Lord had in store for him. “Wait,” the Lord replied.³⁴

Section 11 includes all of the anticipation of section 4 and later revelations, and it commands Hyrum to take part. There is a restraining tone to this one, however, that is not in the others. Note the several specific commands from the Lord to Hyrum: say nothing but repentance,

keep commandments, assist with the marvelous work. The Lord makes these the conditions on which he will grant Hyrum's desires. As with so many others, the entire revelation follows this conditional formula. Hyrum has a spiritual gift to know whatever he righteously desires by faith and the power of the Holy Ghost. The Lord tells him to trust it and promises to enlighten his mind and fill him with joy.

Unlike his father, Hyrum is not yet called to preach but rather to wait until he has the Book of Mormon and the restored Church. Then, as Hyrum desires, he will be a successful preacher

of the gospel. For now he should keep the Lord's commandments, be patient, appeal to the Spirit, and cleave unto Christ wholeheartedly in order to assist with the printing of the Book of Mormon. "Be patient until you shall accomplish it," the Savior tells him (Doctrine and Covenants 11:19). That is his work for now, simply to keep the commandments as best he can. He is not to declare the Lord's word but to obtain it. Then his tongue will be loosed, and then, if he desires, he will be full of the Spirit and the Lord's word, the power of God to convince many. So for now Hyrum should not preach but study the scriptures.

This revelation channels Hyrum's zeal. He is like a wild horse. Here the Lord bridles him, careful not to break his spirit but to train him. This revelation gives Hyrum, and so many others since him, the formula for becoming successful preachers of the gospel. Having the Lord's conditional promise of power to convince by the Spirit if he will



A copy of a drawing of Hyrum Smith, brother of the prophet Joseph Smith, by George Edward Anderson. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.

first learn the gospel, Hyrum spent a year searching the scriptures and helping with the publication of the Book of Mormon. When the Lord spoke to him again in April 1830, the Book of Mormon was printed, the Church was restored, the marvelous work *had* come forth, and Hyrum had the knowledge to pair with his desire to declare the good news. Having been promised in May 1829 that the Lord would loose his tongue if he would obtain the word, Hyrum learned in April 1830 that “thy heart is opened, and thy tongue loosed; and thy calling is to exhortation” (Doctrine and Covenants 23:3).

Section 12

In the spring of 1829, Joseph Knight was in his late fifties and lived with his large family in Colesville, New York, a long day’s journey from Joseph’s home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. He routinely supplied Joseph with food, shoes, cash, and paper to see him through the translation process.³⁵ During one of his visits, Father Knight was “very anxious to know his duty as to this work.” Joseph asked the Lord, who answered with the revelation in section 12.³⁶

It says many similar things as revelations to Joseph Smith Sr. and Oliver Cowdery given earlier or around the same time: A great and marvelous work is about to be made known to mankind. Like a sword that cuts both ways, the Lord’s words can bless and curse, save and damn. The figurative field is ready for harvest. Whoever desires to harvest should do so all day long, saving his soul in the process. God calls whoever will harvest. If Father Knight will ask, God will answer. Since he has asked, the Lord tells him to keep the commandments and work for Zion.

One of the great souls who made the restoration possible, Joseph Knight obeyed this revelation. He did all in his power to bring forth the Book of Mormon. He transported Joseph Smith in his wagon when Joseph went to Fayette to organize the church in April 1830 and in his sleigh when Joseph moved to Ohio early in 1831. He was

“first to administer to my necessities while I was laboring in the commencement of bringing forth the work of the Lord, and of laying the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Joseph remembered. “Faithful and true, and even handed, and exemplary and virtuous and kind.”³⁷

Section 13

Section 13 is an excerpt from Joseph’s manuscript history. It contains the words by which John the Baptist ordained Joseph and Oliver to the priesthood of Aaron on May 15, 1829.

They had been translating the Book of Mormon, likely in 3 Nephi, about the Savior’s commission to Nephi and others: “I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven” (3 Nephi 11:21–26). As Joseph read those words to Oliver in May 1829, it was as if the Savior was teaching them too. They realized that no one on earth in 1829 had the Lord’s permission and power to baptize—no one.³⁸ They went to the woods for what Oliver described as “fervent prayer.” They desired to “inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins as we found mentioned in the translation of the plates,” Joseph said.³⁹ His account continues:

A Messenger from heaven, descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying unto us; “Upon you my fellow servants in the name of Messiah I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the minist[er]ing of angels and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and this shall never be taken again from the earth, untill the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”⁴⁰

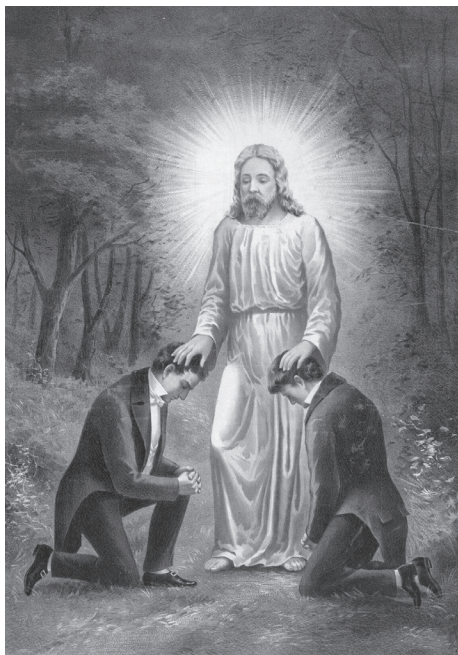
Only later in his narrative, almost as an afterthought, Joseph reveals the messenger’s identity: “[He] said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the new Testament, and that he acted under the direction [of] Peter, James, and John.”

Joseph's straightforward account can seem matter-of-fact. Oliver, by contrast, could barely contain himself when he wrote the story years later: "Twas the voice of the angel from glory—twas a message from the Most High! . . . Where was room for doubt? No where."⁴¹

Joseph and Oliver followed John the Baptist's instructions and immersed each other in the Susquehanna River, then ordained each other. "We were filled with the Holy Ghost," Joseph said, "and rejoiced in the God of our salvation."⁴² Soon Joseph's brother Samuel was baptized by this authority, and so on down to each person who has received the gospel of repentance and baptism by immersion in the last dispensation.

That will continue until, or so that, the sons of Levi (modern Aaronic priesthood holders, cross-reference Doctrine and Covenants 84:26–34 and Doctrine and Covenants 128:24) can offer the Lord the latter-day equivalent of their service in the ancient temples.

There is reason to believe that there is more to the keys of ministering angels mentioned by John the Baptist than most commentaries on section 13 consider. The keys are mentioned again and associated with John the Baptist in Doctrine and Covenants 84, a temple revelation describing how priesthoods, keys, ordinances, and endowments



The youthful prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Oliver Cowdery, receiving the Aaronic priesthood under the hands of John the Baptist, May 15, 1829. Lithograph. Library of Congress.

of power were offered anciently and will be again. When Joseph gave a rapid rundown of temple-related restorations of keys, knowledge, and power in Doctrine and Covenants 128, he mentioned how Adam showed him how to discern the devil on the banks of the Susquehanna River. That must have happened at about the same time John the Baptist restored the priesthood that held the keys to that knowledge. Joseph taught it to Parley Pratt, as recorded esoterically in Doctrine and Covenants 129 with the euphemism of handshaking standing in for temple knowledge, or in other words, keys governed by Aaronic priesthood that enable a person to detect the devil when he appears as an angel of light (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20).⁴³

Sections 14–16

Oliver Cowdery kept his acquaintance David Whitmer informed about the translation of the Book of Mormon. When antagonism against Joseph grew in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Oliver wrote to David to ask if he and Joseph could finish translating at the Whitmers' home in Fayette, New York. David himself came with a wagon to transport them, told them his parents would house and feed them for free while they were translating, and promised them all the help they might need.

By early June 1829, they commenced translating in Fayette. The Whitmers and their neighbors were friendly and supportive. Whitmer sons David, Peter, and John were about the same age as Joseph and Oliver, all in their twenties, and especially “zealous,” Joseph’s history says, “and being desirous to know their respective duties, and having desired with much earnestness that I should enquire of the Lord concerning them, I did so, through the means of the Urim and Thummim and obtained for them in succession the following Revelations.”⁴⁴

Section 14 was for David. It repeats phrases and themes of the marvelous work about to be made known to mankind and the figurative field that is ready for harvest. It also repeats the emphasis on working for Zion and promises David that if he works to build Zion

and endures to the end, God will give him the greatest possible gift: eternal life.

The revelation foreshadows David's role as one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. David kept many of the revelation's commands. His testimony of the Book of Mormon, to which he remained faithful, is recorded in every copy. He assisted in the marvelous work. But in David's case the condition that he "endure to the end" (Doctrine and Covenants 14:7) is especially notable. He may not have endured as the Lord intended. Having served for almost four years as president of the Church in Missouri, he was cut off from the Church in 1838. He lived for another five decades as a respected citizen of Richmond, Missouri, and made a conscious effort to affirm the Book of Mormon while finding fault with Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴⁵

The Lord gave essentially the same revelation to both John and Peter in sections 15 and 16, commanding both to hearken to his words as their Redeemer. They desired to know what would be of most worth to them. The Lord blessed them for this desire and told them the most valuable thing they could do is to "declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 15:6; 16:6).

Like all of the revelations, these ones have an internal rationale. Declaring repentance is the most valuable thing for John and Peter to do, the Lord explains, because it will enable them to rest with the repentant in God's kingdom. Sections 18, 84, and 93 explain this logic further, but in these sections we are introduced to the truth that working for the salvation of others is eternally satisfying for ourselves.

Section 17

Two Book of Mormon passages prophesy that "three witnesses" (2 Nephi 27:12) "shall assist to bring forth this work" and would be shown the Book of Mormon plates so they could know and bear

witness of the truth (Ether 5:2–3). Joseph translated the passage in Ether first. By the time he translated the 2 Nephi prophecy, he was nearly finished with the Book of Mormon, and there had been plenty of foreshadowing about who the three “who shall assist” could be.

In section 5, the Lord had told Martin Harris that he could qualify if he chose to be humble and faithful. In section 6, the Lord mentioned witnesses and testimony and told Oliver Cowdery that he should “assist to bring forth my work” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:9, 28, 31). In section 14, the Lord called David Whitmer “to assist” and prophesied that if he asked of God in faith, he would “stand as a witness of the things of which you shall both hear and see” (Doctrine and Covenants 14:8, 11).

In June 1829, as the translation neared completion at the Whitmers’ home in Fayette, New York, Martin, David, and Oliver pled with Joseph to ask God if they could be the prophesied witnesses. Joseph asked and the Lord answered with section 17. Joseph rose from his knees and said to Martin, “You have got to humble yourself before God this day and obtain, if possible, a forgiveness of your sins. If you will do this, it is God’s will that you and Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer should look upon the plates.”⁴⁶

The revelation can be read as a covenant in which the Lord promises Oliver, David, and Martin that if they will rely on his word wholeheartedly, he will show them the Book of Mormon plates, the breastplate, Laban’s sword, the seer stones the Lord made for the brother of Jared, and the Liahona that directed Lehi and his family miraculously through the wilderness near the Red Sea. The witnesses would view these artifacts by faith like that of the brother of Jared or Lehi.

That witness would prove to these men much more than the fact that Joseph had plates. Lehi’s miraculous compass, Laban’s sword, and the brother of Jared’s seer stones testify that the plates were inscribed with ancient writing about actual people who received revelations, knew the Lord, were directed to a promised land, and committed their testimonies of Christ to writing that had been translated by Joseph Smith.

In exchange for such an experience, the Lord obligated the would-be witnesses to testify of the Book of Mormon to fulfill his purposes. Their witness would verify Joseph's, keep him from being overwhelmed, and accomplish the Lord's righteous purposes. On these conditions, the Lord covenanted to resurrect the witnesses at the time of his Second Coming.

About noon on a late spring day in 1829, Joseph, David, Oliver, and Martin slipped into the woods near the Whitmer home. "Having knelt down," Joseph said, "we began to pray in much faith, to Almighty God, to bestow upon us a realization of those promises. According to previous arrangement, I commenced by vocal prayer to our Heavenly Father and was followed by each of the other three." Nothing happened.

"We again observed the same order of prayer, each calling on and praying fervently to God in regular rotation, but with the same result as before." Finally, Martin Harris confessed that he was responsible for the Lord's silence. He left the others humbly, disappearing deeper into the woods. "We knelt down again," Joseph stated, "and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer when presently we beheld a light above us in the air of exceeding brightness and behold an angel stood before us." He held out the plates for them to see, turning them over one by one. "We could see them," Joseph testified, "and discern the engravings thereon very distinctly." A heavenly voice declared, "These plates have been revealed by the power of God, the translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear."

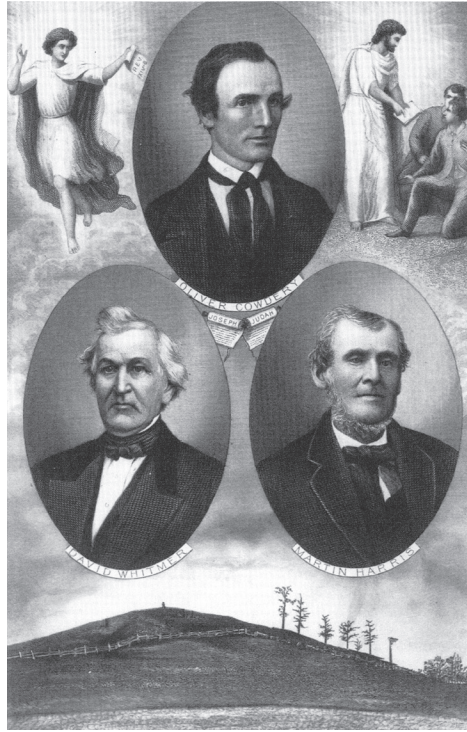
"I left David and Oliver," Joseph reported, "and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance fervently engaged in prayer." Joseph knelt beside him and their joined faith opened heaven. Joseph saw and heard the vision again while Martin cried out, "Mine eyes have beheld, mine eyes have beheld," and was overcome with joy. Joseph helped him up and they returned to the Whitmer home, rejoicing.⁴⁷

Joseph entered the room where his parents and Mrs. Whitmer were visiting. "Father! Mother! You do not know how happy I am.

The Lord has caused the plates to be shown to three more besides me. They have also seen an angel and will have to testify to the truth of what I have said, for they know for themselves that I do not go about to deceive the people.” The pressure of being the sole eyewitness had, Joseph said, become “almost too much for me to endure. But they will now have to bear a part, and it does rejoice my soul that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world.”⁴⁸

Martin, Oliver, and David eagerly told what they had seen and heard. They wrote a statement of testimony to the whole world that they had seen the engraved plates and heard the voice of God state that they were translated correctly. “We declare with words of soberness,” they affirmed, “that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon.” It happened just as all the witnesses said. “It is marvelous in our eyes,” they declared together. “Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things.”⁴⁹

As section 17 emphasizes, the witnesses fulfill the Lord’s righteous purposes. They do not compel people to believe. They make



Engraving of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon by Edward L. Hart. From *Contributor* 5 (October 1883): frontispiece.

everyone able to accept or reject the testimony and accountable for their choice. Witnesses sift people into self-selected categories of believers or unbelievers. “Their testimony shall . . . go forth unto the condemnation of this generation if they harden their hearts,” while those who believe will receive the testimony of the Spirit (Doctrine and Covenants 5:5–6, 18).

Section 18

The Lord revealed section 18 because Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer desired to know how to build the Church of Jesus Christ, something they knew was coming but had never done before.⁵⁰ The Lord tells Oliver specifically to rely on what he has learned from the Book of Mormon manuscript he has penned as Joseph translated. Since he knows by the Spirit that it’s true, he can use it to compose a foundational document for the church that is soon to be restored. If they build the church on this foundation, hell cannot stop them.

This revelation is the first in the Doctrine and Covenants to refer to Apostles, saying that Oliver and David “are called” to that calling (Doctrine and Covenants 18:9). What should Apostles do? “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (v. 10). Based on that premise—the value to God of each individual soul—the revelation gives a rationale for repentance that is centered in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This part of the revelation sounds like a sacred equation: the value of each soul is directly proportionate to the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ. He conquered death to bring the repentant to him. He feels great joy in repentant souls. Truman Madsen had this revelation in mind when he taught, “If souls are of value in direct proportion to the concern and sacrifice of our Redeemer, then we know that in the eyes of the Father and the Son, your soul—even yours—and mine—even mine—is of infinite worth.”⁵¹

That is the revealed reason for Oliver and David to cry repentance. If they spend their whole lives at it and only a single soul repents,

the effort will be worthwhile. Their joy with that soul will be great in God's kingdom. How much greater joy, then, to help many repent? So they are to follow the Book of Mormon in preaching the law of the gospel with faith, hope, and charity by inviting all mankind to come to Christ and assume his name, becoming his.

After nearly two millennia, section 18 commissions new Apostles. The Lord prophesies their calling. Then, beginning at verse 31, he speaks directly to them, promising grace sufficient to save them if they choose to meet his covenant conditions. Oliver and David are charged to "search out the Twelve" by discerning their godly desires, manifest in their behavior (Doctrine and Covenants 18:37–38). The Twelve, in turn, are to act on their revealed instructions. A quorum of twelve would not be called for nearly six more years, but this revelation sets Apostles Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer to the task of selecting the members of that quorum and then speaks to them directly.

What does the Lord emphasize when he commissions Apostles, when he gives them their job description, their marching orders? He teaches them that Christ's Atonement, the price paid, makes each soul of infinite worth in God's sight. Based on that truth, he commissions the Apostles to tell every soul to repent, to obey the law of the gospel, to become one with Christ by assuming his name.

Based on their commission in section 18, modern Apostles emphasize how the Savior's Atonement gives infinite value to each soul. "If we could truly understand the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ," said Elder M. Russell Ballard, "we would realize how precious is *one* son or daughter of God. . . . We would strive to emulate the Savior and would never be unkind, indifferent, disrespectful, or insensitive to others." Elder Ballard concluded, "It was Jesus who said, 'If . . . you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be *one* soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!' (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15). Not only that, but great shall be the *Lord's joy* in the soul that repenteth! For precious unto Him is the *one*."⁵²

Section 19

Martin Harris was “one of the most respected farmers in Wayne County,” a prosperous, property-owning Palmyran since 1808.⁵³ In summer 1829, Martin and Joseph agreed to terms with a Palmyra printer named Egbert Grandin to publish the Book of Mormon. It was a controversial book and they wanted to print a large run of five thousand copies.

Martin led the negotiations and planned to pay for the printing, but he balked when Grandin refused to begin work until he had security for the entire payment.⁵⁴ They worked out an agreement in which Grandin would print and bind all five thousand copies of the book for \$3,000, with Martin putting up more than 150 acres of land as collateral. That’s when Martin “staggered in his confidence.”⁵⁵ He would have to mortgage all the land he owned outright. The marvelous work halted for most of the summer.

Martin worried that no one would buy the books and he would lose his farm. “I want a commandment,” he told Joseph, “I must have a commandment.” So Joseph asked and the Lord gave a commandment, section 19.⁵⁶ In a word, the commandment was “repent.” Frequent, intense repetition of “I command” and “repent” dominate this text. It offers astonishing autobiographical insight into the Savior’s Atonement. It begins in the voice of the Almighty Christ. First, he clarifies a mystery, or a common debate at the time, about whether God’s punishment would last forever or not. Didn’t the word *eternal* obviously mean “never-ending,” proponents might argue? Not necessarily, the Lord answers. Consider that it can be a qualitative measure as well as a quantitative one. The acts of Christ’s suffering and being resurrected didn’t last forever, and yet they have eternal consequences. Punishment, perhaps, can be limited in duration and yet lasting in effect. Moreover, Christ says, *eternal* “is more express” than other words (Doctrine and Covenants 19:7).

With that, the Savior begins to make his intended point powerfully. He repeatedly commands Martin to repent because Christ suffered

exquisitely so that he could. This is the best autobiographical description of the Savior's atoning suffering in the scriptures. It is wrenching, beautiful, and powerful. Compare section 18, for example, where the Savior speaks briefly and modestly in the third-person voice to describe how he suffered the pain of all so that all might repent (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–13). It's the same doctrine declared by the same Christ but in an entirely different voice and tone. Section 19 is adapted to Martin's present predicament, which Christ knows how to address.



“Martin Harris, the Prophet’s Scribe.” From T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons*, . . . (New York, 1873), 22.

Throughout section 19 there is subtle allusion in which Christ compares himself to Martin implicitly. As Martin wrestles with whether he should keep his promises, and whether the sacrifice asked of him is too great, the Savior declares his character: he keeps promises. He made the infinite sacrifice. Where Martin is concerned with carnal security, the Savior shows contempt for covetousness. Where Martin is coveting his own property, the Lord compares it to the priceless testament of Jesus Christ, the “Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:26).

This revelation reoriented Martin Harris. He grasped what the Lord was saying so expressly. He learned to let this commandment suffice and not ask again (Doctrine and Covenants 19:32). He obeyed the Lord’s command to “not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:26). He mortgaged his farm on August 25, paying Grandin in full.⁵⁷ Once the paperwork was finished, Grandin’s employees began printing. The marvelous work was back on track.

Section 20

Section 20 is the founding document of the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

Joseph's history says it came "by the Spirit of Prophecy and revelation."⁵⁸ Joseph read it and the saints unanimously received it at the Church's first quarterly conference in June 1830.⁵⁹

It is a constitution of sorts and quite unique. It is not in the voice of the Lord or an angel, as most of the sections are. Rather, it is in the voice of the Latter-day Saints, a sort of "we the people" or, at least, "we, the elders of the church" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:16).

Section 20 does three things. Its first sixteen verses justify the Church's existence by highlighting the backstory of how it came to be established on April 6, 1830: the calling and commissioning of Apostles to lead it, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the collective witness of the elders.

The passage in verses 17–36 declares what we know. These are articles of faith: "There is a God in heaven," this part begins, and then summarizes the plan of redemption. God created. Mankind fell. "The Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son. . . . He was crucified, died, and rose again" so that everyone who ever lived or lives can have eternal life on conditions of enduring in faith and repentance. This section briefly situates the restored gospel relative to other theologies. Saints share with many Christians, for example, the truth that sanctification comes through the grace of Jesus Christ, but not the agency-compromising idea that a sanctified person can never fall from grace. Anyone can opt out of God's grace, and the revelation warns the Church about that.

The third and longest passage begins in verse 37. It sets the qualifications for baptism, instructs how to administer the sacrament, relates the duties of priesthood holders and other members, and tells of the need for membership records.

Oliver Cowdery did not initially like verse 37's detailed qualifications for baptism. He had prepared an earlier draft that specified only "whosoever repenteth & humbleth himself before me & desireth to be

baptized in my name shall ye baptize them.”⁶⁰ By comparison, verse 37 adds the requirements of a broken heart and contrite spirit, evidence of true repentance and willingness to assume the name of Jesus Christ with determination to serve him to the end, and a godly life (compare Moroni 6:1–4).

Oliver demanded “in the name of God” that Joseph delete the requirement that baptismal candidates should “manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins.” Joseph asked Oliver “by what authority he took upon him to command me to add or diminish to or from a revelation or commandment from the Almighty God.”⁶¹ Joseph finally convinced Oliver, who read section 20 to the Church’s second conference in September 1830.⁶²

There are two things section 20 does not do. Verse 1 does not establish once and for all the date of the Savior’s birth. Verse 1 is best understood as a headnote saying that the Church was organized on April 6 in 1830. It should not be understood to establish that date as precisely 1,830 years since Jesus was born. Joseph’s history says that the Lord “pointed out to us the precise day” to organize his Church.⁶³ It does not specify that it was Jesus’s birthday, nor does verse 1 say it was. Rather, it has been interpreted to mean that it was.

Section 20 does not do all the work of establishing the Church’s authority, core doctrines, and practical organization and procedures. This revelation was amended frequently, as more became known. It is a beginning, not the sum total, of the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

Section 21

After more than a year of anticipation, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery organized the Church of Jesus Christ on April 6, 1830, as the Lord commanded. At the organizational sacrament meeting, Joseph received section 21. In this revelation the Lord established the order of his Church. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught the relationship between order, ordaining, and ordinances. To ordain, he said, was the process

of putting things in order. He defined an ordinance as a ceremony by which things are put in order.⁶⁴ Consider section 21 in that light.

The order the Lord intends is clear from what the revelation says and how it says it. Jesus reveals it to Joseph, who reveals it to the Saints. The Lord authorizes Oliver to ordain Joseph as the first or presiding elder, “this being an ordinance unto you” (Doctrine and Covenants 21:10–11). Oliver is to be ordained as the second elder, again by an ordinance. The Savior leads his Church. Joseph speaks on his behalf. The Savior inspires Joseph to move the cause of Zion forward. The Saints sustain Joseph and Oliver as their leaders and give heed to their words as they heed the Savior’s. This ordained order requires “patience and faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 21:5).

The first command in the revelation is to record these things. The acts of putting the Lord’s Church in its ordained order must be documented. Section 21 restored the Church of Jesus Christ. After nearly two millennia, duly authorized Apostles were ordained and assigned by Jesus Christ to lead his church. Many people have “wished,” as one wrote, “I had lived in the days of the prophets or Apostles, that I could have sure guides.” Others looked forward, waiting for the Lord to send new Apostles.⁶⁵ Those hopes were realized on April 6, 1830. As Joseph put it, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded upon direct revelation, as the true church of God has ever been, according to the scriptures.”⁶⁶

Section 22

The Book of Mormon taught the need for authorized baptism of accountable, covenanting believers. Section 20 added to it, further specifying the method and criteria for baptism. However, when some “very moral and no doubt as good people as you could find anywhere . . . came, saying they believed in the Book of Mormon, and that they had been baptized into the Baptist Church,” Joseph did not know what to tell them. He asked the Lord and received section 22.⁶⁷

Sixteenth-century reformers were pejoratively called Anabaptists (“rebaptizers”) when they followed the biblical practice of immersing accountable believers, including people already baptized as infants. The American Baptist leader Francis Wayland defended this practice. “We consider ourselves not to *baptize again*,” he wrote, “but to baptize those who have never submitted to this ordinance.”⁶⁸

Section 22 makes the same case. The Lord declares that “old covenants” are “done away” because he has restored “a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning” (Doctrine and Covenants 22:1). So even a man baptized an hundred times would not have entered the “strait gate” by obeying an irrelevant law, by “dead works” (vv. 2–3). The Lord gave the new covenant because of these dead works.

Oliver Cowdery preached that until the Lord restored authorized baptism, “the ordinances of the gospel have not been regularly administered since the days of the Apostles.”⁶⁹ His teaching was understood by converts who flocked to the restored covenant. It was unpopular to others.⁷⁰

Section 23

Once the Church of Jesus Christ was organized, Joseph’s brothers Hyrum and Samuel and their father, together with Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Knight, were “anxious to know of the Lord what might be their respective duties, in relation to this work.” Joseph’s history says, “I enquired of the Lord and received for them the following.”⁷¹

In section 23, the Lord speaks to each of these men in turn, offering blessings and warnings, prophecies and promises. Note especially the conditions on which the prophesied blessings depend.

Oliver Cowdery pridefully withdrew from the church in 1838 and remained out for a decade before returning humbly. During that period he wrote defensively about his importance in the Restoration. Afterward, Oliver testified meekly of the Book of Mormon and of

receiving the priesthood from ministering angels along with Joseph Smith.⁷² When Oliver was aware of pride and made his calling known, the Lord opened his heart to preach the truth.

For Hyrum, verse 3 fulfills the Lord's promise to him in section 11. There the Lord told Hyrum Smith that if he would learn the word of the Lord, then his tongue would be loosed to preach it. Hyrum must have studied the scriptures in the year between the two revelations, since section 23 announces that his tongue is loosed. Hyrum preached powerfully ever after. Joseph's father and brother Samuel also became effective missionaries and church leaders in response to this revelation.

Joseph Knight had done so much for Joseph—provided money, paper for the Book of Mormon, food, transportation, and moral support. He was most comfortable behind the scenes. What section 23 commanded was more difficult for him: to join the church meant to preach the gospel. Father Knight wrote that he wrestled with the decision to be baptized but finally decided not to. A few weeks later, he and his wife chose to be baptized.

Section 24

Joseph had a rough month between the Church's Spirit-filled June conference in Fayette, New York, and this July 1830 revelation. He returned to his home in Pennsylvania and then visited the Saints in nearby Colesville, New York. Reverend John Sherer, who was losing some of his Presbyterian followers to the restored gospel, stirred prejudice against Joseph. Sherer's followers interrupted baptismal services, and he finally kidnapped Emily Coburn in an attempt to prevent her baptism.

When several people who had been baptized, including Emma Smith, were to be confirmed, a constable arrested Joseph "on charge of being a disorderly person; of setting the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon." The charges didn't stick, but as soon

as the court acquitted Joseph, a constable from the neighboring county arrested him again and hauled him over the county line. All the antagonistic witnesses could offer was hearsay. Newel Knight embarrassed the prosecution with his testimony. Public opinion began to turn in Joseph's favor. The court again acquitted him as his persecutors threatened to tar and feather him. The formerly hostile constable helped Joseph escape to Emma's sister's house, where Emma anxiously waited.

She and Joseph finally returned to their Harmony, Pennsylvania, home the next day. He returned to Colesville a few days later with Oliver Cowdery to confirm the new converts, only to be chased all night by the same enemies. "Shortly after we returned home," Joseph wrote, referring to sections 24 and 25, "we received the following commandments."⁷³

Section 24 is one of several revelations in which the Lord meets Joseph where he is. Though he has become larger than life to many, Joseph, like Nephi, thought of himself as a sinner who needed redemption through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In section 24 the Lord acknowledges both Joseph's accomplishments and his sins, commanding him to sin no more.

Section 24 addresses Joseph's concern about finances and how to provide for his family. It does not promise wealth, only that Joseph will have sufficient if he attends to his calling: "Thou shalt devote all thy service in Zion" (Doctrine and Covenants 24:7). Because Joseph devotes all his service to the Saints, the Saints are responsible to see that his family's needs are met.

Oliver, too, is encouraged to give his all to the kingdom. Perhaps hoping to escape further persecution, both of the Church's presiding elders are promised plenty of afflictions to endure. The Lord does, however, promise to smite anyone who uses violence against them. Those who use the law to persecute the prophet will find themselves cursed by the law. In sum, the two young Apostles are now in the full-time service of the Lord. He promises to look after them as they trust him and take up his cross and follow him, devoting their lives wholly to his service.

Section 25

In the summer of 1830 Emma Hale Smith was baptized near Colesville, New York, as a group of angry neighbors objected. Before she could be confirmed, the raging crowd drove her and other Saints into the Knight family's home for refuge. Then a constable arrested Joseph for preaching the Book of Mormon. Emma awaited the outcome for a few days at her sister's home, feeling "that her very heart strings would be broken with grief" as she witnessed her neighbors' hostility toward her husband.⁷⁴

It wasn't only Emma's confirmation that had been interrupted. Choosing to marry Joseph had disrupted the trajectory of Emma's life. As with so many women who came of age in her time and place, Emma was raised to aspire to middle-class respectability. Given her tumultuous married life thus far, she couldn't help but be concerned about her financial future.

Then in section 24 the Lord essentially guaranteed Joseph and Emma a modest living if the Saints would support them. They would have enough to enable him to devote his life to the Church but no guarantee of things of this world. All section 24 seemed to assure Emma was a life of hardship with a husband who belonged to the Church.

Up to that point, the Lord had only spoken to the men of the Church, though, like Emma, the women of the Church—Lucy Mack Smith, Mary Whitmer, Polly Knight, and many others—were just as much its backbone and as vital as a heartbeat. Then the Lord let Emma know that he could see through her eyes and gave her an opportunity to see through his.

The earliest manuscript of section 25 begins more intimately than the more formal, published version. "Emma my daughter in Zion," the Lord says, "A Revelation I give unto you concerning my will Behold thy sins are for given thee & thou art an Elect Lady whom I have called."⁷⁵ He reveals his will to this highly favored daughter, promising to preserve her life and place in Zion if she will be faithful and virtuous.



Painting of Emma Hale Smith.

This was no hollow promise to a woman living in a time of high maternal mortality rates who had nearly died shortly after her first child did.

The Lord's command that Emma "murmur not because of the things which thou hast not seen" (Doctrine and Covenants 25:4) is often assumed to refer to the Book of Mormon plates, but there is no basis for that conclusion. There were many things Emma did not see, and the Book of Mormon plates may not have been among them.

The revelation gives Emma a calling—or several, actually. "The office of thy calling shall

be for a comfort unto *my servant*, Joseph Smith, Jun., *thy husband*" (Doctrine and Covenants 25:5, emphasis added). As this sentence suggests and one might expect, at times Emma felt as if she was in a tug-o-war with the Lord over Joseph. Still, she excelled at meekly comforting and consoling him.

Emma, the Lord said, was called to be Joseph's partner, his confidante, his strength—and he hers. The Lord commands her to go with Joseph when he goes, scribe for him when he has no other scribe (freeing Oliver Cowdery for other duties), and be ordained to expound scripture and exhort the church by the Spirit. Joseph is to lay hands on Emma to bestow the Holy Ghost, and she shall spend her time scribing and learning much in the process. She need not fear. Joseph will support her in this calling. That is his calling, and by doing it Joseph reveals whatever the Lord wills, according to the Saints' faith.

Emma can see where all this is leading. “Lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better” (Doctrine and Covenants 25:10), the Lord invited. Lay aside your telestial-world aspirations and feed your celestial ones.

The Lord also called Emma to select sacred hymns for the church. He delights in the heartfelt song. Thus Emma may be encouraged and rejoice and cleave to her covenants. Continue to be meek, the Lord commands her, and beware of pride. “Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him” (Doctrine and Covenants 25:14). A crown of righteousness awaits Emma if she keeps these commandments continually.

Emma was confirmed and compiled the church’s first two hymnals in response to section 25, but the revelation is significant far beyond those accomplishments. It addresses Emma’s deepest fears and fondest hopes. This is the only revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants addressed to a woman. It shows that the Lord knew his daughter. He knew she was meek but could be proud. He knew that part of her wanted to complain because she had not seen some of the marvelous things others had seen. He knew she could be tempted by the things of this world. He invited her to sacrifice them for infinitely more. He knew before she knew that she was capable of scribing for Joseph, learning much, and teaching the Saints by the power of the Holy Ghost. He knew that these callings would cause Emma anxiety. He assured her that Joseph would support her. He knew that she needed Joseph. He knew that Joseph needed her, and he called her to comfort and sustain Joseph.

Section 25 oriented Emma’s life. Expecting twins, she forsook her unbelieving parents to obey its command to go with Joseph to Ohio, and she never saw them afterwards. A decade later Emma was elected by her sisters to preside over the Relief Society, which Joseph validated. He read the revelation to the sisters from the Doctrine and Covenants and said that Emma had been “orddain’d at the time, the Revelation was given to expound the scriptures to all; and to teach the female part

of the community.” She was sustained in her calling by her husband and her sister Saints.⁷⁶

A few weeks later Joseph was evading arrest on false charges. It was a depressing time of his life. There was tension between him and Emma over plural marriage, straining their relationship. Emma went to great lengths to visit Joseph in that situation. His journal entry says, “Again she is here, even in the seventh trouble, undaunted, firm and unwavering, unchangeable, affectionate Emma.”⁷⁷

In September 1843 Joseph sealed on Emma’s head the “crown of righteousness” the Lord promised in section 25. Then, just days before his death in 1844, Joseph invited Emma to write her own blessing. She thought of section 25 and penned her hopes that she would be able to obey its commands and receive its promised blessings.⁷⁸ She clung to her covenants through Abrahamic tests. Emma understandably could have, and perhaps sometimes did, consider herself in competition with the Lord and others for Joseph’s time and attention. Section 25 assured her that however true that might be, she was the Lord’s highly favored daughter, that he expected more of her than she may have thought she could give, and that he would finally give her all she ultimately wanted.

Section 26

Joseph and the Saints in southern New York endured a blast of persecution in the summer of 1830. The Knight family in Colesville were understandably anxious. Back home in the nearby but comparatively peaceful setting of Harmony, Pennsylvania, Joseph received a series of revelations, including section 26. The Lord gave it to Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, and John Whitmer to teach them what to do until the conference scheduled for September in Fayette, New York.

The revelation says simply that Joseph and his brethren are to devote their time to scripture study, preaching, confirming the Saints

in southern New York, and farming as needed until time for conference later in the summer. There he will direct them further.

The most significant, if understated, aspect of the revelation is the line “all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 26:2). The Lord had revealed this principle earlier, but that revelation is not canonized, so this is the first mention of common consent in the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph’s manuscript history says that before the Church was organized, the Lord commanded him and Oliver to ordain each other elders in the Church of Jesus Christ and then ordain others, but only after they could gather all who had been baptized to get “their sanction” and be “accepted by them as their teachers.”⁷⁹

At that meeting, the members of the Church, the women and men, accepted Joseph and Oliver as their leaders by a unanimous vote.⁸⁰ Though the word *vote* is used, common consent differs from a democratic election. In common consent, Church leaders put forward a proposal and ask for consent and dissent. Though consent is common, it is not taken for granted and dissent is to be respected. The presiding authority meets with a dissenting member to learn why they dissented and acts accordingly. In an unusual turn of events, Joseph Smith dissented in October 1843 at the proposal that Sidney Rigdon be sustained as his counselor in the First Presidency. Joseph’s dissent was overruled by the Church after a lengthy discussion.⁸¹

Newel Knight said section 26 provided

great consolation to the little band of Brethren and Sisters at Colesville after having been abandoned from time to time by the servants of God in consequence of the wicked who were constantly seeking to destroy the work of God from the earth. It showed us that the Lord took cognizance of us and also that he knew the acts of the wicked. So we resolved to continue steadfast in the faith and were diligent in our prayers and assembling ourselves together, waiting with patience until we should have the pleasure of again seeing Brother Joseph and others of the Servants of the Lord who had become dear to us by the ties of the gospel, and of being confirmed members of the Church of Jesus Christ by the laying on of hands of the Apostles.⁸²

Section 27

Section 27 is one of the revelations Joseph did not know he needed. He set out to get wine so he and Emma could have the sacrament with Sally and Newell Knight, who were visiting so Sally and Emma could be confirmed. An angel appeared to Joseph and clued him in.⁸³ Joseph received the first four and a half verses and parts of verses 14 and 18. Both Joseph and Newell Knight said the rest of verses 5–18 were revealed a few weeks later.⁸⁴

It is easy to assume that this revelation is about the Word of Wisdom, but it is not. It's about the sacrament. Speaking for the Savior, the angel informed Joseph that it does not matter what the Saints eat or drink for the sacrament. What matters is that they partake with an eye single to the Lord's glory, signifying to God that they remember the Savior's body sacrificed and blood shed for the remission of their sins.

Section 27 penetrates to the heart of the sacrament. If one's eye is not single to God's glory in that ordinance, tradition can transcend substance. The angel commanded Joseph not to purchase wine or distilled drinks from people they could not trust. Rather, they should make their own sacramental wine. As a result of section 27, according to Brigham Young, "We use water as though it were wine; for we are commanded to drink not of wine for this sacred purpose unless it be made by our own hands."⁸⁵

The later text of section 27 adds considerable detail to the earlier prophecy that Christ would partake of sacramental wine with Joseph and others. It emphasizes priesthood keys—rights associated with priesthood—and the transmission of those keys to Joseph by biblical prophets. It is the earliest document we have confirming that Peter, James, and John ordained Joseph an Apostle.

Section 27 also applies to Latter-day Saints the counsel Paul gave the Ephesian Saints to arm themselves spiritually.⁸⁶ The revelation identifies the archangel Michael as Adam, and Adam as the "Ancient of days" referred to in the book of Daniel.⁸⁷

Newel Knight remembered how he and Sally, Emma, and Joseph obeyed this revelation. They

prepared some wine at our own make, and held our meeting. . . . We partook of the sacrament, after which we confirmed the two sisters into the church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us. We praised the God of Israel, and rejoiced exceedingly.⁸⁸

Section 28

As the Church's second conference approached in September 1830, Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates, began receiving revelations through a stone "concerning the upbuilding of Zion the order of the Church and so forth, but which were entirely at variance with the order of Gods House, as it is laid down in the scriptures. and our own late revelations."⁸⁹ Newel Knight wrote that Hiram "had quite a roll of papers full of these revelations, and many in the Church were led astray by them," including Oliver Cowdery and many of the Whitmer family. Joseph was perplexed, but not for the reason that is sometimes assumed.⁹⁰

Hiram Page's seer stone was not the problem. Joseph's revelations and personal teachings encouraged others to use their spiritual gifts, including when those gifts involved seeric objects like Oliver Cowdery's rod (see section 8). If Hiram had received real revelation through his stone about how to be a better husband, there would have been no problem. The problem was that Hiram's revelations were "entirely at variance with the order of God's house." He was a teacher in the Aaronic priesthood. He had not been appointed by God's authorized servants, nor sustained by the common consent of the Saints, to receive revelations and commandments about issues that involved all the Saints.

Joseph spent most of a sleepless night prayerfully seeking and receiving section 28. His history says, "We thought it best to enquire

of the Lord concerning so important a matter.” Maybe the “we” included Oliver, because the Lord’s answer is addressed directly to Oliver, which is an important key to seeing what the revelation does, rather than just what it says.

The Lord speaks through the first elder of his Church to the second elder—a point of order—clarifying Oliver’s role to teach the revelations given to Joseph. Likening Joseph to Moses and Oliver to Aaron, the Lord reminded Oliver of his role to “speak or teach” (Doctrine and Covenants 28:4) but not to write revelations for the Church or to command Joseph. The Lord directed Oliver to go on a mission to the Lamanites, or Native Americans, in the West, hinting that Page’s predictions for the location of Zion were wrong: “It shall be on the borders by the Lamanites” (v. 9). But before his mission, Oliver was assigned to visit Hiram privately to “tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him” (v. 11). The Lord did not renounce personal revelation or seer stones. He reminded Oliver of the revealed order and showed him that Hiram was out of order. “For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith” (v. 13).

By speaking through Joseph to Oliver, the Lord illustrated the order in which revelation flows for the Church. By countering the information in Page’s revelation with accurate details about Zion, the Lord led Oliver to the conclusion that either Joseph or Hiram Page was the true revelator. By commanding Oliver to teach Hiram Page these principles, the Lord reinforced them in Oliver’s mind and illustrated the order of the Church at work at a critical moment. Oliver obeyed the revelation and “after much labor with these brethren they were convinced of their error, and confessed the same, renouncing the revelations as not being of God, but acknowledged that Satan had conspired to overthrow their belief in the true plan of salvation.”⁹¹

Section 29

Could you identify the voice of Jesus Christ the way you can quickly identify the voice of one of his living Apostles? What does the Savior sound like? Section 29 begins with a command to listen to Christ, followed by a reason why.

It was given to Joseph at a small gathering of Church members at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, where they gathered for their quarterly conference in September 1830. They all wanted to better understand the prophecy of Isaiah, emphasized in the Book of Mormon, about when the Lord would bring again Zion (Isaiah 52:8; 3 Nephi 16:18; 20:32; 21:22–24). They also had different views about the nature of Adam’s fall. Joseph had been reading the Bible closely on that point, and they all hoped the Lord would clarify some things about it.⁹²

Section 29 is the first of Joseph’s revelations to use the word *agency*, the power with which God endows people to act of their own free will. The revelation shows that agency comes when a set of ingredients combine in a person—a mixture of power to act, commandments that determine good and evil, knowledge of the commandments to act upon, and Satan’s opposition to our acting in obedience.

Joseph’s Calvinist ancestors thought the elect were the relative few God arbitrarily chose to passively receive his grace. In section 29 the Lord defines the elect as those who actively choose to hear his voice (the commandments that comprise part of agency) and harden not their hearts. The chicks he promises to gather like a hen are those who decide to humble *themselves*. That language is theologically significant and frames the entire revelation. Agency: who has it, how did they get it, and what are the results of using it to obey or disobey?

Several of the revelations are eschatological, meaning they deal with the last days, the end of time as we know it at the Lord’s Second Coming. None is more vividly eschatological than section 29. It paints a horrific picture of those who exercise their agency not to repent.

The Lord never specifies the timing of his Second Coming in the scriptures. He says only that it will be “soon,” but as Elder Neal A. Maxwell suggested, wristwatch-wearing mortals are not well positioned to determine what *soon* means to “Him who oversees cosmic clocks and calendars.”⁹³ Even if the revelations are purposefully vague about precise dates, eschatological revelations like section 29 are chronological. They tell the order of events that will lead up to and comprise the Savior’s return and reign. They are characterized by words such as “*before* this great day shall come” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:14), “*when* the thousand years are ended” (v. 22), and “*before* the earth shall pass away” (v. 26). Section 29 sets forth the logic of gathering the elect because the unrepentant will soon suffer the Lord’s just vengeance at his Second Coming. “The righteous shall be gathered on my right hand unto eternal life; and the wicked on my left hand will I be ashamed to own before the Father” (v. 27).

The Lord explains that the wicked will be powerless to come where he is and then transitions into a passage on the importance, therefore, of being endowed with power. Section 29 thus prefigures the endowment of power restored later. How does this endowment of power work? Using Adam and Eve as archetypes in section 29, the Lord talks us through the process of their creation, fall, and redemption. (Though, if I understand verses 30–31, this is all one process of creation in God’s image.)

As the earliest-known revelation to Joseph to describe premortal life, section 29 explains Satan’s lust for power and how he led away a third of heaven’s inhabitants “because of their agency” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:36). We too easily assume that Satan conspired to undermine agency by coercing his followers. The scriptures don’t say that. They only say that he sought to destroy agency. Couldn’t he have done that by telling them their choices had no consequences, that anything they chose was as good as any other choice?

Section 29 emphasizes Heavenly Father’s more excellent way. When Adam and Eve chose of their own free will to become subject

to Satan by obeying him, they were cast out of God's presence *because* they transgressed the law. They thus died spiritually. In other words, they were first spiritual, then temporal. Their fall made them carnal, mortal, natural. But that was only "the beginning of my work," the Lord said (Doctrine and Covenants 29:32).

God began the "last" phase of creating Adam and Eve in his image by lengthening their mortal lives to enable them to exercise agency. He sent angels to teach them the law of the gospel, namely "repentance and redemption, through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:42). This plan safeguarded agency, justice, and mercy. It guaranteed redemption to all who choose to believe and "eternal damnation" to all who choose not to believe or repent (v. 44). Both get just what they want, what they choose.

Section 29 ends as it began, with emphasis on agency. Until his children are capable of acting for themselves, Heavenly Father restricts Satan's power to tempt them. In other words, we grow into free agents gradually, and we "begin to become accountable" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:47) in direct proportion to our ability to act on our knowledge of the Lord's commands of our own free will.

Section 30

Section 28 resolved the tension Joseph felt between him and Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmers. The second quarterly conference of the young Church of Christ, held in September 1830 at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, culminated when "the Holy Ghost came upon us, and filled us with joy unspeakable; and peace, and faith, and hope, and charity abounded in our midst." In that setting, Joseph received revelations for Whitmer brothers David, Peter Jr., and John.

David, the Lord said, had misplaced his devotion and his faith. Rather than loving God with all his mind, he became preoccupied with the things of the earth. Here the Lord is probably not accusing

David of being worldly. The Lord uses the word *world*, as in Doctrine and Covenants 1:16, when he wants to describe the fallen earth, to suggest evil, or what we might call *worldliness*. The revelations use the word *earth* positively. The world is bad; the earth is good. What, then, is the problem? David's priorities. He is a farmer. It is harvest time. He is preoccupied with dirt and crops instead of their "Maker." David is looking down rather than up. His earthly cares have led him to neglect his commission to harvest souls (Doctrine and Covenants 14; 17; 18).

Peter remembered that "the word of the Lord came unto me by the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . saying Peter thou shalt go with Brother Oliver to the Lamanites."⁹⁴ Peter covenanted to obey the command, and he did, traveling nearly a thousand miles, trudging much of it through snow. As with so many missionaries, they did not succeed as they hoped. Baptist missionaries and government agents opposed their efforts, and they eventually returned east without converting any Native Americans. Taking the Book of Mormon to that remnant of Israel would have to wait. Meanwhile, the missionaries had great success with another intended audience of the Book of Mormon. "Strange as it may appear," a northern Ohio newspaper reported,

it is an unquestionable fact, that this singular sect have, within three or four weeks, made many proselytes in this county. The number of believers in the faith, in three or four of the northern townships, is said to exceed one hundred—among whom are many intelligent and respectable individuals.⁹⁵

The Lord calls John Whitmer to proclaim the gospel like a trumpeter. Using the home of the friendly Philip Burroughs as a headquarters, John is to labor for Zion with his whole soul, preaching the gospel without fear, for the Lord is with him. Early missionaries had success preaching the gospel at the Burroughs home in Seneca Falls, New York.⁹⁶ John apparently did so for about six months, from this September 1830 calling until his March 1831 calling to keep a history and transcribe for Joseph (see section 47).

Section 31

Thomas Marsh ran away from home at age fourteen. He made his way to New York City and then to Boston, where he worked in a foundry, making type for printing presses. Later, Thomas and his wife Elizabeth joined Methodism, which satisfied her but not him. He “expected a new church would arise, which would have the truth in its purity.”

In 1829 the Holy Ghost led Thomas to take a trip west in search of this new church. In Lyonstown, New York, a woman asked Thomas if he had heard of the Book of Mormon. He had not, but he wanted to know more. She referred him to Martin Harris in Palmyra. Thomas found Martin at Grandin’s, where the first sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon had just been struck off. Thomas took one of the first copies and went with Martin to the Smith home, where Oliver told him all about the Book of Mormon.

Thomas headed home to tell Elizabeth, who was as excited by the news as he was. When they learned that the Church had been organized in April 1830, they moved to New York, where the Lord revealed section 30 through Joseph to Thomas at the Church’s second quarterly conference in September.⁹⁷

This revelation marked a turning point for Thomas Marsh. His years of seeking the gospel were over; his years of declaring it were about to begin. The revelation’s rich metaphors spoke to Thomas. As a physician, he served Saints who were sick, but at least as important was his work prescribing the gospel of repentance.⁹⁸ He was also to be a farmer of souls, to cut and bundle wheat all day long before it grew too late.

Thomas obeyed this revelation falteringly. He helped build the local branch of the Church, and when it was time to gather, he led them from Fayette, New York, to Ohio. The New York Saints converged at Buffalo, where the harbor was frozen. Places to stay while waiting for a sufficient thaw were at a premium. Prices were high, supplies low. Conditions were calculated to test Thomas’s willingness to declare the gospel and to try his patience and meekness. “You will be

mobbed before morning,” Thomas Marsh told Joseph’s mother, Lucy, when she refused to keep her faith secret. “Mob it is, then,” she shot back, “for we shall sing and attend to prayers before sunset, mob or no mob.”⁹⁹

Thomas presided unevenly over the Quorum of Twelve Apostles from 1835 until 1838. He led them on a mission to the eastern United States and tried to heal wounds created by widespread dissent and apostasy in 1837. But then Thomas himself came out against Joseph Smith in 1838 and spent almost two decades outside the Church before he wrote to Church leaders in 1857, seeking “reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured.” Thomas humbly acknowledged as he wrote, “The Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?”¹⁰⁰ Reconciled to the Redeemer, who gave him section 31, Thomas died in the faith in 1866.

Section 32

Inspired by the Spirit, Parley Pratt left his Ohio homestead in the summer of 1830 and learned of the Book of Mormon while preaching in western New York. He devoured it, became converted, and went in search of Joseph Smith. He first met Joseph around the time of the September 1830 Church conference. During that conference, several of the elders desired very much to know how they could best take the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites. They agreed to ask the Lord whether some of them should go to the Native Americans, whom they assumed were descendants of Lehi.¹⁰¹

Oliver Cowdery had already been called to lead such a mission, and Peter Whitmer was assigned to join him (sections 28 and 30). Parley remembered that Joseph “inquired of the Lord, and received a revelation appointing me a mission to the west, in company with Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Ziba Peterson. We started this mission in October, 1830.”¹⁰²

Parley and Ziba took this revelation seriously and worked hard to obey it. On October 17, 1830, they signed a statement that said,

Being called and commanded by the Lord God, to accompany our brother Oliver Cowdery to go the Lamanites and to assist in the . . . glorious work and business, we do, therefore, most solemnly covenant before God, that we will assist him faithfully in this thing, by giving heed to all his words and advise, which is, or shall be given him by the spirit of truth, ever praying with all prayer and supplication, for his and our prosperity, and our deliverance from bonds, and imprisonments and whatsoever may come upon us, with all patience and faith.¹⁰³

Joseph's mother, Lucy, remembered that "Emma Smith, and several other sisters, began to make arrangements to furnish those who were set apart for this mission, with the necessary clothing, which was no easy task, as the most of it had to be manufactured out of the raw material."¹⁰⁴ Lucy said that "as soon as those men designated in the revelation were prepared to leave home, they started on their mission, preaching and baptizing on their way, wherever an opportunity afforded."¹⁰⁵

Section 33

Some sections of the Doctrine and Covenants highlight the working relationship between personal revelation and prophetic revelation. Section 33 is one of those. Before it was revealed to Joseph, the Lord revealed himself personally to Ezra Thayer, a builder who had employed Joseph before. When he heard Hyrum Smith preach in autumn 1830, Ezra

thought every word was pointed to me. God punished me and riveted me to the spot. I could not help myself. The tears rolled down my cheeks, I was very proud and stubborn. There were many there who knew me, I dare not look up. I sat until I recovered myself before I dare look up. They sung some hymns and that filled me with the

Spirit. When Hyrum got through, he picked up a book and said, “Here is the Book of Mormon.”

I said, “Let me see it.” I then opened the book, and I received a shock with such exquisite joy that no pen can write and no tongue can express. I shut the book and said, “What is the price of it?”

“Fourteen shillings” was the reply.

I said, “I’ll take the book.” I opened it again, and I felt a double portion of the Spirit, that I did not know whether I was in the world or not. I felt as though I was truly in heaven. Martin Harris rushed to me to tell me that the book was true. I told him that he need not tell me that, for I knew that it is true as well as he.

At home later, Ezra had a vision in which a man brought him a roll of paper and a trumpet, telling him to blow it. Ezra visited Joseph a week after he heard Hyrum preach. “I told him what had happened, and how I knew the book was true,” Ezra wrote. “He then asked me what hindered me from going into the water.”¹⁰⁶ Parley Pratt baptized Ezra Thayer and two others that day, including Northrop Sweet, who was married to a niece of Martin Harris.

Personal revelation prepared these converts for the work. Prophetic revelation to them through Joseph called them to the work.

Oliver Cowdery delivered section 33 to Ezra, who realized then that the roll of paper in his vision “was the revelation on me and Northrop Sweet.” Oliver handed it to him and said, “Here is a revelation from God for you, now blow your trumpet.” Ezra protested, “I never blowed a trumpet.” Oliver assured him, “You can.”¹⁰⁷

Would Ezra and Northrop blow their trumpets as the revelation commanded? Would they let their fears, their lack of refinement and education, keep them from boldly opening their mouths as Nephi did? The revelation’s reference to Nephi, with whom Ezra and Northrop had just become familiar as they studied the Book of Mormon, must have helped them understand that they were being asked to speak the truth boldly to an antagonistic audience—but that they would have success. They could speak as powerfully as Nephi, the Lord assured them, on the condition that they would simply be willing to preach the gospel.

Northrop Sweet chose not to become as Nephi. He did not endure long in his calling. He sought a greater one and thought he received a revelation that he should be a prophet. He left the Church and started his own. This is one of several revelations whose promises went unfulfilled because the free agents to whom the Lord declared his will chose to disregard it. Opposed by his wife and others, Ezra Thayer preached the Book of Mormon powerfully but only briefly. He maintained his faith in Joseph Smith for a lifetime, though after Joseph's death, he, too, left the Church. He was often distracted by business and economic concerns. A revelation one *cannot* obey is the Lord's responsibility. A revelation the recipients *will not* obey is their responsibility.

Section 34

"The greatest desire of my heart," wrote Orson Pratt of his youth, "was for the Lord to manifest his will concerning me." In the fall of 1829, eighteen-year-old Orson "began to pray very fervently, repenting of every sin." Soon two elders, including his older brother Parley, came to his upstate New York neighborhood with the restored gospel and baptized Orson on his nineteenth birthday. "I traveled westward over two hundred miles to see Joseph Smith, the Prophet," Orson recounted. He found Joseph in Fayette at the Whitmer home, where he asked Joseph for a revelation.¹⁰⁸

"I well recollect the feelings of my heart at the time," Orson said many years later. Joseph "retired into the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in the house where this Church was organized in 1830." Joseph asked Orson and John Whitmer to join him upstairs, where he got his seer stone, put it into a hat, and asked Orson to write what he would say. Orson felt inexperienced and unworthy and asked if John could write, and the Prophet said he could.¹⁰⁹

Orson remembered how

the Lord in that revelation, which is published here in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, made a promise which to me, when I was



Engraving of Orson Pratt. Frontispiece in *A Series of Pamphlets by Orson Pratt* (R. James, 1851).

in my youth, seemed to be almost too great for a person of as humble origin as myself ever to attain to. After telling in the revelation that the great day of the Lord was at hand, and calling upon me to lift up my voice among the people, to call upon them to repent and prepare the way of the Lord, and that the time was near when the heavens should be shaken, when the earth should tremble, when the stars should refuse their shining, and when great destructions awaited the wicked, the Lord said to your humble servant—“Lift up your voice and prophesy, and it shall be

given by the power of the Holy Ghost.” This was a particular point in the revelation that seemed to me too great for me ever to attain to, and yet there was a positive command that I should do it.¹¹⁰

The Lord chose Orson as an Apostle in 1835 at age twenty-three. As commanded in his youth in section 34, he lifted up his voice long and loud and cried repentance to a crooked generation until he died an old man in 1881. Brigham Young said of Orson, “If you were to chop up Elder Pratt into inch-square pieces, each piece would cry out, ‘Mormonism is true.’”¹¹¹

Section 35

“There was a man whose name was Sidney Rigdon, he having been an instrument in the hand of the Lord of doing much good.” That’s



Sidney Rigdon. Photograph by Irving Saunders (1873), copy by studio of Alexander Fox and Charles W. Symons.

how John Whitmer began the story of section 35 in his history. Sidney “was in search of truth, consequently he received the fullness of the gospel with gladness of heart, even the Book of Mormon.” John Whitmer continued, imitating the Book of Mormon:

Now it came to pass, after Sidney Rigdon, was received into this Church, that he was ordained an elder, under the hands of Oliver Cowdery. He having much anxiety to see Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer whom the Lord had raised up in

these last days. Therefore he took his journey to the state of New York, where Joseph resided.¹¹²

Arriving in time to hear Joseph conclude a sermon, Sidney asked Joseph to seek revelation to know the Lord’s will for him.¹¹³ “After the Lord had made known what he wanted that his servant Sidney should do, he went to writing the things which the Lord showed unto his servant the Seer.” Joseph revised the Bible as Sidney scribed, giving us some of the most precious scripture ever revealed, including much of the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.¹¹⁴

Joseph and Sidney also obeyed the revelation’s command to form a powerful companionship, with Joseph prophesying and Sidney teaching from the scriptures. They “went to the several churches preaching and prophesying wherever they went,” John wrote,

and greatly strengthened the churches that were built unto the Lord. Joseph prophesied saying: God is about to destroy this generation, and Christ will descend from heaven in power and great glory, with all the holy angels with him, to take vengeance upon the wicked, and

they that know not God. Sidney preached the gospel and proved his [Joseph's] words from the holy prophets.¹¹⁵

Section 36

Edward Partridge grew up in New England. He spent four years apprenticed to a hat maker before becoming a journeyman hatter with ambitions to go west to open his own factory. He married Lydia Clisbee and they moved to Painesville, Ohio, and succeeded according to their dreams. But something was missing. Respected and prosperous, Edward and Lydia still lacked spiritual fulfillment. They began to worship with Sidney Rigdon in 1828 and were nearly ripe to hear the restored gospel from Oliver Cowdery, Parley Pratt, and their companions in the fall of 1830. When the missionaries offered Edward a Book of Mormon, he refused but reconsidered.¹¹⁶ Soon Edward “partly believed,” as Lydia put it, “but he had to take a journey to New York and see the Prophet.”¹¹⁷

Joseph’s mother, Lucy, picked up the story there. Joseph, she said, was preaching in Waterloo, New York, when Edward arrived. Joseph invited remarks after his sermon, and Edward stood and said, “He believed our testimony and was ready to be baptized, ‘if,’ said he, ‘brother Joseph will baptize me.’”¹¹⁸ Joseph baptized Edward two days later, then received section 36, apparently before Edward was confirmed by Sidney Rigdon.

This revelation shares a theme common to many others. It calls for urgency in declaring repentance to a perverted generation because the Lord is coming soon to burn the wicked. Section 36 not only calls Edward Partridge to preach the gospel, it also sets forth the doctrine that every man is a missionary, not so much in the formal sense but as a duty of holding the priesthood. One who holds the priesthood preaches the gospel.

Edward Partridge obeyed this revelation. He was confirmed by the Lord’s hand—that is, by Sidney Rigdon acting for the Lord—and he spent his life declaring repentance and serving as a bishop. In 1835

he traveled roughly two thousand miles, held fifty meetings, visited nearly thirty branches of the Church, preached the gospel, and baptized three people. On November 7, 1835, Joseph received an uncanonized revelation in which the Lord praised Edward and his companion for “the integrity of their h[e]arts in laboring in my vin[e]yard for the salvation of the souls of men.”¹¹⁹

Section 37

By the end of 1830, an astonishing amount had happened since the spring, when a handful of members organized the Savior’s Church. There were now dozens of members in New York, and missionaries had converted many more than that in Ohio before trekking to the western frontier to convert others and scout a location for New Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were reading the Bible closely and seeking and receiving revelation that clarified and amplified it. Joseph received the book of Moses by revelation, including the prophecy of Enoch (now Moses 6–8 in the Pearl of Great Price). Church historian John Whitmer noted that “after they had written this prophecy, the Lord spoke to them again and gave further directions”—section 37.¹²⁰

The Lord explained to Joseph that under these circumstances, it was not useful for Joseph to continue revising the Bible until he had gone to Ohio for the Church’s sake because of some unspecified enemy. The Lord commanded Joseph to strengthen the Saints in both western and eastern New York first. All Saints in New York, the Lord said, were to move to Ohio quickly, before Oliver Cowdery returned from his mission to the West. This was the wise thing to do, but as free agents, each of the Saints must choose whether to do it. Soon the Lord would come and hold them accountable for their choice.

Joseph and Sidney did exactly what the Lord told them to do. John Whitmer’s history says that “after the above directions were

received, Joseph and Sidney went to the several churches preaching and prophesying wherever they went, and greatly strengthened the churches.” Specifically, as the revelation directed, “Joseph and Sidney went to Colesville to do the will of the Lord in that part of the land and to strengthen the disciples in that part of the vineyard.” Joseph sent John Whitmer to Ohio to preside and to take a copy of the revelations to teach the Saints there. John reported what he found: “The enemy of all righteousness had got hold of some of those who professed to be his followers, because they had not sufficient knowledge to detect him in all of his devices.”

Back in New York the generally prosperous and long-settled Saints struggled to come to terms with section 37. John blamed worldliness and false traditions for the Saints’ hesitance to “believe the commandments that came forth in these last days for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, and the salvation of those who believe.” They dragged their feet and waited for section 38 to be revealed before doing what section 37 commanded them to do, namely to choose to obey or disobey.¹²¹

Section 38

Early in 1831, Joseph Smith gathered the fledgling Church of Jesus Christ, not yet a year old, for general conference in Fayette, New York. Newel Knight remembered that “it was at this conference that we were instructed as a people, to begin the gathering of Israel, and a revelation was given to the prophet on this subject.”¹²²

Joseph announced section 37’s command for them to move to Ohio right away. The Saints wanted “somewhat more” explanation. Joseph asked the Lord during the meeting and received section 38.¹²³

Unlike the terse command to move to Ohio in section 37, this time the Lord gives a detailed rationale for the commandment. The situation is bleak. All flesh is corrupted, the powers of darkness prevail, eternity is pained (Doctrine and Covenants 38:11–12). The enemy,

presumably Satan, plots the Saints' destruction. The Lord paints a vivid, apocalyptic picture of the different destinies awaiting those who believe and obey the revelation, compared to those "who will not hear my voice but harden their hearts, and wo, wo, wo is their doom" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:1–6).

The January 1831 revelation compelled the Saints to decide whether to serve themselves or the Lord. It provided them a way out of the world. It envisioned an alternative society. It came in the voice of the Lord, who took "the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom . . . by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:4). It foretold evil designs to destroy the Saints "in process of time" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:4, 13).

Those were the same words recently revealed to Joseph to describe how Enoch's Zion made it safely out of this world (Moses 7:21). Their eerie similarity to the New York Saints living in "Babylon" suggests that a creeping, cultural evil posed a great threat to the spiritual welfare of the New York Saints, though, like the proverbially slow-boiled frog, they could hardly discern it themselves.

The revelation brought the crisis to the Saints' attention, compelling them to choose (for it described an either-or proposition) to begin the "process" of becoming like Enoch's Zion or continue the "process" toward "destruction" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:13). To be saved, the New York Saints must move to Ohio (Doctrine and Covenants 38:10–13).

The choice to escape was also a choice to acknowledge the Lord as the source of authority, the maker of worlds as well as laws, and Joseph Smith as his spokesman (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1–8). "Hear my voice and follow me," the Lord commanded unequivocally (Doctrine and Covenants 38:22). The revelation required the Saints to relieve poverty, esteem everyone equally, and to "be one" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27). To those at the conference, the revelation shouted objections to the cultural messages they received every day to be partisan, to be covetous, and to "possess that which is above another." "like the Nephites of old" (Doctrine and Covenants 49:20;

38:39). It seemed calculated to test the integrity of covenant-makers by compelling them to choose either the “the things of this world” or “the things of a better” (Doctrine and Covenants 25:10; 38:17–20, 25–26, 39). The revelation was starkly indifferent to the Saints’ carnal security. “They that have farms that cannot be sold, let them be left or rented as seemeth them good” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:37). The irrelevance of property contrasts sharply with the revelation’s emphasis on the welfare of souls. There is a sense of urgency that the Saints might make it safely out of a fallen world. “That you might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless: wherefore for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:31–32).

The revelation caused an initial shock and division among the Saints. Some who were comfortable in New York did not want to obey it. Some projected their own selfishness onto the prophet, claiming he had invented the revelation to get gain himself. “This,” John Whitmer noted, “was because, their hearts were not right in the sight of the Lord.”¹²⁴

That is not the most remarkable part. Given the individualistic attitude of the society in which these Saints lived, the remarkable fact is not that “one or two” chafed at the “monumental sacrifice” of the command to gather in Ohio but the stunning degree of obedience and sacrifice in response to section 38.¹²⁵ “The Lord had manifested his will to his people,” John noted. “Therefore they made preparations to Journey to the Ohio, with their wives, and children and all that they possessed, to obey the commandment of the Lord.”¹²⁶

Newel Knight wrote, “As might be expected, we were obliged to make great sacrifices of our property.”¹²⁷ By keeping the command to pull up telestial roots and forsake telestial concerns, the New York Saints were yielding up their *selves* to God.¹²⁸ They were making a bold, countercultural declaration.¹²⁹ By so doing they prepared themselves to receive the law of consecration the Lord promised to give them when they gathered to Ohio. They were self-selecting to be “endowed with power from on high” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32).

Sections 39–40

James Covell was a Methodist minister and president, in fact, of a Methodist conference in western New York. Early in 1831, James came to Joseph and said he had covenanted with the Lord to obey any command the Lord gave him through Joseph. The Lord gave Joseph section 39 for James.¹³⁰

The Lord reveals how well he knows James and that his heart is now right. The great sorrow of James's past stems from his pride and worldly cares, which have led him to reject Christ many times, but the day of his deliverance has come. The Lord commanded James to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" and receive the Holy Spirit (v. 10).

If James will obey the law of the gospel, the Lord has greater work for him to do: preaching the fulness of the gospel, which Christ has sent forth as a covenant to recover the house of Israel. James will have power, great faith, and the Lord to go before him. The Lord has called him to build the Church so that Zion may rejoice and flourish. James is called to go west to Ohio.

James Covell broke his covenant. Almost immediately he "rejected the word of the Lord" in section 39 "and returned to his former principles and people." Joseph and Sidney wondered why, and the Lord explained in section 40.¹³¹

The order of events in section 40 is important. First, James Covell made a covenant with an honest heart. He sincerely received the gospel. Then Satan tempted him to fear the persecution that would result, to worry about giving up his paid ministry for a lay one. James chose to follow those fears and cares, resulting in a broken covenant.

This sequence highlights how revelation facilitates agency. A person has agency, or power to act independently, only when they know what God wants, Satan poses an alternative, and they are free to choose between the two (see section 29). Given section 39, James knew just what the Lord wanted him to do. Then Satan countered the commandments. James was free to choose between the two. He chose to break his covenant, making it null and void.

Some have cited sections 39 and 40 as evidence that Joseph Smith was a fraud. They contend that these sections prove that Joseph's God did not even know that James Covell would not obey. That conclusion depends on a particular conception of God that is not evident in Joseph's revelations. The Lord who spoke through Joseph Smith does not function in that agency-robbing way. Joseph's revelations distinguished between the sovereignty of God and the agency of individuals (see section 93). Joseph truly taught that "God sees the secret springs of human action, and knows the hearts of all living," but it did not follow for Joseph that God caused bad behavior.¹³² "I believe that God foreknew everything, but did not foreordain everything," Joseph taught profoundly. "I deny that foreordain and foreknow is the same thing."¹³³

In other words, God did not make James Covell break his covenant. Rather, the Lord gave James power to make and keep his covenant and the agency to decide whether to make and keep it for himself. Revelation gives us knowledge of God's will. It makes us free to choose. Section 40 explains that James Covell made and broke his covenant of his own free will. It is a more significant revelation than one might assume based on its brevity.

Section 41

"Joseph the Prophet and Sidney arrived at Kirtland to the joy and satisfaction of the Saints," John Whitmer wrote. They were homeless. Joseph and Emma had left their home in Pennsylvania. Sidney and Phebe Rigdon had, because of their conversions, lost the home their Reformed Baptist congregation built for them. Joseph received section 41 the day they arrived. It answered the questions about housing and did something out of the blue: called a bishop named Edward Partridge.¹³⁴

Edward had apprenticed four years for a hat maker in New England before venturing west to Ohio to open his own factory with his bride,

Lydia Clisbee. They succeeded economically but remained unsettled. They could see a great need for God to “again reveal himself to man and confer authority upon son [*sic*] one, or more, before his church could be built up in the last days.”¹³⁵

Oliver Cowdery was just such a man. When he and his companions brought the Book of Mormon to Painesville, Ohio, Edward initially reacted with disbelief. Knowingly, and perhaps with a smile, Oliver thanked God for honest-hearted souls and departed. Before long, Edward sent one of his employees to fetch a Book of Mormon from Oliver and his fellow missionaries.¹³⁶

Hungering for truth, Edward set out for New York to interview Joseph Smith and returned to Ohio having been baptized by the Prophet himself.¹³⁷ Lydia, meanwhile, had been baptized by Parley Pratt. “I saw the Gospel in its plainness as it was in the New Testament,” she testified, “and I also knew that none of the sects of the day taught these things.”¹³⁸ Edward returned to New England to declare the good news to his parents and siblings.

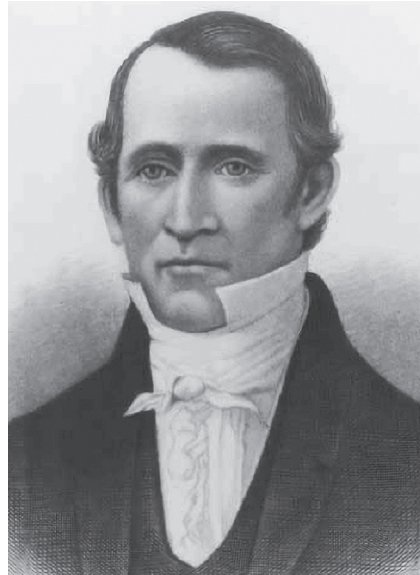
Joseph, meanwhile, received sections 37 and 38, commanding the New York Saints to move to Ohio and promising revelation of the Lord’s law and an endowment of power there. Joseph and Emma traveled to Ohio by sleigh with the returning Edward Partridge and Sidney Rigdon.

Section 41 is strikingly countercultural. It highlights the differences between the kingdom of God and the world in which Joseph Smith lived. The revelation is neither democratic nor republican. It assumes that the Lord, not the people, are sovereign. It does not separate legislative, judicial, and executive powers. The Lord exercises them all.

He assumes both the power and prerogative to bless and curse, to include and to cast out, to make and declare law, and to bring law-breakers to judgment. He repeatedly refers to “my law” and calls for an assembly, not to debate and create law but “to agree upon” law dictated by revelation. Moreover, he commands specific action, most

notably for Edward Partridge, to “leave his merchandise” and spend his whole effort executing the divine law. Section 41 is a revelation from a King with instructions about how to build His kingdom.

As section 38 declared, this King of kings gives laws that make us free (Doctrine and Covenants 38:21–22). He retains sovereignty, including the prerogative to make the laws, but grants agency—the power to decide whether or not to obey them.



Engraving of Edward Partridge.

Bishop Partridge had been a member of the Church for less than two months when he was asked to sacrifice everything he had worked for in his life and devote his time completely to his new Church. How did he choose to act on the revelation? He fed and clothed the Saints, left hat-making and factory-owning to others, and faithfully, if imperfectly, acted out the commands in this revelation and others for the rest of his life.

That was not the American way. It was the Lord’s way. Edward Partridge had been called to model and then implement the law of consecration (section 42). His daughter remembered that he “was called to leave his business, which was in a most flourishing condition, and go to Missouri to attend to the business of the Church. He went.” Soon thereafter, when the Lord called for them in section 57, Lydia and their children went too. This revelation was the beginning of the Partridge family consecrating their lives to the kingdom of God on earth.¹³⁹

Section 42

“We have received the laws of the Kingdom since we came here and the Disciples in these parts have received them gladly.”¹⁴⁰ Joseph had been in Ohio less than a month when he wrote those words to Martin Harris, who was still in Palmyra, New York, in February 1831. Prior to Joseph’s own move from New York, the Lord commanded him to gather the Church in Ohio and promised, “There I will give unto you my law.”¹⁴¹ Shortly after Joseph’s arrival in Kirtland, he received the promised revelation. Early manuscripts call it “The Laws of the Church of Christ” (now Doctrine and Covenants 42:1–73).

The need for the revelation at this time was acute. Joseph found the Saints in Ohio to be sincere but confused about the biblical teaching that early Christians “were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32).

Many of the Ohio converts belonged to “the Family,” a communal group that shared the home and farm of Lucy and Isaac Morley in an effort to be true Christians. Their intentions were in keeping with the account Joseph himself had recently received of Enoch’s Zion, where the people had achieved the ideal “of one heart and one mind” and completely eliminated poverty (Moses 7:18). However, their practices undermined personal agency, stewardship, and accountability—though they were “striving to do the will of God, so far as they knew it.”¹⁴² As a result, the converts were, in the words of Joseph Smith’s history, “going to destruction very fast as to temporal things: for they considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to a brother belonged to any of the brethren.”¹⁴³

Very shortly after Joseph arrived in Ohio, the Lord revealed that “by the prayer of your faith ye shall receive my law that ye may know how to govern my Church.”¹⁴⁴ A few days later, Joseph gathered several elders and in “mighty prayer” asked the Lord to reveal His law as promised.¹⁴⁵

The revelation Joseph received in response upheld the first great commandment, loving God wholeheartedly, as the motivation for keeping all the others, including the law of consecration, suggesting that love for God is the reason for the practice. To consecrate, the early Saints were taught, meant to make their property sacred by using it for the Lord's work, including purchasing land on which to build New Jerusalem and crowning it with a temple. The law revealed that consecration was as much about receiving as it was about giving, since the Lord promised that each faithful Saint would receive "sufficient for him self and family" here and salvation hereafter.¹⁴⁶

The law clarified that consecration did not necessarily mean communal ownership of property. Rather, it required willing souls to acknowledge that the Lord was the owner of all and that each of the Saints was to be a hardworking "steward over his own property"¹⁴⁷ and thus accountable to the actual owner, the Lord, who required that the Saints freely offer their surplus to his storehouse to be used to relieve poverty and build Zion.¹⁴⁸

The Ohio converts' faith in Joseph's revelations led them to align their practices with the Lord's revealed plan. As Joseph's history put it, "The plan of 'common stock,' which had existed in what was called 'the family,' whose members generally had embraced the ever lasting gospel, was readily abandoned for the more perfect law of the Lord."¹⁴⁹

As time went on, Bishop Edward Partridge implemented the law as best he could, and willing Saints signed deeds consecrating their property to the Church. But obeying the law was voluntary and some Saints refused. Others were untaught and many were scattered.¹⁵⁰ Some rebellious Saints even challenged the law in court, leading to refinements in its language and changes in practice.

Other early Saints understood that the eternal principles of the law—agency, stewardship, and accountability to God—could be applied in changing situations, as when Leman Copley decided not to consecrate his farm in Thompson, Ohio, sending the Saints gathered there on to Missouri to live the law, or again when a mob drove

Church members from Jackson County in 1833, ending the bishop's practice of giving and receiving consecration deeds but not ending the law itself. Just as the law of consecration, though revealed in February 1831, did not begin then, it did not end when some refused to obey and others were thwarted in their attempts. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that "the law of sacrifice and the law of consecration have not been done away with and are still in effect."¹⁵¹

In addition to expounding the law of consecration, section 42 answered many questions the Saints had. Joseph and the elders who gathered in February 1831 in pursuit of the revelation first asked if the Church should "come to gether into one place or continue in separate establishments." The Lord answered with what are now essentially the first ten verses of Doctrine and Covenants 42, calling on the elders to preach the gospel in pairs, declare the word like angels, invite all to repent, and baptize all who were willing. By gathering Saints into the Church from every region, the elders would prepare for the day when the Lord would reveal the New Jerusalem. Then "ye may be gathered in one," the Lord said.¹⁵²

The Lord then answered a question that had troubled Christianity for centuries: Was Christ's Church an orderly, authoritative institution or an unfettered outpouring of the Spirit and its gifts? Some people made extreme claims to spiritual gifts, and others responded with an equal and opposite reaction, stripping away the spontaneity of the Spirit, completely in favor of rigid rules. This dilemma existed in the early Church in Ohio, and the Lord responded to it with several revelations, including his law. The law did not envision the Church as either well ordered or free to follow the Spirit; rather, it required that preachers be ordained by those known to have authority, that they teach the scriptures, and that they do it by the power of the Holy Ghost.¹⁵³

Other portions of the law restated and commented on the commandments revealed to Moses and included conditional promises of more revelation depending on the Saints' faithfulness to what they had received, including sharing the gospel.¹⁵⁴ "How," the elders wondered, should they care for "their families while they are proclaiming

repentance or are otherwise engaged in the Service of the Church?”¹⁵⁵ The Lord answered with what has become verses 70–73, then elaborated further in later revelations, now found in Doctrine and Covenants 72:11–14 and 75:24–28.

Early versions of the law also include short answers to two additional questions: Should the Church have business dealings—especially get into debt—with people outside the Church, and what should the Saints do to accommodate those gathering from the East? The answers have been left out of later versions of the text, perhaps because Doctrine and Covenants 64:27–30 answers the first question, while the answer to the second is so specific to a past place and time that it may have been considered unimportant for future generations.¹⁵⁶

Section 43

Section 43 is one of the loveliest, most poetic of Joseph’s revelations. It is an eschatological text, meaning that it addresses the end of the world and the events that lead up to the Savior’s return. But perhaps its most significant contribution is its solution to the old and perplexing problem of revelation. Avoiding the extremes of no revelation at all or a completely chaotic free-for-all, section 43 validates personal revelation and sets boundaries for what such revelations will contain. Only Joseph or his authorized successors will reveal the Lord’s will for the entire Church of Jesus Christ.

Oliver Cowdery and his companions converted well over one hundred people in northeastern Ohio in the fall of 1830, then left for the western frontier to fulfill their mission call. Meanwhile, the natural leaders of the converts, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge, went to New York to meet Joseph. So almost overnight there was a large group of new, leaderless converts.

The enemy of all righteous had . . . made them think that an angel of God appeared to them, and showed them writings on the outside cover of the Bible, and on parchment, which flew through the air, and

on the back of their hands, and many such foolish and vain things, others lost their strength, and some slid on the floor, and such like maneuvers.¹⁵⁷

Into the chaos stepped a woman we know only by her surname, Hubble. She claimed to be a prophetess. She testified that the Book of Mormon was true, and she received revelations that included commandments and laws. The Saints believed her.¹⁵⁸

When Joseph arrived, he had a problem. Critics of revelation complain that God no longer reveals his will to women and men on earth. Believers in revelation, meanwhile, receive revelations themselves and many believe in counterfeits. Joseph did not want to make the false claim that God would not reveal himself to ordinary people, including women. Like Moses, he wished “that all the LORD’s people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29, emphasis added). But how could he affirm that God continues to reveal his will while simultaneously maintaining the revealed order of the Lord’s Church?

Hubble’s gender was not the issue. Hiram Page had created a similar problem by presuming to receive revelations (D&C 28). To Emma Smith, meanwhile, the Lord had promised the power to expound scripture and exhort the Church by the spirit of revelation to her (D&C 25:7). The question was not whether women could receive revelation. They could, and did, and do. The question was to whom the Lord would reveal his will for the whole Church. The confusion required clarification.

John Whitmer prefaced section 43 by saying that “the Lord gave Revelation that the saints might not be deceived which reads as follows.” He noted that

after this commandment was received the saints came to understanding on this subject, and unity and harmony prevailed throughout the church of God: and the Saints began to learn wisdom, and treasure up knowledge which they learned from the word of God, and by experience as they advanced in the way of eternal life.¹⁵⁹

Section 43 makes an important distinction between revealed commandments and teachings about how to act on the revealed commandments and teachings. They are not of the same importance even if they come from the same source. The revelations of the Lord through Joseph are more important and binding than the teachings of Joseph about them.

In section 43, Saints are commanded not to receive the *teachings* of anyone as if they were *revelations or commandments* (D&C 43:5, emphasis added). The Lord commands Saints to instruct and edify each other—to produce teachings—about “how to act upon the points of my law and commandments, which I have given” (v. 8). Inspired teachings about how to obey commandments are good, but they are not the same as the Lord’s actual commandments and revelations. A Saint who feels guilty for seeking and receiving personal revelation that runs counter to the teachings of a Church leader is actually obedient to the Lord’s command in section 43 to not equate anyone’s teachings with the Lord’s commandments and revelations. Section 43 was necessary, John Whitmer said, so Saints could “learn to discern.”¹⁶⁰

Section 44

Shortly after he relocated to Kirtland, Ohio, as commanded (Doctrine and Covenants 37 and 38), Joseph wrote an urgent letter to Martin Harris, still living in New York: “Inform the Elders which are there that all of them who can be spared will come here without delay if poss[i]ble this by Commandment of the Lord,” the prophet said.¹⁶¹

Section 44 was Joseph’s motivation—the commandment he mentioned to Martin.¹⁶² The rationale of the revelation goes like this: The Lord explains that it is *expedient*, or a means to a highly desired end. Often, as in section 44, the Lord says something is “expedient in me,” meaning that the thing is a vital means to accomplish his purposes. The means, in the case of section 44, is to gather all the elders of the

Church who can possibly attend. At least that is the first premise of the means, or what is expedient.

Here is a paraphrase of the rest of the Lord's rationale in section 44:

- Gather all the elders.
- If they are faithful they will have the Lord's Spirit poured out upon them when they assemble.
- That will make them powerful preachers of repentance.
- That will lead many people to convert.
- That will give the Saints power to organize economically in ways that are legal (and so not vulnerable to suits by enemies).
- That will give the Saints power to organize economically in ways that are also legal in terms of the Lord's law of consecration.

Meanwhile, the Lord explains, "You must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief" (Doctrine and Covenants 44:6).

That all makes more sense when you know that Ohio law demanded that twenty members of a church meet to elect officers and have their organization recorded by the county clerk in order for that church to have legal recognition and be able to own property.¹⁶³ The gathering of the Saints in Ohio led prominent and powerful men, including Eber Howe and Grandison Newell, to oppose the church economically, in the press, and in the courts. Foreseeing the need to organize and the antagonism the Saints would experience, the Lord revealed section 44.

Joseph wrote to his brother Hyrum, "I think you had better come into the country immediately for the Lord has commanded us that we should call the elders of this Church together unto this place as soon as possible."¹⁶⁴ There was a "special meeting of the Elder[s] of the Church of Christ held at Kirtland" on April 9, 1831, but it seems like the meeting that best fulfills the command and prophesied blessings in section 44 was held in early June.¹⁶⁵

Section 45

Joseph Smith bought a King James Version of the Bible at Egbert Grandin's Palmyra, New York, bookstore while the Book of Mormon was being printed upstairs. Shortly after the Church was restored in 1830, Joseph's main task became revising this Bible. He called the revision his new translation. He began with Genesis and received by revelation much restored scripture, including the book of Moses that is now in the Pearl of Great Price.

The book of Moses explains how Enoch led his people to unitedly eliminate poverty and live with one heart and one mind "in process of time" (Moses 7:21). One imagines that by March 1831, Joseph was slogging through less compelling parts of the Old Testament, trying to stay awake while reading about who begat whom and so on and so forth. Joseph's history says,

False reports, lies, and fo[o]lish stories were published in the newspapers, and circulated in every direction, to prevent people from investigating the work, or embracing the faith. . . . But to the joy of the saints who had to struggle against every thing that prejudice and wickedness could invent, I received the following,

referring to section 45.¹⁶⁶

Section 45 is an unusual revelation. It is a commentary on one of the most complicated and even contested passages of the Bible. That's not remarkable. There is no shortage of interpreters of Jesus's Olivet discourse. The remarkable thing is that the interpreter in section 45 is the Savior himself. This is the finest text in the world for understanding Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. One could go to any number of commentaries on Matthew 24 and find all kinds of analysis. These would be helpful, perhaps, but section 45 is the only source on earth in which the Savior of the world interprets and applies his own Olivet discourse.

Section 45 cements a connection between the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. The Savior who reveals it is the "God of Enoch," about whom

Joseph has recently learned so much in his revision of Genesis and reception of the book of Moses. The Savior gave the discourse to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, and here he is in Section 45 interpreting and applying it to the Latter-day Saints.

Section 45 laces together the dispensations of Enoch, the Savior and his Apostles, and the fullness of times. Overwhelming wickedness and pending calamities are common themes in each. Always the outnumbered righteous seek safety, peace, and refuge. They seek Zion. Section 45 gives coherence to the past, present, and future. One sees in it the Lord's plans and purposes being accomplished.

At the point of highest tension in the Savior's discourse, just as he is explaining to the Apostles about the extreme wickedness, violence, and calamities that are coming, he interjects to say that at that point the Apostles "were troubled." Then he restores part of the sermon missing from the Bible, a part that makes sense of all the rest: "I said unto them: Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:34–35). Without revelations like this one, the world might seem like a violent, purposeless mess. With it, one need not be troubled, for one can see that Zion rises in contrast to the world and that calamities portend the fulfillment of Christ's promises that Zion is about to be established.

Section 45 justifies optimism in the face of evil and tumult. Sister Patricia Holland told about her fears when anxiety became widespread and acute after a genocide in Kosovo, a school massacre in Colorado, murders in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, damage resulting from a terrible storm that hit her home, and the pending dawn of the year 2000. Over the howling wind, she asked her Apostle-husband, Jeffrey R. Holland, if these events were the ones prophesied to immediately precede the Savior's Second Coming. "No," he replied, "but wouldn't it be wonderful if they were."¹⁶⁷

Section 46

Like several other revelations Joseph received shortly after relocating to Kirtland, Ohio, section 46 fights deception. The revelation is known for its list of spiritual gifts, but the Lord presents them as part of a larger rationale that may not be easy to grasp. The Lord's command for us to earnestly seek the gifts of the Spirit is so that we will not be deceived. If Saints live in the light of the Holy Ghost, they will not be deceived. If they do not have the Spirit, they will be deceived. Joseph taught that someone "who has none of the gifts has not faith; and he deceives himself if he supposes he has."¹⁶⁸

The revelation arose from a conflict between missionaries. Some returned to Kirtland from Cleveland having had an awful experience. They were preaching when a deceiver came forward and knelt as if to pray but then led an attack. His cohorts blew out the candles and threw inkstands and books at the speaker. Some missionaries understandably wanted to restrict attendance at their meetings as a result of this abuse. Others opposed this idea, citing 3 Nephi 18:22 where the Lord commands the church "not to forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together." Both positions seemed justified. The Saints needed further light. "Therefore," wrote John Whitmer, "the Lord deigned to speak on this subject, that his people might come to understanding, and said, that he had always given to his Elders to conduct all meetings as they were led by the spirit."¹⁶⁹

The Lord knows very well what the Book of Mormon says in 3 Nephi 18:22–34 about allowing everyone who wants to worship with the Saints to do so. However, it is always the case that the elders should conduct meetings by the Holy Ghost. There may be times when exceptions to what the Book of Mormon says are in order. How will those exceptional cases be known? By the Spirit.

The Saints must prayerfully, gratefully seek the Holy Spirit in holiness, with honest motives, a clear conscience, and concern about eternal consequences. Otherwise, they are likely to be seduced by evil spirits, doctrines of devils, or commandments of men. Section 46

commands Saints to beware of these deceptions and promises them they will not be deceived if they seek earnestly the gifts of the Holy Ghost and always remember their intended purposes to benefit those who love the Lord and keep all his commandments—and those who seek to do so. The gifts of the Spirit are not given to satisfy selfish motives. They are to be shared, the Lord explains. Not all Saints have every gift, but all have at least one gift. Some have one, some another, and thus by sharing, everyone gains access to all the gifts.

When asked by one skeptic whether one could be saved simply by repenting and being baptized but not seeking the Holy Ghost, Joseph made an analogy.

Suppose I am traveling and am hungry, and meet with a man and tell him I am hungry; and he tells me to go yonder, there is a house for entertainment, go and knock and you must conform to all the rules of the house, or you cannot satisfy your hunger; knock, call for food, sit down and eat and I go and knock and ask for food and sit down to the table, but do not eat, shall I satisfy my hunger? No! I must eat: the gifts are the food.¹⁷⁰

Section 47

On the day the Savior restored his Church, he commanded the Saints to keep records (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1). Oliver Cowdery assumed the responsibility to do so, and then the Lord called him on a mission. John Whitmer, meanwhile, returned from a mission and “was appointed by the voice of the Elders to keep the Church record.” Joseph asked him to also write and preserve a history of the Church. John didn’t want to. “I would rather not do it,” he explained, “but observed that the will of the Lord be done, and if he desires it, I desire that he would manifest it through Joseph the Seer.”¹⁷¹

That’s when Joseph asked and received section 47. It assigned John to preserve the Church’s history and also to copy Joseph’s revelations. John accepted his revealed assignments. He was sustained by the

Church at a special conference in April 1831, a month after the revelation, and began writing in June.¹⁷² “I shall proceed to continue this record,” his first sentence says, “being commanded of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to write the things that transpire in this church.”¹⁷³ John was not nearly as good a historian as Oliver. His history is an important but sketchy source that became quite cynical when John apostatized in 1838. John was faithful to his calling as a transcriber, however. Many of the earliest revelation manuscripts that exist are copies in his handwriting.¹⁷⁴

Joseph had lived in John’s home. John had scribed part of the Book of Mormon as Joseph translated. What does it tell us about Joseph Smith and the restoration that someone who knew him as well as John did would resist obeying Joseph’s personal counsel and then obey a revelation received through Joseph? The people who knew Joseph best “accepted the voice in the revelations as the voice of God, investing in the revelations the highest authority, even above Joseph Smith’s counsel. In the revelations, they believed, god himself spoke, not a man.”¹⁷⁵

Section 48

The literal gathering of Israel and building of New Jerusalem raise questions. Section 48 was given to answer some of them. Sections 37 and 38 inspired saints in New York to move to Ohio in the fall and winter of 1830–1831. Section 41 called Edward Partridge to be their bishop. Section 42 gave them the law of consecration to live by and gave the bishop responsibility for “the properties of my church” and “the poor and the needy.” It also told Bishop Partridge to obtain places where the New York Saints could settle.¹⁷⁶

As spring of 1831 arrived in Ohio and saints from New York with it, the bishop became anxious for more specific instructions and answers.¹⁷⁷ It is premature, the Lord says, to try to build New Jerusalem yet. Rather, let the New York Saints get settled as best they can

first. Then the Lord will reveal more about New Jerusalem. Then he will appoint people to lay its foundation. “Then shall ye begin to be gathered with your families” (Doctrine and Covenants 48:6).

Section 48 answered Bishop Partridge’s questions and mapped out an orderly, step-by-step process for building and inhabiting New Jerusalem based on previous and future revelation. It also answers common questions related to the law of consecration. Is saving contrary to consecration? What about “obtaining” money? Section 48 clarifies that one’s motives matter very much when it comes to saving and obtaining. It commands the Saints, as prophets have since, to save all they can for righteous purposes. It commands them to earn all they can “in righteousness” so they can build Zion. It is a restatement of the Lord’s command to seek his kingdom first and foremost. Earning and saving for that reason is not only justified, it is commanded.

Section 49

Ann Lee and her family were early Shakers, or members of the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, as they called themselves. At age twenty-two, Ann believed she had a revelation that she was to be God’s messenger. She became the leader of the group in 1772 and led her few followers from England to America two years later, settling near Albany, New York.

The Believers struggled during the American Revolution but gradually gained momentum from the same series of spiritual awakenings that gave rise to the Restoration. Having lost all four of her children to death as infants before being abandoned by her adulterous husband, Lee died in 1784. The Believers continued to thrive in America, however, leading to the establishment of several communities including North Union, Ohio, just a few miles from Joseph Smith in Kirtland.¹⁷⁸ The Saints and the Believers were neighborly and traded with each other.¹⁷⁹



This engraving, “purported to be psychometrically drawn by one Milleston, of New York” in 1871, was believed by many nineteenth-century Believers to be a portrait of founder Ann Lee (1736–1784). S. R. Wells, “Mother Ann Lee, the Shaker,” *Illustrated Annuals of Phrenology and Physiognomy for the Years 1865-6-7-8-9-70-1-2 & 3* (New York, 1873), 39.

The Believers believed that Christ instituted God’s first church, which subsequently apostatized. They believed, therefore, that God would restore his church. Believers acknowledged the goodness of “real reformers” but, asserting that both Catholic and Protestant Christianity were apostate from Christ’s church, they held that “a true Church could have originated only by a new revelation from God to some one person.” They believed that George Fox, the founder of the Religious Society of Friends (aka Quakerism), prepared the world for God to establish his church again. Then “arose Ann Lee and her little company, to whom Christ appeared the second time.” They held that Ann Lee, “by strictly obeying the light revealed within her, became righteous even as Jesus was righteous. She acknowledged Jesus

Christ as her Head and Lord, and formed the same character as a spiritual woman that he formed as a spiritual man.” She was, in a sense, “the second appearing of Christ.”

Believers held that marriage was a worldly, not divine, institution (citing Matthew 22:30) and that sexual relations were ungodly. The choice to leave the world and live celibately was, in Shaker terms, to “take up the cross.” They rejected resurrection and looked forward to shedding their flesh at death to live a wholly spiritual afterlife. They believed in individual moral agency, noting that only those who chose to obey the Lord would be saved, and that coercion was wrong.

They believed in confessing sin but not in the need for redeeming ordinances such as baptism.

Believers advocated temperance, including eating meat sparingly, if at all. Shaker explanations for worshipping God by singing and dancing sound like Doctrine and Covenants 136:28, where the Lord acknowledges that repentant, forgiven souls long to sing and dance as forms of prayer and thanksgiving. Believers taught consecration and stewardship of property. They rejected all forms of exploitation—especially men of women, capital owners of laborers, and mankind of the environment. They envisioned God as both Father and Mother. They spoke of “our Eternal Heavenly Mother,” citing Genesis 1:27—“Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness. So God created man in his own image, *male* and *female*.”¹⁸⁰

Oliver Cowdery spent a few days among the North Union Believers and left several copies of the Book of Mormon with them in 1830, promising to return. Ashbel Kitchell, their large, impressive leader, kept thinking about Oliver’s teachings. He decided that “if God had any hand in that work, he would inform me by some means, that I might know what to do, either by letting me have an interview with an angel, or by some other means give me knowledge of my duty.”¹⁸¹

A Believer named Leman Copley embraced the restored gospel. In May 1831, he came to Joseph “apparently honest hearted, but still retaining ideas that the Believers were right in some particulars of their faith; and, in order to have a more perfect understanding on the subject,” Joseph’s history says, “I inquired of the Lord and received the following revelation.”¹⁸² The Lord revealed section 49 because Joseph did not know exactly where Shaker beliefs and the restored gospel overlapped or diverged. Copley “was anxious that some of the elders should go to his former brethren and preach the gospel”¹⁸³ Section 49 assigned Sidney Rigdon and Parley Pratt to go with Copley to deliver section 49 to the Believers.

Section 49 clarifies the truth and error in Shaker doctrine. Perhaps that is why we hear Heavenly Father’s first-person voice in this revelation, a rare treat. Is he speaking to clarify the nature of the Godhead?

Often in the Doctrine and Covenants we hear Christ speaking of himself as the Son of God. Section 49 ends that way, but most of the revelation is in Heavenly Father's voice. This is one of only two places in the Doctrine and Covenants where we hear the Father speak of Christ as his Only Begotten Son.¹⁸⁴

The revelation clarifies that Ann Lee was not Christ, nor is any man that comes along saying he is. Christ will come with power from heaven, having sent his angels in advance to sanctify the earth with fire. Section 49 clarifies that the Believers erred in thinking marriage is a temporary, human institution. Because the Believers did not understand premortal life and God's plan to embody his children on earth and make them immortal by resurrection and fully divine by exaltation, their opposition to marriage and procreation was counter to his plan. They were thwarting it and section 49 told them so. Similarly, Believers erred in rejecting the ordinance of baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Section 49 affirms Believers' beliefs that are aligned with restored truths. They and the Lord see eye to eye on the evils of inequality and on needlessly exploiting the environment (Doctrine and Covenants 49:20–21).

Sidney and Leman left the day the revelation was given, a Saturday, and were in North Union in time to witness the Believers' evening meeting. They visited with Ashabel Kitchell that evening, discussing whether sex, even in marriage, was Christian. The elders spent the night among the Believers. Parley arrived in North Union early on the Sabbath and asked his companions how things were going. Sidney told him of the previous evening's discussion and that Ashabel had invited them not to debate doctrines but join the Believers for worship. Parley refused to sit by silently. "They had come with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ," he contended, "and the people must hear it." The missionaries sat through the service respectfully. Afterwards Sidney rose and told them he had a message from the Lord Jesus Christ specifically for them. "Could he have the privilege of delivering it? He was told he might." Sidney read section 49 and asked the Believers to receive it.

Here was the answer to Ashabel Kitchell's prayer that God would tell him whether the gospel Oliver Cowdery taught was true. Ashabel rejected it, saying,

The Christ that dictated that I was well acquainted with, and had been from a boy, that I had been much troubled to get rid of his influence, and I wished to have nothing more to do with him; and as for any gift he had authorized them to exercise among us, I would release them & their Christ from any further burden about us, and take all the responsibility on myself.

"You cannot," Sidney Rigdon protested. "I wish to hear the people speak." Ashabel advised the Believers to make their feelings known. They echoed their leader, and Sidney relented to their will. Parley Pratt rose, took off his coat, and shook it in front of them "as a testimony against us," Ashabel said, "that we had rejected the word of the Lord Jesus." "You filthy beast," he responded to Parley. "Dare you presume to come in here, and try to imitate a man of God by shaking your filthy tail; confess your sins and purge your soul from your lusts, and your other abominations before you ever presume to do the like again."¹⁸⁵

What a scene that must have been. By Ashabel's account he cowed the missionaries with his forceful rebuke, but Parley Pratt was not easily intimidated. He got back on his horse and went straight home to Kirtland. Sidney stayed for supper with the Believers. Leman stayed overnight and decided to reunite with the Believers. Years later, Parley summed up the drama with a single line. "We fulfilled this mission, as we were commanded, in a settlement of strange people, near Cleveland, Ohio; but they utterly refused to hear or obey the gospel."¹⁸⁶

Section 50

What happens when young missionaries convert well over a hundred people in a short time, and then the missionaries and the most mature spiritual leaders among the converts leave town? According

to John Whitmer, “The enemy of all righteous [gets] hold of some of those who professed to be his followers, because they had not sufficient knowledge to detect him in all his devices.”¹⁸⁷ According to a local newspaper in northeastern Ohio,

Immediately after Mr. R[igdon] and the four pretended prophets left Kirtland, a scene of the wildest enthusiasm was exhibited, chiefly, however, among the young people; they would fall, as without strength, roll upon the floor, and, so mad were they that even the females were seen in a cold winter day, lying under the bare canopy of heaven, with no couch or pillow but the fleecy snow.¹⁸⁸

When one of the missionaries, Parley Pratt, returned from Missouri, he noticed that

some very strange spiritual operations were manifested, which were disgusting, rather than edifying. Some persons would seem to swoon away, and make unseemly gestures, and be drawn or disfigured in their countenances. Others would fall into ecstasies, and be drawn into contortions, cramp, fits, etc. Others would seem to have visions and revelations, which were not edifying, and which were not congenial to the doctrine and spirit of the gospel. In short, a false and lying spirit seemed to be creeping into the Church.¹⁸⁹

John Whitmer reported that after Joseph arrived on the scene, “these things grieved the servants of the Lord.” They counseled together at Joseph’s home. They did not know what to do, so Joseph sought and received section 50 “in consequence of their not being perfectly acquainted with the different operations of the Spirits which are abroad in the earth.”¹⁹⁰

In section 50, Christ condescends to the elders’ intellectual level in order to be understood. He reaches them where they are and enlightens them. This kind of teaching has results beyond mastery of facts. As a result of it, the weak become strong, the deceived become discerning. Though Satan had power over the deceived elders, those who “attend to the words” of this revelation are promised power over him. “The spirits shall be subject unto you,” Christ assured them on the condition that they act out his instructions precisely. Does it work?

Before the revelation, Jared Carter had been confused by and powerless to act in the face of the strange things he witnessed. After the revelation, he was neither confused nor powerless. He was conducting a sacrament meeting in Amherst, Ohio, with his companion when a young woman fell to the floor. Jared, doubting that the Holy Spirit would interrupt the sacrament, thought a false spirit was at work. He suggested to his companion that they “try that Spirit according to the revelation that God had given.” He explained how they followed verses 31–34 precisely: “We kneeled down and asked our Heavenly Father in the name of Christ, that if that spirit which the sister possessed was of him, he would give it to us. We prayed in faith, but we did not receive the Spirit.”

Jared’s companion made a weak statement “which was not proclaiming against the spirit,” as verse 32 commands. “I arose and proclaimed against it with a loud voice,” Jared wrote, reflecting his intimate knowledge of the revelation. Most of the congregation objected, sure that the young woman was full of the Holy Ghost like the queen in Alma 19. But this was a counterfeit, Jared discerned by the Holy Ghost, and rebuked by the power of the priesthood. He lost much of his influence among that group of Saints but, as he wrote, “I received assurance that I had the approbation of my Heavenly Father, which was better than the good will of many deceived brethren.”¹⁹¹

Section 50 puzzles some modern students, who sometimes jump too hastily to the conclusion that anyone who sees a vision or falls to the floor unconscious or speaks in an unknown tongue is clearly not experiencing the Holy Ghost. If those were the criteria for discerning, we would have to reject large parts of the Book of Mormon and several sections of the Doctrine and Covenants along with much of our history. It is not that simple. Satan is abroad deceiving. As section 50 says, a knee-jerk reaction against false spirits can actually lead a person to be “seized” with a false spirit themselves. Ironically, a smug certainty that one would not be fool enough to fall for the kinds of things some early converts did may be an indication that one has

already been deceived. Joseph taught, “It is that smooth, sophisticated influence of the Devil, by which he deceives the whole world.”¹⁹²

Discerning spirits takes a sound mind, but it is a spiritual, not primarily an intellectual, process. To gain power over false spirits, one must obey the voice of Jesus Christ, have him cleanse and purify them, and learn the difference between light and darkness. For Joseph Smith, Jared Carter, and many others, that lesson has been learned by experiencing both and learning to recognize the difference.

Like Jared Carter, several elders acted out the revelation and got the Church back in order. Parley Pratt told how he obeyed the Lord’s command in verse 37: “Joseph Wakefield and myself visited several branches of the Church, rebuking the wrong spirits which had crept in among them, setting in order things that were wanting.”¹⁹³

Section 51

In the spring of 1831, Bishop Edward Partridge had a problem. It was his job to organize and settle the Saints who were gathering from New York to Ohio. Leman Copley was a member of the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing when he converted to the restored gospel in Ohio. He offered to let the Colesville, New York, Saints settle on some of his 759 acres in Thompson.¹⁹⁴ Bishop Partridge asked Joseph how to organize the immigrant Saints. Joseph asked the Lord, who gave section 51, “A revelation given to the Bishop at Thompson Ohio May 20th 1831 concerning the property of the Church.”¹⁹⁵

This revelation begins to implement the law of consecration. Initially, it instructed Bishop Partridge to obtain a deed from Leman Copley for his land “if he harden not his heart.” Copley returned to his former faith, however, and rescinded his offer for the gathering Saints to settle on his land. He did not give consent to Bishop Partridge obtaining the title to it.¹⁹⁶ When section 51 was first published

in 1835, its instructions about Bishop Partridge obtaining a deed to Copley's land were long since irrelevant and were omitted from the published version.¹⁹⁷

The Saints who had gathered on Copley's property were told by the Lord to gather to Missouri instead (section 54). Bishop Partridge implemented section 51 in Missouri. He purchased hundreds of acres and established a storehouse to supply the needs of the Saints. He was sued by a fellow named Bates who had donated fifty dollars to purchase land and then decided he wanted it back.¹⁹⁸ The suit was granted, apparently on the grounds that the bishop did exactly what section 51 originally said: he purchased the land in his own name and then leased parts of it to individual stewards while he remained, on behalf of the Lord, the legal owner.

Bishop Partridge must have felt like the law of the land prohibited him from carrying out section 51. Joseph wrote to Bishop Partridge in Missouri in May 1833 to counsel him what to do, explaining much of section 51 in the process. Bates had expected something tangible in return for his fifty dollars.¹⁹⁹ Joseph assured the bishop that he remained bound by the law of the Lord to receive consecrated property to purchase inheritances for the poor. Joseph emphasized that such offerings were legal and in no way coerced. "Any man has a right . . . agreeable to the laws of our country, to donate, give or consecrate all that he feels disposed to give." Joseph counseled the bishop to ensure that all offerings were legal by making sure that donors understood they were giving money freely for the poor, not in exchange for anything temporal. "This way no man can take advantage of you in law," Joseph wrote.

He also counseled the bishop to apply section 51 by deeding pieces of land to Saints as their "individual property." Joseph called this "private stewardship," not ownership. Bishop Partridge issued several such deeds based on section 51. When section 51 was first published in 1835, much of verse 5 was added to keep folks like Bates from suing the Lord's bishop. Joseph wrote to Bishop Partridge that the revelation in *Doctrine and Covenants* 51:5 was given so "that rich men

cannot have power to disinherit the poor by obtaining again that which they have consecrated.”²⁰⁰

Section 52

Acting on section 44’s commandment to convene a conference, Joseph promised the priesthood leaders a blessing if they would come humbly and faithfully. “Therefore,” John Whitmer wrote, “the elders assembled from the East, and the West, from the North and the South.”²⁰¹ Joseph presided over the series of priesthood meetings during June 3–5, 1831. He and others prophesied at the conference, rebuked the devil, and ordained the first high priests in the Church. The next day, he received section 52, which he described as “Directions to the Elders of the Church of Christ.”²⁰²

Section 52 gives the Saints knowledge—and therefore power—to discern devilish counterfeits from the Lord’s power. Satan tried mightily to deceive the Saints from the time missionaries first arrived in Ohio through the priesthood meetings just prior to section 52. He mimicked spiritual gifts and convinced many people they were under the influence of the Holy Ghost. Joseph taught that “some, by a long face and sanctimonious prayers, and very pious sermons, had power to lead the minds of the ignorant and unwary.”²⁰³

The fact that someone speaks well or is overwhelmed with emotion is not evidence that their actions are acceptable to God. Section 52 adds important criteria for discerning: Do those overcome with emotion regain their composure and teach wise, restored truth? Do those who pray, whose attitude seems Christian, obey the ordinances Jesus has established in his Church and kingdom? Do they follow the revealed order of the Savior’s Church? Do excellent speakers obey Christ’s ordinances? Christ does not accept the sanctimonious prayers or pious sermons of those who are unwilling to obey his ordinances and neither should the Saints. The knowledge in section 52 empowers the Saints to separate satanic imitations from the Lord’s power.

Section 52 is exciting. This is the first revelation to identify Missouri as the location of Zion, the Saints' inheritance. It calls twenty-eight men to travel to Missouri for a conference at which the Lord will reveal more specifically the location for New Jerusalem. The Saints received section 52 with great anticipation, and many went to great lengths to obey its commands.

Joseph and others the Lord called to travel with him left Kirtland, Ohio, in mid-June and arrived in Independence, Missouri, about a month later. Most of the others who were called followed, taking different routes and making converts along the way, as section 52 commanded. The Lord fulfilled his section 52 promise to reveal more about Zion (see section 57).

Section 52 draws the battle lines for a culture war. Missouri, it says, is the place the Lord chose for the Saints' inheritance. In 1831, however, Missouri was inhabited by people the Lord called "enemies" (v. 42). The Lord's straightforwardness makes some readers squeamish. It doesn't sound to them like their idea of Jesus Christ. If so, just keep reading the scriptures until the sentimental image of Jesus is replaced by the actual Christ whose voice dominates the Doctrine and Covenants. He sees things as they are and will be and speaks the truth. He knows who are his friends and who are his enemies. He demonstrates this knowledge in section 52 and elsewhere in the Doctrine and Covenants. We come to know him by hearing his voice.

Section 53

Sidney Gilbert was an entrepreneur, a business partner of Newel Whitney in northern Ohio, when the first missionaries to that area converted him in 1830. In the late spring of 1831, Sidney may have felt left out. He was not named in section 52 among the many missionaries called by the Lord to journey to Missouri that summer, and Joseph had prophesied that "the elders would soon have large congregations to speak to and they must soon take their departure into the regions west." So Sidney asked Joseph what the Lord had in mind for him to do.²⁰⁴

The Lord had important work for Sidney and his family to do. He and his wife Elizabeth traveled to Missouri with Joseph Smith to obey section 53. There, at the Lord's command (section 57), Sidney established a store to provide for the Saints. He helped Bishop Partridge purchase land for Zion. When the Saints were driven from Jackson County in 1833, Sidney was among the Church leaders who tried to pacify the mob and then obtain justice. The dreaded disease cholera slew Sidney in the summer of 1834. Until the end, he was anxiously engaged in the cause of Zion.

Section 54

Newel Knight led the New York Saints to Thompson, Ohio, where they settled on Leman Copley's land and "commenced work in all good faith thinking to obtain a living by the sweat of the brow."²⁰⁵ Then section 51 instructed Bishop Partridge to obtain a deed from Leman for the land "if he harden not his heart."²⁰⁶ But after obeying section 49's command to preach the gospel to members of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, Leman forsook his faith in the restored gospel and returned to that Society.²⁰⁷ Then he ordered the Saints off *his* land.

Joseph Knight said they "had to leave his farm and pay sixty dollars damage for putting up his houses and planting his ground."²⁰⁸ Where should they go and what should they do to provide for themselves? Joseph's history says that the Saints in Thompson, "not knowing what to do, sent in their elders for me to inquire of the Lord for them." He did and the Lord answered with section 54.²⁰⁹

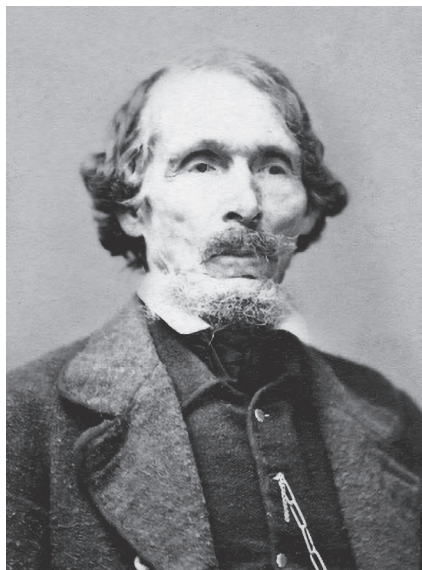
The eternal Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for the sins of mankind spoke to Newel Knight, presiding elder of the Saints in Thompson: "You must stand fast in the office whereunto I have appointed you," the Savior said. The Lord makes repentance and humility the conditions on which the Saints in Thompson will escape their enemies. Because Leman Copley broke his covenant to consecrate land, the covenant is null and void. The Lord blesses the Saints who have

kept the covenant. He commands them to flee from their enemies by traveling to Missouri as a group, appointing a treasurer to pay fares and tolls along the way.

Western Missouri bordered on the territory recently set apart by the U.S. government for Native Americans to settle. The Lord commands the Saints to find ways to make a living after they arrive until Zion can be established and land provided for them to inhabit. He commands them to patiently endure hardships until the Lord's coming. He will reward those who seek him. The souls of these early converts will rest with the Lord.

As a result of section 54, the Saints from Colesville, New York, continued their group trek all the way to Missouri. Led ably by Newel Knight, they became the nucleus of the Church in Jackson County and gave their lives to building Zion.

Section 55



Photograph of William W. Phelps.

William Phelps edited the *Ontario Phoenix* newspaper in Canandaigua, New York. He was all mixed up inside. He aspired to prestigious offices, could be strikingly arrogant and condescending, and within weeks of the publication of the Book of Mormon, he gained a deep and abiding testimony of it. After several months, he visited Joseph Smith and determined to “quit the folly of my way, and the fancy and fame of this world, and seek the Lord and his righteousness.”²¹⁰

Shortly after most of the Saints in New York left to gather to Ohio, William gave up his newspaper and set out with his family to gather with the Saints. He arrived in Kirtland in June 1831 and told Joseph he had come “to do the will of the Lord.” Joseph asked the Lord what that was, and the Lord answered with section 55.²¹¹

In section 55, the Lord continues to recruit talent into his Church to lay the foundation of Zion. William was called to assist Oliver Cowdery as a printer, editor, and writer for the Church, including producing books for the education of children. This calling requires William to go to Missouri with Joseph and Sidney to settle and work there. The Lord commands Joseph Coe to go with them also and promises to reveal more later according to his will.

William Phelps obeyed section 55. He submitted to baptism and confirmation. He traveled with Joseph to Missouri and became the Lord’s printer there. He published the Church’s first newspaper, hymnal, and Joseph’s revelations. Joseph Coe also responded to the Lord and traveled to Missouri to obey section 55.

Section 56

Think of section 56 as an emergency mission transfer. In section 52, Ezra Thayer had been called as Thomas Marsh’s companion on a mission to Missouri. Thomas got ready to go as called. Ezra balked. The same revelation called Newel Knight and Selah Griffin as companions to the same mission. When the Saints from New York were not able to stay on the Copley farm and the Lord directed them to move on to Missouri in section 54, he called Newel Knight to remain as their leader. So Thomas Marsh and Selah Griffin needed new companions. The Lord assigns them to each other in section 56.

Some readers are disturbed by this section; others like it when the Lord changes course. How can that be, some wonder, if the Lord is always the same and knows everything? It seems inconsistent. Close reading of section 56 and revelations related to it shows it to be

consistent with the Lord's way, however. He locates agency in individuals and then responds, as needed, to the way those people choose to act. Leman Copley could have kept his covenant to let the New York Saints settle on his land, freeing Newel Knight to go on the Missouri mission. Ezra Thayer could have accepted the call to go with Thomas Marsh on the Missouri mission.

If the Lord had simply used his foreknowledge to avoid calling them to the work, they could not be free to choose whether to obey his will or not. He would have predetermined their choices instead of empowering them to choose for themselves. The Lord knew well when he called Ezra that he would have to choose to “humble himself” and that he would join Thomas only “if he be obedient to my commandments.”²¹² Moreover, the Lord revoked the commandment for Newel to be Selah's companion “in consequences of the stiffneckedness of my people . . . and their rebellions.”²¹³

Thomas Marsh and Selah Griffin obeyed section 56. As Thomas put it, they “journeyed to Missouri preaching by the way.”²¹⁴ From the beginning of the Restoration, the Lord has extended calls to people who will not accept them or who fail to fulfill them. The Lord revokes the refused callings and rearranges assignments, and the work gets done without the help of the unwilling. That's a vastly superior plan to never calling anyone who might fall short or refuse to serve. Revelations like section 56 honor our choices and prophesy their sometimes painful consequences.

Section 57

Section 57 is the first revelation Joseph received in Missouri. After receiving the commandment to travel there from Ohio in section 52, it took Joseph two weeks to prepare and a month to make the long trip. Mindful of the prophecies of Isaiah, Joseph asked the Lord for details concerning their fulfillment: “When will the wilderness blossom as the rose; when will Zion be built up in her glory, and where will thy

Temple stand unto which all nations shall come in the last days?"²¹⁵ Joseph described how the Lord answered with section 57.²¹⁶

The Lord identified Independence, Missouri, as the center of the place he appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the Saints. It is the promised land, the site for New Jerusalem, the city of Zion. As if Joseph was a disoriented pedestrian, the Lord directs him to the spot where the temple should be built just a few blocks west of the courthouse. The Lord desires the Saints to purchase that land and every tract they can in what is now Kansas City (all the way to the territory created in 1831 for Native Americans) and Independence. This land is ultimately to be inherited by faithful Saints.

The Lord commands Bishop Partridge to carry out his duties outlined in sections 41, 42, and 51. The Lord appoints Sidney Gilbert as Bishop Partridge's real estate agent, with directions to establish a store to supply the Saints' needs and to use the revenue to buy the land. Gilbert is also to obtain a license from the Indian agents to permit him to get involved in supplying the Native Americans. The point of that is to get access to give the restored gospel to Native Americans and employment and resources for the Saints.

The Lord appoints William Phelps as the Church's printer and commands him to set up shop in Independence and use his skills to obtain as much money as he righteously can in order to build Zion. Oliver Cowdery is to assist him. The Lord commands these four men to become "planted" in Independence, along with their families, as soon as possible in order to begin the buying and building of Zion. They are to prepare for the gathering of other Saints and to provide inheritances for them as they come. The Lord promises to provide further directions to that end.

Sidney Rigdon dedicated the Land of Zion on August 1, and Joseph dedicated its temple site the following day. Bishop Partridge bought the sixty-three acres that included this site and over two thousand acres in the area. These he technically owned, but he deeded many of them as stewardships to Latter-day Saints for their inheritances as sections 51 and 57 instructed him to do. Sidney Gilbert established a store

across the street from the courthouse the Lord mentioned, and William Phelps established a printing office nearby. These men and their families went to work to build New Jerusalem.

When the printing office was burned down two years later, and Bishop Partridge was dragged from his home to be tarred and feathered on the courthouse square, it was not because a few loud-mouthed Latter-day Saints had created hard feelings among the Missourians. It was because the men named in section 57 and their families were doing what the revelation commanded them to do: printing the Lord's revelations, legally buying the Lord's land to provide inheritances for his people, and operating a store to facilitate the gathering of Israel. Having violently attacked the Saints, a group of antagonistic citizens drafted a "Memorandum of agreement" between them. It stipulated that the Saints stop doing exactly what section 57 commanded them to do.²¹⁷

Antagonistic Missourians hated Zion. No wonder the Lord had called them "enemies" (Doctrine and Covenants 52:42).

Section 58

Joseph Smith, Bishop Edward Partridge, and others were disappointed when they arrived in Independence, Missouri. They anticipated a thriving branch but found few converts. They thought the village was "nearly a century behind the times."²¹⁸ The Lord had said in section 57 that Independence was the site for New Jerusalem, but culturally speaking it was far from the promised land. The Lord had given Bishop Partridge the job of turning the place into Zion, and the bishop despaired. It would require unconquerable optimism in the face of discouraging circumstances.

A few days after Joseph's arrival in Independence, Sidney Rigdon, Isaac Morley, Ezra Booth, Sidney and Elizabeth Gilbert, and the Saints from Colesville, New York, arrived as well. Joseph received section 58 as "a Revelation given to the Elders who were assembled on the land of Zion Direction what to do."²¹⁹

“The revelation implied that the enjoyment of Zion lay in the future.”²²⁰ Three times in its first four verses the revelation prophesied “much tribulation” before the establishment of Zion. The revelation tempers the Saints’ zeal even as it promises a fulfillment of the prophecies of a promised land.

The revelation launches into a grand vision of Zion preparing a feast to which all nations shall be invited. “First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; And after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:10–11). These first few called to Zion have the privilege of laying its foundation and testifying of its potential. Their calling is to pioneer, to say as Martin Luther King Jr. did, “I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!”²²¹

Section 58 functions like a map that shows how to get from where we are to Zion. It is a seldom-used map and some have wandered in the wilderness for years, not understanding the Lord’s directions or preferring their “own way” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:16). Those to whom the Lord spoke specifically in section 58 understood it and acted it out as commanded.

Bishop Partridge repented of his unbelief and blindness. Ezra Booth, by contrast, left the Church and criticized Edward Partridge for gullibly continuing to believe in Zion.²²² It is not remarkable that Edward despaired that Zion would be established. That was entirely reasonable given the evidence before his eyes. The Lord called those eyes blind and invited the bishop to see what Joseph could see. “I see it, and it will be so,” Joseph said of Zion.²²³

The remarkable fact is that the intelligent, capable, prosperous Edward Partridge was willingly reoriented by section 58. He followed it precisely. He wrote home to Lydia that his great desire to return home was surpassed by his calling. He told her of section 57’s command that his family join him in Zion (Doctrine and Covenants 57:14)

and section 58's instructions to rely on personal revelation to arrange for the move as best they could (Doctrine and Covenants 58:24–26).²²⁴ Edward prepared Lydia for what she could expect when she joined him in Missouri. “We have to suffer and shall for some time, many privations here which you and I have not been much used to for years.” He knew very well that his devotion to Zion would mean an eternal farewell to his extended family and friends “unless they should be willing to forsake all for the sake of Christ, and be gathered with the saints of the most high God.”²²⁵

Edward Partridge humbly acknowledged his important calling, his shortcomings, and his inadequacies. “You know I stand in an important station,” he confided to Lydia, “and as I am occasionally chastened I sometimes fear my station is above what I can perform to the acceptance of my Heavenly Father. I hope you and I may conduct ourselves as at last to land our souls in the heave of eternal rest. Pray that I may not fall.”²²⁶ Lydia did pray, and she packed up their five daughters and made the difficult trek to Missouri to join Edward as commanded.²²⁷ Falteringly, perhaps, but none have given more to Zion than Lydia and Edward Partridge.

“Martin Harris was the first man that the Lord called by name to consecrate his money, and lay the same at the feet of the bishop in Jackson County” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:35–36). He willingly did it; he knew the work to be true; he knew that the word of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph was just as sacred as any word that ever came from the mouth of any prophet from the foundation of the world. He consecrated his money and his substance, according to the word of the Lord. What for? As the revelation states, as an example to the rest of the Church.²²⁸

Sidney Rigdon drafted the description of Zion section 58 commanded, but the Lord rejected it and commanded him to try again (Doctrine and Covenants 58:50; 63:55–56). Sidney dedicated Zion on August 2 as commanded in verse 57. The Saints held the conference called for in verse 58. Edward Partridge prayed, Sidney Rigdon charged the Saints to obey the law of consecration, Ziba Peterson

confessed his sins, and Joseph exhorted the Saints to obey the commands they had received and reaffirmed the promised blessings for doing so. The elders who had not yet arrived were shown section 58 when they did and obeyed verses 61–63 precisely.

Meanwhile, verse 64 continues to motivate Saints who still live in the anxious space section 58 creates between the time-consuming requirements to preach the gospel globally and build Zion in the face of the imminent coming of Christ. If Joseph's question "when will Zion be built up in her glory" is not yet fully answered, at least the Church's history since section 58 reveals how the revelation has worked itself out. The elders have gone forth to gather the righteous—first the rich, whose consecrations have put the Church on a firm financial footing Edward Partridge could only dream of. In the last century, we began to see the gospel blessings extended to more impoverished populations. Perhaps we are beginning to witness what the Lord called "the day of my power," the day when his resources are distributed evenly among his faithful, consecrated Saints and all come to Zion to "partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:11).

Section 58 puts Edward Partridge in charge of beginning to get the feast on the table and sends the elders to every nation under heaven to invite the Lord's children to come for supper.

Section 59

The August 7, 1831, revelation "instructing the saints how to keep the Sabbath and how to fast and pray" begins with the Lord's blessings on the Colesville, New York, Saints, the first group to gather to Zion at his command. Those who live shall inherit the earth, while those who die receive a crown, as Polly Knight, the matriarch of the Colesville Saints, did the day the revelation came to Joseph.²²⁹

The revelation then reiterates the law of consecration, which is simply the two great commandments, in which *all* and *love* are the

key words. Then follows a review of the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments—to which the Lord adds commands to thank God in all things and to offer him a broken heart. He gives a specific logic for observing the Sabbath day: “That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:10). The Sabbath is for offering oblations—that is, time, talents, and material resources—for the establishment of Zion. It is a day of fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer (Doctrine and Covenants 59:14).

The Lord makes a covenant with the Saints in Zion: if they will keep the commandments thankfully and cheerfully yet soberly, he will give them the fulness of the earth—its plants and animals “for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:19).

Obedience to section 59 results in consecration—the free offering of all the Saints have for all God has. It is a countercultural revelation, because when Joseph arrived in Independence, Missouri, it was settled by “the basest of men” who reveled in “sabbath breaking, horseracing, and gambling.”²³⁰ “The only indications of its being Sunday,” one observer reported, was “the unusual Gambling & noise, & assemblies around taverns.”²³¹

Section 59 tells the Saints to behave completely differently from the world in which they are now living in order to keep themselves unsoiled by it. More recently, President Gordon B. Hinckley observed how Latter-day Saints are forsaking the command to be countercultural, to be Zion in the midst of Babylon, by observing the Sabbath and the other commandments. President Hinckley declared that “the Sabbath of the Lord is becoming the play day of the people.” He emphasized, “Our strength for the future, our resolution to grow the Church across the world, will be weakened if we violate the will of the Lord in this important matter. He has so very clearly spoken anciently and again in modern revelation. We cannot disregard with impunity that which He has said.”²³²

More recently, President Russell M. Nelson evoked and applied section 59 on Sabbath observance asking, “What sign will you give to the Lord to show your love for Him?”²³³

Joseph’s first impression of Zion was negative, but the revelation changed his mind. It revealed aesthetics. Verses 16–20 rejoice in the created world, the “good things which come of the earth,” freely given by a sharing God to “please the eye and gladden the heart . . . to strengthen the body and enliven the soul.” It pleases “that he hath given all these things unto man” to use, to share, to enjoy. What displeases him is when mere mortals ungratefully *take* his creation for granted, abuse rather than use his resources, and usurp the creation “to excess.”

Section 59 reveals the owner of the created world and invites his heirs in Zion to see themselves as stewards into whose hands the creation has been trusted and who will be accountable to the Creator for what they do with it. “The land became beautiful in Joseph’s eyes.”²³⁴ He later wrote about it in terms—beautiful, rich and fertile, fruitful, delightful, one of the most blessed places on the globe—that reflect the Lord’s aesthetics revealed in section 59.

Section 60

Having dedicated western Missouri as Zion and a spot near the courthouse in Independence as the site for the temple centered in New Jerusalem, Joseph Smith and his companions sought to know what the Lord would have them do next. The Lord answered with section 60, which John Whitmer described as a “COMMANDMENT given in Missorie Jackson County Independence August 8th 1831 directions to some of the Elders to return to their homes & own land.”²³⁵

The Lord tells the elders planning to return to Ohio quickly that he is pleased with their trek to Missouri, with the exception are those whose fears kept them from preaching the gospel. He is upset with them and says they will lose what he has given them if they do not offer it freely to others.

About the return trip to Ohio, the Lord tells the elders to get a boat that seems to them best suited for the purpose of heading down the Missouri River toward St. Louis. It doesn't matter to him whether they make it or buy it, only that they do not waste time. Once in St. Louis, Joseph, Sidney Ridgon, and Oliver Cowdery are to head for Cincinnati to declare the gospel with faith, not anger.

Alluding to his Old Testament title "I Am," a variation on the name rendered in English as Jehovah, the Lord commands them to "lift up holy hands upon them. For I am able to make you holy, and your sins are forgiven you" (Doctrine and Covenants 60:7; cross-reference Exodus 3:14 and Doctrine and Covenants 68:6).

The remaining elders should leave St. Louis in companionships and thoroughly preach the gospel to those who have not yet repented until the elders arrive in Ohio. This will benefit the branches of the Church, which is why the Lord gave the command. Bishop Partridge should give them enough of the Lord's money to fulfill their missions. Those who are able should pay the Lord back by giving the money to Sidney Gilbert, the bishop's assistant.

The Lord also speaks about the elders who left Ohio for Missouri but have not arrived due to the missionary work in which they engaged on the way. He commands them: "Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known" (Doctrine and Covenants 60:13). Once they arrive in Missouri, now Zion, and preach there, they should return to Ohio quickly, preaching along the way to those who have not repented. They should preach thoroughly, kindly, and without provoking the people.

Rather than condemning openly those who chose not to receive the gospel, as Parley Pratt did to the Believers at North Union, Ohio (see section 49), the elders are to signify that they have freely offered the gospel by washing their feet privately as a testimony, on Judgment Day, that they did not hide the good news from anyone. This act signifies that knowledge and therefore accountability have been transferred from the missionaries to the people.

Joseph and his companions obeyed section 60 and headed for home in Ohio as directed. On August 9, Joseph and ten other brethren headed down the Missouri River on canoes bound for St. Louis.²³⁶

Section 61

The interpretation history of section 61 is a good example of what happens when scripture is not read in context and when it is too quickly applied universally instead of limited to the situation it was originally about. It does not say that Satan controls the water.

The Missouri River was well known to be dangerous, “ever-varying,” and full of submerged trees that could capsize or sink a steamboat, not to mention a canoe.²³⁷ Joseph and the elders launched their canoes at the Missouri River landing just north of Independence, Missouri, and headed home to Ohio. They camped at Fort Osage and “had an excellent wild turkey for supper.” The good food did little to keep the men satisfied under the stressful conditions.

During their second day on the river, “a spirit of animosity and discord” infected the group. “The conduct of the Elders became very displeasing to Oliver Cowdery.” He prophesied, “As the Lord God liveth, if you do not behave better, some accident will befall you.”²³⁸ At some point William Phelps “saw the Destroyer, in his most horrible power, ride upon the face of the waters,” though what that means is uncertain and ought not to be interpreted to mean that Satan controls the waters without more revelation.²³⁹

Contention continued the next day. Joseph got frustrated. Some of the elders refused to paddle, and at least one of the canoes hit a submerged tree and nearly capsized. Joseph urged the frightened group to get off the river. Some of the men called him a coward. They landed on the north side of the river at McIlwaine’s Bend (now Miami), set up camp as best they could, and convened a council to address the contention. Some of the elders were critical of Oliver’s rebuke. Some

criticized Joseph for being “quite dictatorial.” Joseph got defensive and the council went on for some hours until, early in the morning, everyone reconciled.²⁴⁰

Speaking of section 61, Joseph’s history says, “The next morning after prayer, I received the following.”²⁴¹ John Whitmer described the revelation as a “commandment given Aug 12th 1831 on the Bank of the River Distruction (or Missorie) unfolding some mysteries.”²⁴²

In section 61, the omnipotent Lord commands the elders gathered on the banks of the Missouri River to hear and obey him. He forgives their sins. He mercifully forgives the sins of all who humbly confess them. He says they don’t all need to travel quickly down the river while settlers on either side need to be taught the gospel.

The Lord explains that he let the elders experience the river’s terrors so they could testify of the danger to others. The Lord has angrily decreed that water will be a destructive element, especially the Missouri River. But he holds mankind in his hands and will preserve the faithful among this group of elders from drowning. The Lord has kept the group together this long so they can be corrected and purified from their sins, become unified, and thus escape the punishment for their wickedness. Now it’s time to split up, and the Lord gives specific assignments and instructs Sidney Gilbert, the bishop’s assistant, to give them enough money to fulfill their assignments.

Close reading of section 61 shows that the Lord controls the waters, not Satan. That is true for dry land as well. God blessed the waters during the creation process. He later cursed them (see Revelation 8:8–11). The day will come when only the honest-hearted will be able to safely travel to Zion by water. The Lord explains that after the Fall, he cursed the land for Adam’s sake, but in the latter days, he blessed it to be fertile for the Saints’ sake. The Lord commands the elders to warn the other Saints not to travel on the dangerous Missouri River without faith.

William Phelps carried out the commandment in this revelation to tell all the Saints about the dangers of traveling to Zion in Missouri on the Missouri River. He published the revelation in the Church’s newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, along with an editorial

listing the most notable “risks and dangers.” First, there were frequent disasters on the river. Second, he warned, there was cholera, a devastating waterborne illness “which the Lord has sent into the world, and which may, without repentance, ravage the large towns near the waters, many years, or, at least, till other judgments come.”²⁴³

Phelps also wrote a short history of his stay in Missouri, in which he told how section 61 influenced his return to Ohio: “I, in company with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and others started by water for Ohio, but being cautioned in a Revelation given at, McElwains bend, that Missouri River was cursed, all the company save myself and brother Gilbert left the river and proceeded by land. I was assured by revelation, to be safe by land or water.”²⁴⁴

Section 62

Section 62 is one of many revelations in which the Lord tells us much about himself. He is our advocate. He knows our weakness. He knows just how to run to our relief when we are tempted. He keeps his promises. He cannot lie. Who wouldn’t gladly travel hundreds of miles to obey one of his revelations?

Leaving the Missouri River to travel by land, Joseph and the elders who had been to Missouri ran into a group of their brethren—Joseph’s brother Hyrum, David Whitmer, John Murdock, and Harvey Whitlock—still en route to Zion. They had been preaching the gospel with great success along their way. The joyful meeting would not have occurred had Joseph’s trip down the Missouri River been tranquil, but it fulfilled the Lord’s promise that the brethren would meet in Missouri to rejoice in the land of Zion. Joseph sought and received a revelation concerning the elders who had not yet been to Independence.²⁴⁵

Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, Harvey Whitlock, John Murdock, and others who joined them obeyed this revelation. They pursued their journey to Independence and held a solemn meeting with the members of the bishopric there. They sang hymns, prayed, read

scriptural prophecies about Zion and the Second Coming, and then turned around and returned to Ohio.

The revelation, as with so many others, is full of conditional clauses. It thus empowers the elders to control their own destiny by choosing to do the things that will bring the Lord's promised blessings.

Section 63

"The land of Zion," says Joseph's history, "was now the most important temporal object in view." Satan hates Zion and works to undermine it from every angle. When Joseph and his companions returned to Kirtland, Ohio, from their trip to dedicate Independence, Missouri, as the center of Zion, they found "the exertions of Satan" had led many Saints into rebellion. Joseph and the faithful Saints were extraordinarily anxious about how to establish Zion.²⁴⁶

When and how should they gather to Missouri? How should they fund Zion and the move there? What should they do with their property in Ohio, like Whitney's store and the farms belonging to Isaac Morley and Frederick Williams? The revelations in Missouri commanded the Saints to purchase land there. How should they raise the money? Sidney Rigdon had been commanded to write an inspired description of Zion and God's will concerning it (Doctrine and Covenants 58:50). What did the Lord think of his first draft? Isaac Morley had already moved to Missouri, and the several families living on his farm planned to follow as soon as the Lord said to go. Since Joseph and Sidney Rigdon and their families lived on Morley's farm, selling it would leave them homeless. Where should they live?

Section 63 addresses the apostasy and these pressing questions related to literally building Zion. This revelation motivated much action. Joseph began discerning by the Spirit those who should move to Zion.²⁴⁷ As commanded, Titus Billings and several other Kirtland Saints moved to Missouri in the spring of 1832. Sidney Rigdon humbled himself and rewrote a description of the land of Zion based very much on this revelation and previous ones.²⁴⁸

Oliver Cowdery and Newel Whitney used it to obey the command to go “from place to place, and from Church to Church preaching and expounding the Scriptures and Commandments [that is, the recent revelations] and obtaining moneys of the disciples for the purpose of buying lands for the Saints according to commandments and the disciples truly opened their hearts.” Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer took the money to bishop Partridge and Sidney Gilbert in Missouri, “and thus there has been lands purchased, for the inheritance of the Saints.”²⁴⁹

As commanded, Newel Whitney and Frederick Williams kept their property in Kirtland and consecrated it to the Church. As for Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and their families, they moved south to Hiram, Ohio, in September 1831 where Elsa and John Johnson provided homes for them. Yes, there was apostasy—adultery, lying, hypocrisy, rebellion—in Kirtland when the Lord gave section 63. There was also substantial Zion-building in response to it.

Section 64

Various people who observe the same facts interpret the facts differently. The elders’ trip to Missouri in the summer of 1831 led to the dedication of the site for New Jerusalem and the dedication of a temple site. Some returned from the trip rejoicing and others disappointed. The main voice of discontent was Ezra Booth. He noted the outspoken disagreement between Joseph and Edward Partridge about the Missouri land the Lord designated for Zion. Ezra objected that he and Isaac Morley walked to Missouri while Joseph and his party traveled by stagecoach. Joseph and Bishop Partridge reconciled. Isaac Morley got over it. Ezra Booth, by contrast, would not let his grievances go.²⁵⁰ In that setting, the Lord gave section 64.²⁵¹

The Lord was angry with Ezra Booth and Isaac Morley. They did not obey section 42 or the commandment they received to preach the gospel en route to Missouri in the summer of 1831 (Doctrine and Covenants 52:23).²⁵² They had unrighteous desires and therefore lost

the Holy Ghost. Then, as so often happens, they projected their own evil onto others. The Lord forgave the repentant Isaac Morley while Ezra Booth was disciplined by the Church as section 64 directed and withdrew from membership.²⁵³

The Lord was also upset with Bishop Partridge for arguing with Joseph about the location of Zion (see section 58). He repented in response to section 64. Sidney Gilbert returned to Missouri and established a storehouse there and prepared to buy land for Zion.

Isaac Morley sold his farm as a result of section 64 and thus avoided the overwhelming temptations that the Lord knew would keep him from consecrating otherwise (see section 63:38–40). Frederick Williams consecrated his Kirtland farm to the Church for the Lord to use as a secure headquarters for the Church for five more years. Newel Whitney and Sidney Gilbert kept their Kirtland store and other properties for five years after this revelation.

Section 64 paints a vivid picture and makes an unlikely prophecy. It explains with crystal clarity that the Saints must leave Babylon or perish, the only place other than Babylon is Zion, and the only way to get there is by obeying the law of consecration. The Lord's promise is that the willing and obedient will see Zion. It will come. They will get there. This is the promise which, according to section 45, the holy had been granted in ages past. They longed for Zion and never got there "but obtained a promise that they should find it and see it in their [resurrected] flesh" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:14). Section 64 guarantees Zion tomorrow for those who are willing and obedient to the law of consecration today.

Section 65

Joseph's history says that section 65 came to him in early October 1831 as he was living with the Johnsons in Hiram, Ohio, and that he regarded it as a prayer.²⁵⁴ An early copy of section 65 in the handwriting of William McLellin sheds more light on it. The revelation is linked to the

Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 and particularly the meaning of verse 10: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."²⁵⁵

Section 65 teaches us to pray for the ideal government. We look for a literal, earthly fulfillment of Isaiah's declaration, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). This short revelation also reminds us how thoroughly biblical Joseph became as he read that sacred text by the light of the Holy Ghost. In the six verses of section 65, there are clear references to Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, and the Revelation of John.

Section 65 elaborates a prophecy of Daniel, who saw "the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). Daniel compared this kingdom to a rolling stone that would eventually fill the earth. Some of the early Saints envisioned a snow-ball effect, but Joseph clarified Daniel's meaning. The stone, Joseph said, "is stationary like a grind stone. It revolves." He taught that it grew as "the Elders went abroad to preach the gospel and the people became believers in the Book of Mormon and were baptized." In this way "they were added to the little stone. Thus they gathered around it so that it grew larger and larger." Joseph prophesied that in this way the stone—the kingdom of God—would fill the earth.²⁵⁶

In 1838 Judge Austin King charged Joseph Smith with treason and confined him in jail at Liberty, Missouri, for believing what he taught about Daniel's prophecy. Parley Pratt wrote that Judge King "inquired diligently into our belief of the seventh chapter of Daniel concerning the kingdom of God, which should subdue all other kingdoms and stand forever." The Saints testified that they believed the prophecy, and Judge King instructed his clerk, "Write that down; it is a strong point for treason." The Saints' attorney objected. Is the Bible treason?²⁵⁷ The next time he was charged with treason came a month after he set up "the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord" and declared his intent to "revolutionize the whole world." Joseph's life was ended abruptly by a lynch mob shortly after that.²⁵⁸

However, the work of God's kingdom rolled on. It will continue to do so "till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear."²⁵⁹ That, at least, is the prayer of section 65. "May the kingdom of God go forth that the Kingdom of Heaven may come" (Doctrine and Covenants 65:6) so that he who is entitled may reign as King of Kings (Revelation 17:14).

Section 66

Section 66 teaches many lessons. One is to be careful what you ask for. Another is that knowing for certain that Joseph Smith was the Lord's revelator is insufficient to motivate obedience to the Lord's revelations through Joseph.

The Lord gave section 66 to William McLellin through Joseph on October 29, 1831. After copying the revelation in his entry for that day, William wrote that it "gave great joy to my heart because some important questions were answered which had dwelt upon my mind with anxiety and yet with uncertainty."²⁶⁰ Previous to meeting Joseph, William secretly prayed that God would "reveal the answer to five questions through his prophet, and that too without his having any knowledge of my having made such request." In 1848, ten years after bitterly parting ways with Joseph Smith, William wrote: "I now testify in the fear of God, that every question which I had thus lodged in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, were answered to my full and entire satisfaction. I desired it for a testimony of Joseph's inspiration. And I to this day consider it to me an evidence which I cannot refute."²⁶¹

William's questions are unrecorded, but the revelation he wrote as Joseph dictated expresses the Lord's will for him (Doctrine and Covenants 66:4). The revelation therefore compelled William to act either in obedience or disobedience to the Lord's will. His subsequent journal is an accountability report with the revelation in mind. The journal and related documents reveal his inconsistent effort to obey the revelation's many specific commands.

The revelation blessed William for turning from his iniquities to truth and receiving the fulness of the gospel. Still, the Lord told William that he was not completely clean and needed to repent of sins the Lord would show him. The Lord specifically warned William to “commit not adultery—a temptation with which thou hast been troubled” (Doctrine and Covenants 66:10). The Lord commanded William to serve a mission to the East with Samuel Smith until the Lord sent word for them to return. The Lord commanded William to bear testimony to everyone everywhere he went, and his journal testifies that he did. He went about “reasoning with the people” while Samuel Smith bore his simple, powerful testimony as a witness of the Book of Mormon plates. Commanded to “lay your hands upon the sick and they shall recover,” William did so and they were. He tried to “be patient in affliction,” but as rejections mounted and winter approached, William’s resolve to obey the revelation faltered (v. 9). He forsook Samuel Smith and returned to Kirtland in late December 1831 of his own volition. The Lord rebuked William a few weeks later (Doctrine and Covenants 75:6–7).

Humbled, William started on another mission but again forsook his companion and calling, attributing his disobedience to poor health and lack of faith. He took a job to accumulate cash and married Emiline Miller, perhaps in disobedience to the command “seek not to be cumbered” (Doctrine and Covenants 66:10) with family obligations while called to full-time missionary service. Then the newlyweds set out for Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, where William circumvented the law of consecration. Rather than meeting with Bishop Partridge to consecrate his property and receive an inheritance, William purchased two lots on Main Street, all in disobedience to specific commands that he “go not up to the land of Zion as yet; but inasmuch as you can send, send; otherwise think not of thy property” (v. 6).

William’s disobedience to the revelation did not diminish his faith in it or its revelator. He wrote in August 1832 “that Joseph Smith is a true Prophet or Seer of the Lord and that he has power and does receive revelations from God, and that these revelations when received are of

divine Authority in the church of Christ.”²⁶² Upset by William’s hypocrisy, Joseph wrote that his “conduct merits the disapprobation of every true follower of Christ.”²⁶³

Section 66 left William’s future in his hands. If he chose to do the Lord’s will continually, he could “have a crown of eternal life” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 66:12). Instead, William chose to do his own will. On May 11, 1838, William confessed to Bishop Partridge that he had quit “praying and keeping the commandments of God and went his own way and indulged himself in his lustful desires.”²⁶⁴ He spent the rest of his long life outside the Savior’s Church, struggling to resolve the unbearable tension between his sure testimony of the revelation and his unwillingness to abide by all of its terms.

Section 67

In November 1831 Joseph convened a council at the Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, and laid the manuscript Book of Commandments before the Church leaders. It was the archive of dozens of his revelations. He felt that “the Lord has bestowed a great blessing upon us in giving commandments and revelations.”²⁶⁵ He had testified that the contents of the book should “be prized by this Conference to be worth to the Church the riches of the whole Earth.” It was time to publish the revelations.²⁶⁶

Oliver Cowdery asked “how many copies of the Book of commandments it was the will of the Lord should be published in the first edition of that work.” The council voted for ten thousand.²⁶⁷ The Lord revealed a preface for the book in which he said, “These commandments are of me & were given unto my Servents in their weakness after the manner of their Language.”²⁶⁸

The question arose, “Was the simple language of Joseph Smith worthy of the voice of God?”²⁶⁹ Joseph’s history says that a discussion followed “concerning Revelations and language.”²⁷⁰ Other fears went unspoken during the discussion. After all, everyone in the room must have

recognized that they were being asked to aid a poorly educated, twenty-six-year-old farmer who was planning to publish ten thousand copies of revelations that unequivocally declared themselves to be the words of Jesus Christ in a Protestant culture that widely believed the Bible to be all the word of God there ever would be. If that was not enough to make the elders consider carefully, the revelations Joseph proposed to publish called the Saints' neighbors "idolatrous" and Missourians "enemies," commanded them all to repent, and foretold calamities upon those who continued in wickedness. Finally, the revelations were not properly punctuated, the spelling was not standardized, and the grammar was inconsistent.

Though lacking confidence in his own literary skills, or perhaps even because of his limitations, Joseph was sure that his revelation texts were divine if imperfect productions. He promised the brethren present that they could know for themselves as well. Just a few days earlier, Joseph had predicted that if the Saints could all "come together with one heart and one mind in perfect faith the vail might as well be rent to day as next week or any other time."²⁷¹ Seeking confirmation of the revelations, the brethren tried to rend the veil like the Book of Mormon's brother of Jared. They failed. Joseph asked why and received section 67.

The revelation challenges widespread but unfounded assumptions about what constitutes a revelation. Must it be literarily lovely? Some are, but not all. That or any other standard set by mortals will be subjective. The Lord will never satisfy all self-appointed editors. He does not seem worried about that. In contrast to the elders' fears about that, the Lord seems utterly unconcerned. He does not ask whether Joseph dangled any of his participles or spelled everything just right. He asks whether the revelations are righteous. He thus sets a standard for truthfulness that involves observations and experiments but in the end can only be spiritually known for sure, for the things of God are known certainly only by communication from the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10–14).

Section 67 does the work of giving the brethren a certain testimony of the revelations, even if it was not the dramatic one they hoped for.

In section 67 the Lord reads their minds and provides them with a scientific, hands-on way of observing the properties of the revelations and using a sample from them as a control in an experiment. The Lord gives the kind of testimony the brethren were suited to receive and gently urges them to become humble and spiritual enough to part the veil between him and them completely. He invites them to touch, feel, hear, see, taste, and testify of the revelations. He invites them to know him insofar as they are able and to “continue in patience” until they know him face to face.

Joseph’s history and other sources tell us how the brethren acted out the instructions in the revelation and became willing to testify before the world. William McLellin, who had written as Joseph dictated section 66 the preceding week, “endeavored to write a commandment like unto one of the least of the Lord’s, but failed.”²⁷² Joseph asked the men present “what testimony they were willing to attach to these commandments which should shortly be sent to the world. A number of the brethren arose and said that they were willing to testify to the world that they knew that they were of the Lord,” and Joseph received a revelation for them to sign as witnesses. McLellin signed along with four others, and John Whitmer copied the revelation and their signatures into the manuscript Book of Commandments.²⁷³

Twelve more elders signed the statement in Missouri when the book arrived there for printing. Joseph undoubtedly appreciated these witnesses. He knew he was no writer. He felt imprisoned by the “total darkness of paper pen and ink and a crooked broken scattered and imperfect language.”²⁷⁴ He considered it “an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord.”²⁷⁵ Yet he knew the responsibility was his. The revelations said God had “called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments” and declared to him that “this generation shall have my word through you” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:17; 5:10).

As section 67 acknowledged, these witnesses knew the limits of Joseph’s imperfect language. It was a striking vote of confidence in Joseph and his revelations for eighteen men who knew him to declare their

testimonies that the revelations were true. The discussion about revelations and language concluded as “the brethren arose in turn and bore witness to the truth of the Book of Commandments. After which br. Joseph Smith Jr arose and expressed his feelings and gratitude.”²⁷⁶ The bold project of publishing the revelations required fearless believers to sustain Joseph in his awesome responsibility.

Section 68

Four newly ordained high priests were among the Church leaders who gathered for conference in Hiram, Ohio, in November 1831. They “requested of the Lord to know his will concerning them.” The Lord obliged them with the first twelve verses of section 68. He then added an amendment to previous revelations about the office of bishop. Then he commented on the implications of the bad parenting he saw in the Church.²⁷⁷

The Saints resolved to act on this revelation’s instructions regarding bishops and Church discipline.²⁷⁸ Oliver Cowdery took this revelation and others to the Saints in Missouri. The brethren who sought the Lord’s will and received it acted on it pretty well in the short term. Orson Hyde, William McLellin, and the Johnson brothers would all be chosen as Apostles in 1835, largely because of their faithfulness to the Lord’s commission in this revelation to preach the gospel by his Holy Spirit. All of them struggled to endure in that commission and were at one time or another antagonistic to the Church.

Section 68 gives a unique definition of scripture as the voice of God communicated by his Holy Spirit to his authorized servants in real time. In dictionaries of Joseph’s day, the word *scripture* literally meant “what is written.” Then and now the word connoted very old sacred writing. The sooner we get past that confining idea the better. In 1838 Ralph Waldo Emerson urged Harvard graduates “to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake.”²⁷⁹ Joseph Smith already had.

The Lord uses this revelation and others to give instruction on parenting. Children come weak and helpless. Powerless to act for themselves but innately divine, children can be empowered to act for themselves if properly parented. Out of love, God empowers his children to act as he acts. God empowers his children by teaching them law, beginning with the law of the gospel. If children are not taught God's laws as they mature, they will never have agency or power to act for themselves. Teaching children the law of the gospel is a prerequisite to their gaining the ability to choose and act for themselves.

Teaching children the laws of God does not guarantee they will keep them. It does guarantee that they will be able to choose for themselves whether to keep them. Parents who do not teach and therefore do not endow the children with agency will answer to God for deciding for the children rather than empowering them to choose for themselves. This revelation, together with sections 29 and 121, shows how the Lord both teaches and models how to endow children with power by giving them laws and thus agency.

Section 69

Joseph spent the first two weeks of November 1831 in Hiram, Ohio, closely reviewing the revelations and counseling with his brethren about their publication. The Church's press was in Independence, Missouri. The handwritten copies of the revelations and the money to print them was in Ohio. John Whitmer wrote that "it was in contemplation for Oliver Cowdery to go to Zion and carry with him the Revelations and Commandments, and I also received a revelation to go with him."²⁸⁰

Seeing that it would not be wise to send Oliver Cowdery alone to Missouri with the invaluable Book of Commandments and quite a bit of cash in his possession, the Lord appointed John as his companion. The Lord, moreover, gave John the command to continue to document the important history of the Church (see section 47) and to be counseled and assisted as Church Historian by Oliver, William

Phelps, and perhaps others in Missouri who knew important historical information or were good writers. The missionaries in the field should write about their experiences and send the accounts to Zion for John to use in keeping the Church history. Zion is the place for John to do this work and the Saints to send him their documents. He should, however, travel often to the various branches to gather knowledge. He can preach and explain at the same time he writes, copies, selects, and obtains historical information.

Joseph told the council that the revelations should be prized more than the riches of the earth and that he wanted to dedicate them, together with Oliver and John, to the Lord.²⁸¹ Then John went faithfully with Oliver to Missouri, carrying with them the revelation to parents in Zion (section 68), the priceless Book of Commandments to be published by William Phelps in Independence, Missouri, and considerable cash for printing and for Bishop Partridge to buy land in Missouri.²⁸²

Together with Sections 21 and 47, section 69 gives the commandments to document the history of the Church. In the restored Church of Jesus Christ, *history* functions much as *theology* does in other Christian traditions. Latter-day Saints don't refer to the philosophical creeds of traditional Christianity to describe the nature of God. They tell, rather, of historical events like Joseph's First Vision, in which God revealed his nature. We know priesthood needed to be restored—and was, because ministering angels brought it to Joseph Smith. We know of these experiences because they are described in documents. Without those documents, we lose what was restored. If we cannot document our history, we are back in the apostasy. Thus, revelations like section 69 are perhaps more important than they might seem.

John Whitmer wrote a history because of sections 47 and 69. It is an important but sketchy source of early Church history. As John's selfish interests overwhelmed him, he became bitter toward the Church in 1838. That is reflected in the last chapters of his brief history. When John stopped writing, Joseph started. With help from a host of assistants, Joseph compiled a much fuller history of the Church to document the Restoration.

Section 70

Section 70 created what is often called the Literary Firm, a corporation assigned by the Lord to receive, write, revise, print, bind, and sell the revelations according to the law of consecration. Section 70 has to be read in light of the law of consecration in section 42, which says that everyone who devoted themselves full time in Church service could be “supported out of the property which is consecrated to the Lord.”²⁸³ So when the plan was laid for six members of the Church to form a firm dedicated to publishing the revelations, section 70 was given to apply the law of consecration specifically to their case. It solves the problem of how to pay the bills when you spend all your time, talent, and energy working for the Lord’s Church.

Church leaders had counseled for nearly two weeks early in November 1831 about publishing Joseph’s revelations. They had decided to send the manuscript revelations with Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer to Independence, Missouri, where Church printer William Phelps would publish them on a press he was to purchase in Cincinnati.

Books don’t publish themselves. Joseph was thankful for those who had helped him with the Church’s publishing projects. He noted that Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris had labored with him from the beginning to scribe and publish the Book of Mormon and that John Whitmer and Sidney Rigdon had long scribed and transcribed revelations and Joseph’s new translation of the Bible. Joseph then explained that if the Saints valued the revelations enough to want them published, the Church should compensate those who gave their time and means to get them published.²⁸⁴

Section 70 appoints and ordains the revelator, the financier, scribes, a transcriber, and an editor as “stewards over the revelations and commandments which I have given unto them, and which I shall hereafter give unto them; and an account of this stewardship will I require of them in the day of judgment” (Doctrine and Covenants 70:3–4).

Members of the Literary Firm had the stewardship of managing the revelations from receipt to publication to sale. The Lord commands them not to give the problems of getting the revelations published, or the profits from selling the Book of Commandments, to anyone else. Rather, they are to use the profits to provide for their families. Whatever is left after that they are to consecrate by giving it to the storehouse for the Saints in Zion and their descendants who obey the laws of God. This is what the Lord requires of every steward that he appoints.

No Latter-day Saints are exempt from this law of consecration—not Bishop Partridge, nor his agent Sidney Gilbert, nor anyone the Lord appoints to do any job, whether the work is physical or spiritual.

Joseph modeled and taught his brethren the law of consecration as section 70 sets it forth. When William Phelps began acting like the owner of the Lord's press rather than a steward over the revelations (Doctrine and Covenants 70:3), Joseph gently but directly sent him the following postscript. It penetrates to the heart of consecration and section 70: "Bro. William – You say 'my press, my types, &c.' W[h]ere, our brethren ask, did you get them & how came they to be 'yours'? No hardness, but a caution, for you know that it is We, not I, and all things are the Lord's, and he opened the hearts of his Church to furnish these things, or we should not have been privileged with using them."²⁸⁵

Most of the six members of the Literary Firm had already been deeply involved in the publishing work and remained so through the 1833 publication of the Book of Commandments and, along with others, the 1835 publication of the Doctrine and Covenants. Martin Harris funded the publication of the Book of Mormon and perhaps the Firm's later projects. Sidney Rigdon often scribed revelations and Joseph's new translation of the Bible, and he proofread the manuscript revelations. John Whitmer transcribed these texts as a human copy machine. Oliver Cowdery assisted in all stages of receiving, editing, and printing. He and John Whitmer carried the revelations and money to print them to Missouri where the Lord's choice for an editor, William Phelps, printed the Book of Commandments.

Joseph received the revelations. He also edited and amended them as he saw fit. One of Joseph's stewardships in the Literary Firm was to "correct those errors or mistakes which he may discover by the holy Spirit."²⁸⁶ Joseph believed in his revelations more than anyone, but he never believed that any scripture was literarily pristine.²⁸⁷ He edited his own revelations because he regarded them as his best efforts to represent the voice of the Lord condescending to speak in what Joseph called a crooked, broken, scattered, and imperfect language.

Most of the other members of the Firm were more literary than Joseph. That was a blessing that occasionally annoyed him. After William Phelps criticized one revelation, Joseph responded defensively in behalf of himself and Oliver Cowdery. "We would say, by way of excuse, that we did not think so much of the orthography [spelling], or the manner, as we did of the subject matter; as the word of God means what it says; & it is the word of God, as much as Christ was God, although he was born in a stable, & was rejected by the manner of his birth, notwithstanding he was God." Joseph implicitly and a bit defensively blamed the revelation's spelling and punctuation errors on his limited education and explicitly on the fatigue of his proof-reader, Oliver, he having recently returned from Missouri and then New York, where he purchased a new press for the Church amidst opposition.²⁸⁸

The members of the Firm gave their best efforts to publish the revelations, impoverishing themselves in the process. Then, when William Phelps had nearly finished printing the Book of Commandments, a mob of Missourians destroyed the press and burned his home and office and as many copies of the revelations as they could. Some of the printed sheets were rescued by various Saints and a few incomplete copies of the Book of Commandments were published.

Today there are fewer than thirty known copies, and they sometimes sell for astronomical amounts. We should remember what the revelations originally cost. Joseph and the other members of the Literary Firm made themselves poor and persecuted by publishing them. They all voiced their conviction just prior to organizing the Literary

Firm according to section 70. Joseph made a motion, and the other brethren approved it unanimously, that they should “prize the revelations to be worth to the Church the riches of the whole earth.”²⁸⁹

Sections 71 and 73

Ezra Booth was a talented Methodist preacher who visited Joseph Smith at his home in Kirtland in 1831 with his wife, John and Elsa Johnson, and some others. An early history of Disciples of Christ in northern Ohio reported that

Mrs. Johnson had been afflicted for some time with a lame arm, and was not at the time of the visit able to lift her hand to her head. The party visited Smith partly out of curiosity, and partly to see for themselves what there might be in the new doctrine. During the interview, the conversation turned on the subject of supernatural gifts, such as were conferred in the days of the apostles. Some one said, “Here is Mrs. Johnson with a lame arm; has God given any power to men now on the earth to cure her?” A few moments later, when the conversation had turned in another direction, Smith rose, and walking across the room, taking Mrs. Johnson by the hand, said in the most solemn and impressive manner: “*Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command thee to be whole,*” and immediately left the room.²⁹⁰

Ezra Booth and the Johnsons joined the Church. They knew God had restored the New Testament gift of healing to Joseph Smith. Knowing that God worked through Joseph, however, is not the same as being converted by the Savior’s gospel. Ezra went with Joseph and many others to Missouri in the summer of 1831. He judged everything Joseph said and did with a jaundiced eye. He found fault with Joseph’s personality and prophecies. Then, casting himself as a public servant, Ezra wrote nine letters against Joseph that were published in the *Ohio Star* newspaper.²⁹¹

Ezra’s letters claimed that Joseph’s revelations were false and that Zion in Missouri was a scam. Ezra justified his failures to do what

the revelations commanded and persuaded himself, and perhaps others, that Joseph was “quite dictatorial” and no prophet after all. What about that nagging miracle Ezra had witnessed? The fact that Elsa Johnson was healed could not be denied, even by Joseph’s most outspoken antagonists. So a subsequent history explained that the “infinite presumption” of Joseph Smith gave Elsa Johnson a “sudden mental and moral shock—I know not how better to explain the well attested fact—electrified the rheumatic arm—Mrs. Johnson at once lifted it up with ease, and on her return home the next day she was able to do her washing without difficulty or pain.”²⁹²

Ezra’s letters raised public consciousness of Joseph Smith and the Restoration.²⁹³ In section 71, the Lord called Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to take a break from revising the Bible to take advantage of the opportunity Ezra gave them to declare the gospel in the area and set the record straight.

Joseph and Sidney enjoyed obeying this revelation. “Knowing now the mind of the Lord,” Joseph wrote, “that the time had come that the gospel should be proclaimed in power and demonstration to the world, from the scriptures, reasoning with men as in days of old, I took a journey to Kirtland, in company with Elder Rigdon, on the 3d day of December to fulfill the . . . Revelation.”²⁹⁴ Sidney Rigdon replied to Ezra Booth in the pages of the *Ohio Star* and invited him to meet publicly.²⁹⁵ For nearly six weeks Joseph and Sidney

continued to preach in Shalersville, Ravenna, and other places, setting forth the truth; vindicating the cause of our Redeemer: showing that the day of vengeance was coming upon this generation like a thief in the night: that prejudice, blindness, and darkness, filled the minds of many, and caused them to persecute the true church, and reject the true light: by which means we did much towards allaying the excited feelings which were growing out of the scandalous letters then being published.²⁹⁶

Since Ezra Booth, many others have wielded weapons against the restored gospel. The Lord’s policy, as stated in section 71, is to “let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord” (Doctrine

and Covenants 71:8). Such opposition facilitates agency and fulfills prophecy. It compels people to consciously choose whether to believe in Joseph Smith's testimony, and it honors Moroni's unlikely promise to the obscure, teenage Joseph that his "name should be had for good and evil among all nations . . . or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (Joseph Smith—History, 1:33).

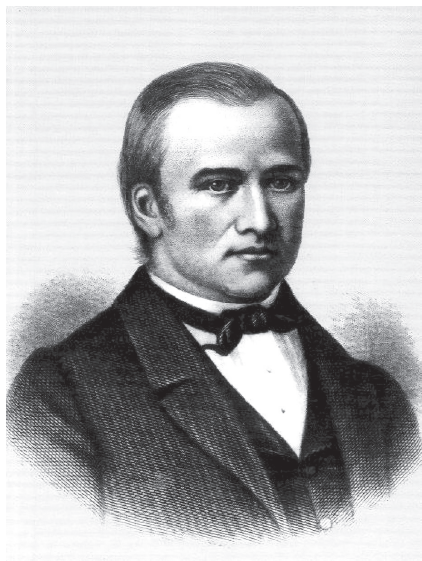
In section 73, the Lord told the elders to continue preaching the good news while Joseph and Sidney returned to revising the Bible and preaching locally as best they could.²⁹⁷

Section 72

Church members in Ohio, wanting to learn their duty and worried about their "spiritual and temporal welfare," gathered on December 4, 1831.²⁹⁸ The church grew larger and more complicated to manage. Many of the ablest Saints, including Bishop Edward Partridge, had migrated to Missouri to obey earlier revelations, leaving a large number of Saints in Ohio without a bishop. In a revelation a month earlier than section 72, the Lord had promised to call other bishops when he saw fit (Doctrine and Covenants 68:14).

He saw fit in section 72, which is actually a series of three related revelations given to answer the questions Joseph and others were asking. Verses 1–8 address whether the time is right for the appointment of a new bishop, and if so, who it should be. Verses 9–23 outline the duties of the new bishop. The Saints worried about overtaxing their resources in gathering to Zion in Missouri. They could not wisely arrive faster than Bishop Partridge could make land available for them to inherit. Verses 24–26 are an amendment to earlier revelations, given to regulate the gathering of Saints to Zion.²⁹⁹

"I cannot see a Bishop in myself," Newel Whitney told Joseph after section 72 called him to that office, "but if you say it's the Lord's will, I'll try." Joseph replied that Newel "need not take my word alone. Go and ask Father for yourself." Newel prayed privately for confirmation



Engraving of Newel K. Whitney.

and “heard a voice from heaven tell him, ‘thy strength is in me.’” He found Joseph and told him he would accept the calling as the Lord’s bishop.³⁰⁰ He confided to his wife, Ann, “that it would require a vast amount of patience, of perseverance and of wisdom to magnify his calling.”³⁰¹

Early bishops like Edward Partridge and Newel Whitney did not preside over wards as bishops do today. That began in the 1840s. Their primary duty was to implement the law of consecration. They managed the Lord’s property and assets,

relieved poverty, paid the Church’s bills, and literally built Zion as best they could. Having received his calling and confirmation of it by revelation, Newel Whitney did his best to serve as a bishop for the rest of his life. He was a great choice for the job. He was an experienced and able manager of properties, inventories, and accounts. Perhaps most important of all, he knew he was incapable of being a bishop unless he relied on the Lord for the patience, perseverance, and wisdom he needed.

The bishops were responsible to assist the members of the Literary Firm (see section 70) so they could concentrate on publishing the Lord’s revelations and selling the Book of Commandments widely, thus raising funds to support their own families and, hopefully, surplus to benefit the Church. In this way, assistance from the bishop would enable members of the Literary Firm to be faithful and wise stewards.

Section 72 is a blueprint for appointing bishops in all large branches of the Church to facilitate obedience to the law of consecration. If the Saints act on this blueprint, they will be obeying the law

of consecration's principles of agency (acting of one's own free will to obey God's will), stewardship (taking care of the Lord's property and business as commanded), and accountability (reporting to the Lord's appointed servant, the bishop).

The Saints struggled to obey section 72's command to gather to Zion only after receiving a recommend from the bishop to do so. Joseph wrote to Church leaders in Missouri that he rejoiced at the news that a group of Saints had arrived there safely, but "they left here under this displeasure of heaven." Why? For "making a mock of the profession of faith in the commandments by proceeding contrary thereto in not complying with the requirements of them in not obtaining recommends."³⁰² William Phelps reminded the Saints of the revelation. He wrote in the Church's newspaper that emigrating Saints would not be welcome in Zion "without regular recommends."³⁰³ Slowly the Saints began to comply with the revelation by receiving recommends before moving to Missouri.³⁰⁴

Section 74

The context of section 74 is mysterious, but the content is a commentary on 1 Corinthians 7:14, where Paul counseled Christian women who were married to Jewish men regarding the tension between their religions when it came to raising children.³⁰⁵

This remarkable revelation makes one think of Joseph's teenage struggles to understand the Bible: "The teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). Joseph had learned then to take his questions to the Lord himself.

In section 74, as in several others, the Lord himself interprets the Bible for Joseph. In doing so he subtly solves an important theological problem that often occurs to parents of three-year-olds. It concerns original sin. Are mortals sinful by nature or not? Ask a group

of Latter-day Saints if they believe that people are inherently evil and, all evidence from themselves and their own children aside, they will overwhelmingly answer no.

Ask the Book of Mormon writers and you get a different answer. They knew and taught that mortals are inherently evil, at least in part (2 Nephi 2:29; 4:17–20). As the brother of Jared put it, “Because of the fall our natures have become evil continually” (Ether 3:2). Though the scriptures are plain on this point, sometimes modern Latter-day Saints underestimate the effects of the Fall. Perhaps we fear that it makes us sound too much like other Christians. But by merely being born as mortals, we inherit a sinful nature. We are naturally vicious, selfish, carnal, mean, and often flat-out evil.

Doesn’t section 74 say that little children are holy? Yes. They are, but not because they are inherently so. The revelation says they are “sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ” (v. 7). Section 74 teaches us one more of the profundities of Christ’s infinite Atonement: Since children inherit fallenness helplessly, without having exercised any agency in the matter, Jesus Christ atones for them. He sanctifies them and sets them on a course to become free agents at about age eight if properly taught the law of the gospel (see sections 29 and 68). As long as children are not yet free agents, too helpless to understand or do much about the fallen part of their nature, Jesus sanctifies them according to his will. That is what section 74 teaches. It is beautiful doctrine, restored through Joseph Smith, and it resolves an important theological problem.

Section 75

The Church convened quarterly conferences in its early years, including an important one in January 1832 in Amherst, Ohio, the home of several Latter-day Saint families, about fifty miles east of Church headquarters in Kirtland. The Lord had recently revealed that at this conference the elders would learn what he wanted them to do next

(see section 73). Joseph's history says they "seemed anxious for me to inquire of the Lord that they might know his will, or learn what would be most pleasing to Him for them to do."³⁰⁶ Joseph asked and received two revelations and Sidney Rigdon wrote them down.³⁰⁷ Combined, they now comprise section 75.

Many of the early elders kept journals of their missions or wrote letters to the Church newspaper to report on their service. They intended to document their obedience to the revelations, or, in some cases, justify their disobedience. We can use their records to tell whether they obeyed section 75. When they did, the Lord unfailingly granted them the blessings he promised on conditions of their obedience.

William McLellin started his mission to the South with Luke Johnson but was soon overwhelmed by doubts. The Lord promised him that continual prayer would sustain him, that if William and Luke would pray, then "I will be with them even unto the end." William said he could not bring himself to pray in faith. He had his eyes on a young lady named Emiline Miller. He quit his mission and took a job so he could marry her, noting, meanwhile, that he was too sick for missionary work.³⁰⁸ "Preferring not to proceed alone," Luke returned to Hiram, Ohio, where Joseph called Seymour Brunson to replace William. Luke and Seymour filled their call and enjoyed the Lord's promised blessings on their mission in the "south countries," Virginia and Kentucky.³⁰⁹

Orson Hyde noted that he and companion Samuel Smith did "one of the most arduous and toilsome missions ever performed in the Church."³¹⁰ For eleven months they walked from Ohio to Maine and back. Samuel wrote that they followed the revelation as they "went from house to house" and shook the dust from their feet as a testimony against those who rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ.³¹¹

Lyman Johnson and Orson Pratt went east, as commanded, ending up in New England. They baptized many, including a future Apostle, and at Charleston, Vermont, twenty-two-year-old Orson Pratt pronounced a priesthood blessing that raised Olive Farr from bed where she had lain invalid for seven years. "Thank God," she wept, "I'm

healed!” Such evidence that the Lord was with the elders, as he said he would be in the revelation, greatly increased their success. They immersed 104 sons and daughters of God for the remission of their sins and organized them into branches before returning to Ohio, after walking nearly 400 miles.³¹²

No known records tell whether Asa Dodds, Calves Wilson, Major Ashely, and Burr Riggs obeyed section 75. Simeon Carter and Emer Harris did with great success, though they each ended up serving with their brothers as companions.³¹³ Ezra Thayre and Thomas Marsh apparently served their mission. Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon obediently served together, and on his return home, Hyrum set out to obey other instructions in the revelation. He noted that he “went to work with mine hands for the support of my family.”³¹⁴ Seymour Brunson reported his mission with both Daniel Stanton and Luke Johnson. They baptized fifty-three and organized them into a branch.³¹⁵

Sylvester Smith and Gideon Carter obeyed the revelation. Sylvester had it in mind the next summer, too, when he went out again, “resolved to blow the trumpet of the Gospel.” He knew that if he would, the revelation promised that the Lord would be with him. “I trust I shall continue to receive the grace of God to support me even to the end.”³¹⁶ There is no known evidence that Ruggles Eames and Stephen Burnett obeyed this revelation. Micah Welton and Eden Smith obeyed. Eden’s journal shows that he was especially mindful of the revelation’s instructions to preach and provide for his family as best he could. “Preachd and then returned home and Laboured for the support of my family,” he wrote, echoing the Lord’s instructions.³¹⁷

Section 76

Various people love Joseph Smith or object to him for the same reason: he revealed “realms of doctrine unimagined in traditional Christian theology.”³¹⁸

On February 16, 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon read John 5:29, where Jesus testified to some Jews that he would raise the dead

who “shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of the just; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Joseph and Sidney “meditated upon these things” and the Lord touched, perhaps literally, their eyes, and they understood (Doctrine and Covenants 76:19). They testified together of Jesus Christ. They saw and understood God’s plans for salvation and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, whom they saw and with whom they spoke, at his Father’s right. After all the testimonies given of Christ, they give the ultimate testimony: “He lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—that by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (vv. 22–24).

In a major reversal, another vision opened to Joseph and Sidney. They saw an angel, Lucifer, revolt against God to steal the kingdom from its rightful heir—Jesus Christ. Weeping, Heavenly Father banished Lucifer permanently from his presence.

Having been punished for his rebellion, Satan chooses to attack the Saints by surrounding them with evil. Joseph and Sidney envisioned the suffering of those who fell under Satan’s onslaught. The Lord told them that all who knew his gospel and then chose to follow the devil and become subject to his power, denying the truth and defying Christ’s power, become Satan’s children rather than Christ’s. They are sons of the utterly lost. It had been better for them not to have been born. They suffer God’s justified anger with the devil and the spirits who rebelled with him. The Lord has said they are not and will not be forgiven. They don’t want to be. They denied the Holy Spirit after they received it. They denied Christ. It was as if, knowing the power of his gospel, they openly crucified him themselves. They are sent to hell with the devil and the spirits who rebelled with him. Though resurrected, they remain spiritually dead forever, cut off from the Godhead, the only ones unredeemed by Christ, who saves everyone else and would have saved them if they wanted that.

A heavenly voice testified to Joseph and Sidney of these glad tidings: Jesus Christ came into the world to be crucified to endure the

sins of the world, to sanctify and cleanse the world for all unrighteousness for the express purpose of saving every one of Heavenly Father's children who exercises their God-given agency to be saved, all except the few who "defect to perdition."³¹⁹

Juxtaposed against the suffering of the damned, Joseph and Sidney testified of seeing and hearing about the resurrection of the just: those who receive the testimony of Jesus Christ, believe, and are baptized by immersion, signifying burial and rebirth as Christ commanded. Christ cleanses from sin all who choose to keep these commandments. They receive the Holy Spirit when an authorized priesthood holder lays on hands. The just overcome Satan by exercising faith in Christ. The Holy Ghost, in his role as the Holy Spirit of Promise, seals them by testifying that they have been faithful to their covenants. Heavenly Father sheds this Holy Spirit of Promise on all who are keeping their covenants. Covenant keepers belong to the Church of the Firstborn. Heavenly Father gives them everything—including the fullness of temple blessings. They are priests and kings, priestesses and queens. They are the children of God who fully inherit his glory. They are thus gods themselves. Everything is theirs. Death cannot stop them. Their future is limitless. They belong to Christ, and he belongs to Heavenly Father. Nothing can damn them or hem them in.

The just are resurrected first and come with Christ at his second coming to reign on earth. They dwell in Zion, the New Jerusalem, the holiest place on earth. They commune with angels and the people of Enoch's Zion and the other Saints throughout time who have received the fullness of temple ordinances and been faithful to their covenants. Their names are written in heaven, where God and Christ judge everything. They have kept their covenant promises to obey the laws of God, and Christ therefore keeps his covenant promise to resurrect and perfect them by the power of his perfect Atonement in which he shed his own blood. They are resurrected with celestial bodies as glorious as the sun, which is typical of God's glory.

Joseph and Sidney then envisioned the terrestrial world, which differs from the celestial as the moon differs from the sun. The celestial

Church of the Firstborn receive all Heavenly Father has. Inhabitants of the terrestrial glory do not. They died without obeying the laws of God. Christ arranged for the gospel to be preached to them in the spirit world. They received the testimony of Jesus Christ there, but they would not receive it when they were alive on earth. They were honorable but deceived, blinded by crafty men. They receive God's glory, just not all of it. They receive the Savior's presence, just not all the Father has. They were promised the blessing to become kings and queens if they would obey the laws of God, but they did not, and thus they forfeit their crowns.

Joseph and Sidney then envisioned the telestial glory, which pales in comparison to the others as stars pale in comparison to the sun and moon from our perspective. Heirs of telestial glory do not deny the Holy Ghost, but they do not receive it either. They do not want the gospel of Jesus Christ. They remain in Satan's power and are not resurrected until the very end of time, after Christ has finished his work. They receive only a portion of what Christ offers them, but they are saved.

When the visions ended, the Lord commanded Joseph and Sidney to write them before the Holy Ghost left them. They marveled and acknowledged their inability to conceive of or communicate what they had seen. They saw much the Lord commanded them to not write.

Section 76 testifies. Two eyewitnesses repeatedly declare what they saw, heard, and understood. "I know God," Sidney Rigdon testified in conference in April 1844. "I have gazed upon the glory of God, the throne, visions and glories of God."³²⁰ Such testimony can be rejected but not discredited. It is powerful evidence.

Wilford Woodruff read section 76 before he ever met Joseph. "It had given me more light and more knowledge with regard to the dealings of God with men than all the revelation I had ever read in the Bible or anywhere else," he said. Wilford "had been taught that there was one heaven and one hell," and that those who were baptized would go to heaven and those who were not would go to hell. Personal righteousness made no difference. "That was the kind of teaching I heard in my boyhood," he noted. "I did not believe one word of it

then.” He said section 76 “opened my eyes. It showed me the power of God and the righteousness of God in dealing with the human family. Before I saw Joseph I said I did not care how old he was, or how young he was; I did not care how he looked.” Wilford knew that only one thing mattered about Joseph. “The man that advanced that revelation was a prophet of God,” Wilford said. “I knew it for myself.”³²¹

Section 77

Having been treated to section 76 in February 1832 for his efforts to understand and revise the Bible, Joseph continued his painstaking study of the scriptures. His history says that “about the first of March, in connection with the translation of the scriptures, I received the following explanation of the Revelations of Saint John.”³²² The questions answered by this revelation are embedded in it.

Section 77 is a key to unlocking the meanings of Revelation chapters 4–11. It models the right way to approach that famously complicated book. Joseph Smith studied the book carefully, formulated questions for the Lord, then sought and received the Lord’s answers to his specific questions.

Joseph rarely spoke of or taught from John’s Revelation. One exception is an April 1843 sermon. The Nauvoo high council had recently convened a hearing to correct Pelatiah Brown’s interpretation of Revelation 4–5. Joseph described Brother Brown as “one of the wisest old heads we have among us,” though he had misunderstood the meanings of the beasts John saw in Revelation 4. Joseph was frustrated that John’s Revelation was “a subject of great speculation” among Latter-day Saints and others, speculation based on ignorance about John’s intended meanings. Joseph decided to reveal some of John’s meaning to combat the ignorance.

Joseph taught that with the exception of chapter 12, John’s Revelation is about the future, not the past. Joseph taught that “John saw curious looking beasts in heaven, he saw every creature that was in



Folio 55r of the Bamberg Apocalypse (c. 1000) depicts the angel showing John the New Jerusalem, with the Lamb of God at its center.



The Lamb enthroned, surrounded by four beasts (BL Add MS 35166 folio 6r, thirteenth century).

heaven, all the beasts, fowls, & fish in heaven, actually there, giving glory to God. I suppose,” Joseph continued, “John saw beings there, that had been saved from ten thousand times ten thousand earths like this, strange beasts of which we have no conception all might be seen in heaven. John learned that God glorified himself by saving all that his hands had made whether beasts, fowl fishes or man.”

Because of section 77, Joseph knew what the beasts represented. He had a key to John’s Revelation, and he was not a hostage to the rampant speculation. “We may spiritualize and express opinions to all eternity,” Joseph told the Saints, “but that is no authority.”³²³ Section 77 is an authoritative key to understanding parts of John’s Revelation. As a possessor of such keys, Joseph could say as perhaps no other person can, “Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written.”³²⁴

Section 78

Joseph purposely veiled the meaning of section 78. The issue it addresses is intentionally vague in the present form of the revelation. That is because it deals with Church finances and assets. It addresses the problem of paying for the things the Lord has commanded—namely, the building of Zion and publishing the Book of Commandments. Joseph—whose job in the Literary Firm was to oversee expensive publication of the Book of Commandments (see section 70)—sat in counsel with Bishop Whitney, whose job it was to meet the Church’s needs from the storehouse, which was literally his store.

Where today’s verse 3 vaguely speaks about “an organization of my people,” the manuscript versions more specifically refer to “an organization of the literary and mercantile establishments of my church.”³²⁵ Joseph kept the issues behind section 78 as confidential as possible to avoid giving the Church’s enemies information they could use to cripple it financially and thus undermine Zion. Essentially, the revelation tells how the Church could use its profitable mercantile assets (like Bishop Whitney’s store) to finance its revealed priorities (buying land in Missouri and publishing the scriptures).

Joseph and the other members of the Literary Firm had covenanted to publish the Book of Commandments, but they lacked funding for the expensive project. The Lord commanded Bishop Partridge to buy land, lots of it, on which to build Zion in Missouri. Bishop Whitney had a profitable store and other businesses in Ohio. Based on the law of consecration’s principle of using the surplus of some to meet the needs of others, section 78 provides a solution to these problems.

In obedience to the revelation, Joseph, Bishop Whitney, and Sidney Rigdon traveled to Missouri to counsel with Bishop Partridge and the Literary Firm, members who were there printing the Book of Commandments. Together they created the United Firm, which is often called the United Order, which is *not* the law of consecration. The United Firm (Order) was a corporation designed to support the

Church according to the law of consecration. Technically, it was the joining of the Literary Firm with Newel Whitney's Kirtland, Ohio, store and the Independence, Missouri, store operated by Whitney's partner, Sidney Gilbert. Uniting these firms was meant to streamline the building of Zion. It did not ultimately work as intended. That is not God's fault; it is the fault of free agents (see section 104). It worked great when Saints chose to keep their covenants and were not overwhelmed by their enemies.

Section 79

One of the most remarkable facts about Joseph Smith as a revelator is that many intelligent, faithful people went to great lengths to seek, receive, and obey his revelations. Jared Carter embraced Joseph's revelations and went on a mission because of them. After he returned, he went to the home where Joseph was living to ask "the seer to inquire the will of the Lord concerning my ministry the ensuing season. And the word of the Lord came forth."³²⁶

Jared noted that April 25, 1832, marked "the commencement of a mission by Jared Carter, a servant of the Lord." He followed section 79 specifically, going from town to town in the power of his ordination, "which was to the high privilege of administering in the name of Jesus Christ." Jared went northeast along Lake Erie and continued on to Benson, Vermont, his birthplace, proclaiming the everlasting gospel in each location. He battled opposition and bouts of depression. He kept careful track of his obedience to the revelation and the fulfillment of the promised blessings. His records testify that, as promised, the Lord sent him the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to teach him the truth and where he should go. Since Jared was faithful to section 79, the Lord crowned him again with a bountiful harvest. Jared summarized his service after returning in October: "I have been gone six months and two days. The Lord has permitted me to administer the Gospel to 79 souls and many others by my instrumentality

have been convinced of this most glorious work.” He rejoiced on the completion of his difficult yet successful mission. “God has blessed me according to the prophecy of Brother Joseph before I went from Ohio,” Jared wrote.³²⁷

Section 80

Stephen Burnett started fast. He converted at age sixteen and was ordained a teacher, then an elder, and then a high priest before he turned eighteen. He was filled with the Holy Ghost and a desire to take the gospel to his relatives. He led his parents into the Church and was called to preach in January 1832 (Doctrine and Covenants 75:35) and again in March by section 80.

Stephen Burnett and Eden Smith started their mission on July 15 and spent a few days together declaring the gospel in villages south of Kirtland, Ohio.³²⁸ Stephen also went east with success. He “was the first one that sounded the glad tidings of the everlasting gospel” in Dalton, New Hampshire.³²⁹ By 1838, Stephen felt completely disillusioned. He tried but failed to regain the Spirit. Finally, he “proclaimed all revelation lies” and left the Church. He said that the foundation of his faith failed and the entire structure fell in “a heap of ruins.”³³⁰ Joseph thought there was more to it. He thought that Stephen’s unwillingness to consecrate his life to the kingdom of God contributed to his unconversion.³³¹

Section 81

It is very good to have your sins blotted out. It is not good to have your name blotted out. Before erasers and delete keys, scribes used a blot of heavy ink to expunge the record. God keeps meticulous records. In them he blots out the sins of the repentant and the names of the rebellious unrepentant (Isaiah 44:22; Nehemiah 4:5; Alma 6:3; Moroni 6:7; Doctrine and Covenants 109:34).

Joseph chose and ordained Jesse Gause as a counselor in the Presidency of the High Priesthood in March 1832.³³² A week later Joseph received section 81, giving Jesse instructions for his calling.³³³

Section 81 announces that the keys of the kingdom belong to the Presidency of the High Priesthood. The Lord commanded Jesse to “be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:5). The Lord promises to bless Jesse on the specific conditions that he remain faithful, pray always, and proclaim the gospel. The revelation closes with a reiteration of the Lord’s covenant with Jesse: “If thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality and eternal life which I have prepared for thee in the mansions of my Father” (v. 6).

Jesse Gause forsook his covenant and his calling by 1833. In an early manuscript of section 81, the name of Jesse Gause is blotted out and replaced by the name of Frederick Williams. It was a tragic ink blot for Jesse but not a hindrance to God’s plan. Here, as elsewhere in the revelations, the Lord simply replaced Jesse and the kingdom rolled forward (see Doctrine and Covenants 56 and 124:91–95).

Section 82

To organize the Church (as Joseph was led by the Lord to do) to be “independent of every encumbrance beneath the celestial kingdom,” you need to make “bonds and covenants of mutual friendship, and mutual love.”³³⁴ The problem was that in early 1832 there was a lack of friendship and love among Church leaders. Section 78 commanded Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, and Bishop Whitney to travel to Missouri to organize the United Firm with Bishop Partridge and others. Sidney and Bishop Partridge were at odds with each other.

Joseph noted with relief that the Missouri Saints were glad to see them and sustained him as President of the High Priesthood and that Bishop Partridge extended “the right hand of fellowship.” Joseph’s history says that between meetings the “difficulty or hardness which had

existed between Bishop Partridge and Elder Rigdon was amicably settled, and when we came together in the afternoon all hearts seemed to rejoice, and I received the following revelation given April, 1832, shewing the order given to Enoch and the church in his day.”³³⁵

The revelation begins with the Lord’s forgiveness for the brethren who have forgiven each other—and a warning not to backslide. The tone is serious and solemn. The Lord is about to organize the leaders of his Church, by covenant, into a firm, an order, or what we might call a corporation. It is to fulfill the command in section 78 “to manage the literary & Mercantile concerns & the Bishoprick both in the Land of Zion & in the Land of Kirtland.”³³⁶ In other words, section 82 organizes the leaders by covenant into the United Firm designed to build Zion by living the law of consecration.

The Lord declares a reason that he has consecrated Zion and its stake in Kirtland to the Saints and why he commands them to coven-

enant with him to consecrate: “that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord’s storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:18). *Talent* in these verses refers to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, where a *talent* is a substantial amount of silver or gold. This is a revelation about economics. By Joseph Smith’s lifetime, the word *talent* in English had



Parable of the talents, a woodcut from *Historiae celebriores Veteris Testamenti Iconibus representatae* (1712).

taken on the meaning of a natural gift or endowment, enriching the Lord's usage of it in this revelation.

Section 82 created the United Firm, better known as the United Order, a pseudonym still used in published versions of the revelations.³³⁷ The men named by the Lord in verse 11 met the day after the revelation was given and “resolved, that the name of the Firm mentioned in the Commandments yesterday be Gilbert, Whitney & Company in Zion. And Newel K. Whitney & Company in Kirtland, Geauga Co. Ohio.”³³⁸ They joined the Church's two storehouses and made them a parent company of the Church's printing and real estate projects “and named the newly integrated mercantile establishment the United Firm.”³³⁹

The members of the United Firm were diligent if faltering. They acquired properties in both Ohio and Missouri and published the revelations, two newspapers, and a hymnal. They operated two stores until antagonistic neighbors in Independence, Missouri, dragged Bishop Partridge from his home in July 1833 to tar and feather him, demanding that the Firm shut down its Independence businesses. Then the mob burned the Firm's printing office and destroyed its press. In Ohio, meanwhile, the Firm struggled with debt and access to credit. Building Zion was expensive and the Saints were often frustratingly stingy. The Lord accused them of saying, “We will not go up unto Zion, and will keep our moneys” (Doctrine and Covenants 105:8).

The Lord finally dismantled the United Firm in section 104 because some of its members broke the covenant they entered as a result of section 82. “I the Lord am not to be mocked in these things,” he told them, after reminding them about the punishments he prophesied for covenant breakers in section 82 (Doctrine and Covenants 104:3–10). In April 1834, two years after beginning, the United Firm ceased to function unitedly. Some Latter-day Saints believe that this process ended the law of consecration. That is a little like saying that if NASA ceased operations, the laws of rocket propulsion would be nullified as a result. They would not be. The choice not to live the law of consecration does not end the law of consecration.

Section 83

While he was in Missouri in spring 1832, Joseph “received a welcome known only by brethren and sisters united as one in the same faith.”³⁴⁰ These Saints, including widows Phebe Peck and Anna Rogers, were acting on the law of consecration as best they could. The law specified that “individuals” should consecrate surplus to the storehouse maintained by the bishop so that “every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants,” but it was not clear that women could be supplied as well (Doctrine and Covenants 42:33). Section 83 is an “addition to the laws” already given.³⁴¹ It clarifies that the storehouse is for widows, orphans, and children whose parents cannot provide for them. “They have claim upon the church, or in other words upon the Lord’s storehouse, if their parents have not wherewith to give them inheritances” (Doctrine and Covenants 83:5). The storehouse, in turn, is to be stocked by the consecrated offerings of the Latter-day Saints. “Widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor” (v. 6).

Generally speaking, Latter-day Saints past and present have practiced these principles beautifully. When he dedicated the new Bishops’ Central Storehouse in 2012, then-President Dieter F. Uchtdorf recalled his boyhood in post–World War II Germany, when food, clothing, and bedding was sent from the Church’s storehouses to meet the needs of his family and others.³⁴²

Section 84

In section 57 the Lord identified the site for his temple in Zion. That was the first reference to a specific latter-day temple in the Doctrine and Covenants. There is not another one until section 84, which tells the Saints to build the temple and forges the gospel links between their missionary work, the gathering of scattered Israel, the fulfillment of ancient prophecies, and the building of New Jerusalem, crowned with its holy temple.

Joseph's history designates section 84 as a "Revelation . . . On Priesthood."³⁴³ That is worth considering. It could be described as a revelation on temple ordinances, covenants, the gathering of Israel, missionary work, the law of consecration, and the imminent coming of the Savior to "reign with my people" in Zion, as He says in closing (Doctrine and Covenants 84:119). So why "priesthood?" What was Joseph seeing? What difference will it make to our understanding when we see it too?

The answer may be in a long digression between verses 7 and 31. It seems, at first, to be a tangent from the point of the revelation, which began with a prophecy about building the temple. It turns out, however, that the digression becomes an explanation of priesthood and the relationship between priesthood, ordinances, and the endowment of power we need to transcend the Fall and regain God's presence. In short, priesthood validates the ordinances to be performed in the prophesied temple.

Moses understood this principle, the revelation says, and tried to teach it plainly, but the Israelites of his day did not generally want the endowment of priesthood power. They could not, therefore, endure God's presence. Angry, God gave them less priesthood than he had to offer but as much as they were willing to receive. Joseph later taught about this strange human tendency to "set up stakes and say thus far will we go and no farther." By contrast, Moses and Joseph were like Peter and the others who, Joseph said, received "the fullness of priesthood or the law of God" when the Savior was transfigured before them.³⁴⁴

I remember a Sunday School class discussion in which the consensus was that God does not get angry. It was an example of wrestling the scriptures, which testify in section 84 and elsewhere that the Lord's "anger was kindled against them," and justifiably so. They rejected him, his plan, his sacrifice, his redeeming love, his fullness. The misguided class was trying to articulate truth about God's character. It was a little like the process by which the creeds of Christianity eventually determined that God had no passions or emotions like anger. Section 84 does a better job. The Lord is justifiably angry, it says. There is nothing wrong with justified anger. The problem is the

choice to express it badly. God does not express his anger the way a fallen mortal might. Section 84 says that when God is angry at his children for rejecting his blessings, he responds by offering as much as they are presently willing to receive, preparatory to their receiving more (Doctrine and Covenants 84:23–26).

Having concluded his digression, the Lord returns to his main theme—namely, how priesthood holders will serve in the temple to be built on the consecrated spot in Independence, Missouri. Saints who are full of priesthood power—figurative descendants of Moses and Aaron—will be filled with the Lord’s glory in the temple. One would think this revelation would provide the Saints enough incentive to begin building a temple on the dedicated site in Independence, Missouri—Zion. They did not, however. There are several complicated reasons why, and later revelations will cover these.

The Saints obeyed section 84 in other specific ways. A council of high priests assigned Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith to write a rebuke of the Church leaders in Missouri, as verse 76 commanded.³⁴⁵ As instructed in verses 112–14, Bishop Whitney and Joseph Smith left Kirtland “to fulfill the Revelation,” making important contacts in New York City, visiting Albany, and prophesying in Boston.³⁴⁶ The gospel continues to be preached to “all who have not received it” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:75). Many people have made the covenant to receive, obtain, and magnify the priesthood as outlined in section 84. Many people have obeyed the law of consecration as instructed in verses 103–10.

Perhaps the most important result of section 84 is that it raised Joseph’s consciousness of the fundamental importance of priesthood and, inseparably, the temple. He had listened attentively all night at age seventeen while Moroni explained the imperative need to obtain restored priesthood in order to seal the human family together before the Savior’s coming, but the doctrine of the priesthood distilled on Joseph like dew from heaven (Doctrine and Covenants 121:45). Considerable dew condensed during the night nine years later, when section 84 explained the priesthood’s past and projected its future use in temples.³⁴⁷

Section 85

The leaders of the Church in Missouri grew troubled. Saints were gathering there by the hundreds. Relatively few of them were obeying the law of consecration when they arrived. “Have you all fulfilled the law of the church,” William Phelps wrote to them in the Church’s newspaper, “which saith: Behold thou shalt consecrate all thy properties, that which thou hast, unto me, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken?”³⁴⁸ (see section 42).

In Ohio, Joseph learned by “the still small voice” that leaders in Missouri were wondering what to do. He sought and received a revealed answer, section 85, which he sent to them.³⁴⁹ It clarifies the duty of the Lord’s clerk to keep a history of righteousness and unrighteousness in Zion, including accurate records “of all those who consecrate properties, and receive inheritances legally from the bishop” (v. 1) Those that do not receive their inheritance by living the law of consecration are to be excluded from the Church record referred to as the “book of the law of God” (v. 5).

Verse 7 prophesies that the Lord will send someone to arrange inheritances for those whose names are recorded in the book, but those who are not in the book will receive no inheritance in Zion. Verse 8 prophesies that those who steady the ark (go beyond their assigned role in building Zion) will be smitten.

Joseph purchased his first journal on the very day this revelation was given “for the purpose,” he wrote, “to keep a minute account of all things that come under my obse[r]vation.”³⁵⁰ At about this same time, Joseph began writing his history, recording his letters, and minutes of Church council meetings. He knew, as John the Revelator had prophesied, that mankind would be judged by records of their works kept on earth (Revelation 20:12; Doctrine and Covenants 128:6–8), and Joseph tried to document his own “manner of life” (Doctrine and Covenants 85:2).

Later, in 1841, Joseph began another journal, the “Book of the Law of the Lord,” a title he derived from Doctrine and Covenants 85.

Joseph appointed Willard Richards as “Recorder for the Temple, and the Scribe for the private office of the President.” Willard became what section 85 calls the “Lord’s clerk,” filling the duties described in the revelation. He recorded historical entries and donations in the Book of the Law of the Lord.³⁵¹ In 1842, while preparing to leave for the East, Richards gave the book to William Clayton, whom Joseph appointed as temple recorder, with a commission to fulfill the duties named in section 82.³⁵²

These recorders carefully kept track of consecration. They recorded the deeds and donations of those who freely offered their whole souls to the Lord’s work. Joseph recorded a tribute to his wife Emma, to Bishop Newel Whitney, to his brother Hyrum, and to many others. “The names of the faithful are what I wish to record in this place.” He recorded “the virtues and the good qualifications and characteristics of the faithful few,” as he called them, but also noted that “there are a numerous host of faithful souls, whose names I could wish to record in the Book of the Law of the Lord.”³⁵³

I’m sometimes asked when the Lord will require us to live the law of consecration. The answer is never. It never has been coercive and never will be. Section 85 clarifies that Church leaders should simply keep track of who consecrates but not encroach on individual agency to obey or disobey. The Lord will judge as he deems best. The law is quietly kept by many people, and their names are recorded in appropriate places. The faithful whose names and deeds are documented will receive inheritances in Zion. Those “whose names are not found written in the book of the law . . . shall not find an inheritance among the saints of the Most High” (Doctrine and Covenants 85:11).

Section 86

With Christianity in apostasy and no living prophets, Protestant reformers retreated to the relative safety of the Bible, the known word of God. Some went so far as to declare, though the Bible never does,

that it was all-sufficient and sufficient alone for salvation. Joseph faced the same fears and frustrations resulting from apostasy, but he took a different approach to the Bible. He “reflected . . . again and again” on its often-repeated injunction to ask and receive, seek and find, knock and the door will open (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

Joseph continually worked at understanding the Bible better and better—and making it possible for us to do so too. He had been over the parables in Matthew 13 in the spring of 1831, but he revised his own revision a year and a half later. His journal for December 6, 1832, says he spent the day “translating and received a revelation explaining the Parable [of] the wheat and the tares.”³⁵⁴

Section 86 defines and evokes powerful symbols to explain a parable about how the gospel spread, how apostasy followed and “[drove] the church into the wilderness” (Doctrine and Covenants 86:3), and how the Lord nevertheless protected and preserved his people and will cause the gospel to flourish again. The main analogy of the parable is a field in which the Apostles have planted wheat, but Satan has sown tares.



“An Enemy Sows Tares” from *The Story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation Told in Simple Language for the Young* (1873).

The question for Joseph Smith and Latter-day Saints is, how should the field be harvested? The version in Matthew 13 says to let the wheat and the tares “grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30). Section 86 importantly reverses the order of the harvest: “Let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe; then ye shall *first* gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned” (Doctrine and Covenants 86:7, emphasis added; cross-reference Doctrine and Covenants 64:24). In his new translation, Joseph revised Matthew 13 according to what he learned from the revelation (JST Matthew 13:29).

All of that is preliminary to the Lord’s main point in section 86. His intent in the revelation is to explain how, despite apostasy, the priesthood has returned to its lawful heirs, and they are commissioned to harvest the wheat planted by the original Apostles. Notice how the Lord develops this point with the four consecutive *therefores* that begin verses 7, 8, 10, and 11.

The difference between Joseph’s way of reading the Bible and the dominant way of his time and place is crucial. For many people, the Bible is “a sealed book,” as a popular Methodist preacher of Joseph’s day described it, lamenting that he did not live “in the days of the prophets or apostles, that I could have sure guides.”³⁵⁵ Joseph’s revelations open the Bible. Consider how profound it is that in section 86 the Lord explains his own parable to Latter-day Saints. Is there any reason why he would not? Could not?

Section 86 revises and expands the biblical record. The fact that it came as Joseph was revising his previous revision is, itself, revealing. Joseph never felt finished with the work of unlocking the scriptures. One of his great contributions to us is his example of reading for and receiving revelations.

Section 87

Section 87 came during a Constitutional crisis. Congress had passed tax laws that favored northern factories over southern planters. So a South Carolina convention “unilaterally nullified the tariff and forbade its collection. President Andrew Jackson, refusing to acknowledge this assertion of state power, called out troops. By Christmas 1832, a military confrontation appeared imminent.”³⁵⁶

Latter-day Saints and other Christians viewed these events (along with a plague in India and a nearly global outbreak of cholera) in eschatological terms, meaning they thought the end of the world would come soon.

At least that’s how it looked to Joseph Smith and others late in 1832. Wars and rumors of wars, desolating sicknesses and scourges were in the news.³⁵⁷ Joseph asked for and received a revelation about what was to come. It said that wars—plural—would begin shortly with South Carolina’s rebellion, then continue until wars had gone global and resulted in “a full end of all nations” (Doctrine and Covenants 87:6). The revelation foresaw slave rebellions and the uprising of “remnants” vexing the Gentiles, which Joseph and the early Saints interpreted in Book of Mormon terms to mean descendants of Lehi irritating the unrepentant (Mormon 7:1–10; 3 Nephi 10; Doctrine and Covenants 19:27).³⁵⁸

Section 87 is mainly descriptive, not prescriptive. The first seven verses describe what God knows will happen because people reject his laws and his love. It is not about what he wants to happen or what would happen if people obeyed his laws and reflected his love. It describes unfathomable violence by which the inhabitants of the earth “feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God” whom they have rejected. Given the impending eschaton (day of the Lord), the prescriptive point in the last verse is “stand ye in holy places, and be not moved” (Doctrine and Covenants 87:6, 8).

Is that a command to be passive? Does it mean we should be bystanders or immobilized by fear? I think it means something like

“take a stand for holiness and don’t get pushed around.” I interpret it as a command to take an immovable stand for the laws and love of God in a world descending into self-destruction. The otherwise depressing revelation ends with good news for those who take such a stand: The day of the Lord—the eschaton—comes quickly (Doctrine and Covenants 87:8).

Joseph Smith may have looked foolish to some when the crisis blew over. Civil war didn’t come. It didn’t start with the rebellion of South Carolina, nor result in death and misery, or global warfare, or the end of nations. Well, at least not right away, as Joseph and others probably expected.

The eschaton never seems to happen as expected. That’s the story of Christian eschatology in a nutshell. Since the days of Paul at least, Christians have been expecting the end of the world any day. Every generation of Christians has waited for the end times, and there are always some Christians somewhere who are sure that it’s coming very, very soon.

Early Latter-day Saints were like that, though not quite as much as the followers of William Miller (1782–1849). He was a generation older than Joseph Smith. He was a Baptist, then a Deist, but the combination of having his life miraculously saved in the War of 1812 and the deaths of loved ones led him to conversion to Jesus Christ, and he renewed his Baptist faith. He longed for Jesus’s return to end wars and death. Like me, William Miller didn’t have the knowledge or skills or the revelation necessary to read and understand apocalyptic parts of the Bible in context. So he made some assumptions that led him to interpret Daniel 8:14 to mean that the Savior would return sometime between March 21, 1843, and a year later.

Some of William Miller’s followers got even more specific. They narrowed the day of the Savior’s Second Coming to April 3, 1843. They were not the only ones interested as that day approached. Latter-day Saints were also looking forward to the Savior’s Second Coming, studying the prophecies, trying to discern the signs of the times, as Christians had been doing for nearly two millennia.

So it was no wonder that on Sunday, April 2, 1843, the subject came among the Saints. Joseph told them,

I prophecy in the Name of the Lord God that the commenceme[n]t of bloodshed as preparat[o]ry to the coming of the son of man. will commenc[e] in South Carolina.— (it probably may arise through the slave trade.)— this the a voice declard to me. while I was praying earne[s]tly on the subje[c]t 25 December 1832. I earnestly desird to know concern[in]g the coming of the Son of Man & prayed. when— a voice said to me, Joseph, my, son, if thou livest until thou art 85 years old thou shalt see the facce of the son of man. therefore let this suffice & trouble me no more on this matter.³⁵⁹

The next day was April 3, 1843. It turned out not to be the eschaton. Joseph's journal entry takes a poke at Miller and his followers: "tis too. pleas[a]nt. for false prophets." A few days later on April 6, 1843, Joseph again told his experience a decade earlier of praying to know when the Savior's Second Coming would be, and this time he added how he had decided to interpret the Lord's intentionally vague revelation:

[W]ere I going to prophecy. I would procpesy [prophecy] the end will not come in 1844. or 5— or 6. or 40 years more [p. [72]] there are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till christ come. <I was once praying earnestly upon this subject. and a voice said unto me.> My son, if thou livest till thou art 85 years of age, thou shalt see the face of the son of man. . . . <I was left to draw my own conclusions concerni[n]g this &,> I took the liberty to conclude that if I did live till that time Jesus <he> would make his appearance.— <but I do not say whether he will make his appeara[n]ce, or I shall go where he is.—> I prophecy in the name of the Lord God.— & let it be written. <that the> Son of Man will not come in the heavns till I am 85. years old 48 years hence or about 1890. [cross-reference Doctrine and Covenants 130:14–17]

Look at the way Joseph read his own revelations in the context of his culture's eschatology. He accurately prophesied the American Civil War, but he didn't fully understand his prophecy. When he received the revelation in 1832, as South Carolina was threatening

secession, he assumed, as almost all Christians have done, that the Savior's Second Coming would be soon. Then in 1843 Joseph specifically noted the difference between what the Lord revealed and what he, Joseph, interpreted it to mean. The Lord's revelation: "Joseph, my, son, if thou livest until thou art 85 years old thou shalt see the face of the son of man. therefore let this suffice & trouble me no more on this matter." Joseph's interpretation:

I was left to draw my own conclusions concerni[n]g this &,> I took the liberty to conclude that if I did live till that time Jesus <he> would make his appearance.— <but I do not say whether he will make his appeara[n]ce, or I shall go where he is.—> I prophecy in the name of the Lord God.— & let it be written. <that the> Son of Man will not come in the heavns till I am 85. years old 48 years hence or about 1890.—

This is a terrific way to show that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God and a frontier farmer in the antebellum (pre-Civil War) United States. That means that he knew things from God that no one else could and that he understood them as most everyone else in his time and place would.

Sometimes Joseph didn't understand right away how to interpret the Lord's revelations. He referred to his Christmas 1832 revelation occasionally but never published it during his lifetime. Latter-day Saints began to pay attention to it in the 1850s as the American Civil War loomed. Then, in 1861, when it began to be fulfilled to the letter, a Philadelphia newspaper reprinted the revelation and asked, "Have we not had a prophet among us?"³⁶⁰

Section 88

Three months after receiving a revelation on priesthood that included a command to build a temple in Missouri, Joseph and a group of nine high priests "assembled in the translating room in Kirtland, Ohio." Joseph rose and taught them that "to receive revelation and

the blessing of Heaven, it was necessary to have our minds on God and exercise faith and become of one heart and one mind.” He asked them each to pray in turn that the Lord would “reveal His will to us concerning the upbuilding of Zion and for the benefit of the saints and for the duty . . . of the elders.” Each man “bowed down before the Lord, after which each one arose and spoke in his turn his feelings and determination to keep the commandments of God.”³⁶¹

The revelation began to flow, and by nine o’clock that night it had not ended. The brethren retired but returned the next morning and received the rest of the revelation. That is, they received the first 126 verses. The remainder came a week later on January 3.³⁶²

Like section 84, section 88 is thoroughly a temple revelation. Beginning with a promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ to the faithful, the revelation describes the purposeful creation of the earth and then tells how to obey divine law to advance by degrees of light or glory through a perfect resurrection and into the presence of God.

Historian Richard Bushman summarized section 88 best:

[Section 88] runs from the cosmological to the practical, from a description of angels blowing their trumpets to instructions for starting a school. . . . The revelation offers sketches of the order of heaven, reprises the three degrees of glory, delivers a discourse on divine law, offers a summary of the metahistory of the end times, and then brings it all to bear on what the saints should do now.³⁶³

As with several other sections, section 88 instructs the brethren to proclaim the gospel and connects this commandment to the imminent end of the world and impending judgment. Section 88’s eschatological section is, in fact, the most detailed in Joseph’s revelations. “For not many days hence,” it begins, before describing the end of the world, the resurrections, and the judgments and triumphs announced by angels, all culminating in a final battle between good and evil, “the battle of the great God,” in which the archangel Michael leads the armies of heaven against “the devil and his armies,” resulting in the final conquest of death, hell, and the devil (Doctrine and Covenants 88:114–16).

Section 88 is expansive. It maps the universe. Its concepts stretch the mind, inviting inquiry and awe. “Truth shineth,” it says, introducing a string of related if not synonymous concepts that include truth, light, power, life, spirit, and even law. Condescending from the revelation’s lofty heights, the Lord simplifies its vastness in a metaphor suited for the Saints. “I will liken these kingdoms unto a man having a field, and he sent forth his servants into the field to dig” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:51). “My friends,” the Lord says, “I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you: that ye shall call upon me while I am near: Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you” (vv. 62–63). The revelation both commands and invites solemnity and action.

Temple scholar Margaret Barker noted how the concepts in section 88 pervade other scriptural temple texts. “Light and life, then, are linked and set in opposition to darkness and death. The presence of God is light; coming into the presence of God transforms whatever is dead and gives it life.”³⁶⁴

The word *therefore* in verse 117 marks the beginning of the Lord’s final point in the initial two-day revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 88:117–126). This concluding segment reviews the revelation’s instructions in what one might call the “therefore what?” It is instructions for participating in a temple preparation class. The “therefore what” of the whole revelation is “therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him” (v. 68).

The Latter-day Saints built their first temple as a result of section 88 and came into the presence of the Lord. A few days after section 88 was completed, Joseph sent a copy of it with a rebuke to Church leaders in Missouri. The Saints there had not acted on section 84’s command to build a temple in Zion. “I send you the . . . Lord’s message of peace to us,” Joseph wrote, “for though our Brethren in Zion, indulge in feelings towards us, which are not according to the requirements of the new covenant yet we have the satisfaction of knowing that the Lord approves of us & has accepted us.” Joseph sent a copy of section 88 with his letter. Referring to it, he wrote,

You will see that the Lord commanded us in Kirtland to build an house of God, & establish a school for the Prophets, this is the word of the Lord to us, & we must yea the Lord helping us we will obey, as on conditions of our obedience, he has promised <us> great things, yea <even> a visit from the heavens to honor us with his own presence.

Joseph had learned from section 84 that the only way into the presence of God was through the temple. Nothing should therefore be more important. Yet, like Moses, he worried that Latter-day Saints would harden their hearts and provoke the Lord's wrath (Doctrine and Covenants 84:24). "We greatly fear before the Lord lest we should fail of this great honor which our master proposes to confer on us, we are seeking for humility & great faith lest we be ashamed in his presence."³⁶⁵

The Saints in Kirtland began building the House of the Lord in the summer of 1833 and, after some interruptions and a rebuke that reminded them of section 88's instructions (see section 95), they dedicated it in 1836. Joseph, meanwhile, instructed the Saints to purify and prepare themselves for an outpouring of the Lord's power—an endowment. In November 1835, he met with the newly called Apostles. He confessed his own shortcomings and then taught them section 88, or, as he called it, "how to prepare yourselves for the great things that God is about to bring to pass."

Joseph told them he had assumed the Church was fully organized but that the Lord had taught him more, including "the ordinance of washing of feet" mentioned in section 88:139. "This we have not done as yet," Joseph taught the Apostles, "but it is necessary now as much as it was in the days of the Saviour, and we must have a place prepared, that we may attend to this ordinance, aside from the world." He continued to emphasize the need for the temple:

We must have all things prepared and call our solem assembly as the Lord has commanded us [see Doctrine and Covenants 88:70], that we may be able to accomplish his great work: and it must be done in Gods own way, the house of the Lord must be prepared, and the solem assembly called and organized in it according to the order of the house of God and in it we must attend to the ordinance of washing of feet.

Joseph helped them understand the relationship between the power with which God intended to endow them and their calling to preach the gospel (Doctrine and Covenants 88:80–82). Then he concluded his teaching by reaffirming what section 88 twice calls the “great and last promise”: “I feel disposed to speak a few words more to you my brethren concerning the endowment, all who are prepared and are sufficiently pure to abide the presence of the Saviour will see him in the solem assembly” (vv. 69, 75).³⁶⁶

When the temple was finished and the solemn assembly convened, Joseph dedicated it with an inspired prayer that drew liberally on section 88 (see section 109). Joseph worked hard to get the Saints to see the importance of section 88, to understand the temple and ultimate blessings. Like Moses, he wanted to usher his sometimes short-sighted people into the presence of the Lord. This revelation preoccupied Joseph’s attention. He wanted its promised blessings, and he worked to explain them to the Saints. Section 88 built a temple, established schools, motivated (and continues to motivate) learning by study and faith, and helped many Saints sanctify their lives and lay hold on the great and last promise of entering the Lord’s presence.

Section 89

Most everyone drank in the 1820s and 1830s, Joseph Smith included.³⁶⁷ Distillers in his upstate New York neighborhood made corn whiskey and sent 65,277 gallons of it and 69 tons of beer to market on the Erie Canal the year after Joseph’s first vision of God and Christ.³⁶⁸ Newspapers in the towns near Joseph’s home advertised cheap alcohol, printed recipes for making beer, and sold the ingredients. One scholar aptly described Joseph’s America as “the alcoholic republic.”³⁶⁹

Joseph’s father confessed in a patriarchal blessing to his son Hyrum in 1834 that he had been “out of the way through wine” sometimes in the past, but “Joseph Sr.’s drinking was not excessive for that time and place.”³⁷⁰ Nearly all males drank and so did many women and children.

Members of all social classes drank. They drank morning, midday, and evening, at funerals and parties, militia musters, and church socials.

“The thing has arrived to such a height,” one widely quoted temperance advocate noted, “that we are actually threatened with becoming a nation of drunkards.”³⁷¹ America’s desire for alcohol and the rise of temperance generated diverse opinions that led Joseph Smith to ask questions. Between 1831 and 1836, the cry for abstinence gained momentum. In 1833, in the middle of this controversy, the Lord revealed where the Saints should stand relative to alcohol consumption.

Americans consumed enormous amounts of meat. Authorities often condoned this practice in winter but worried that too much consumption could result in overstimulation. All authorities agreed that use of all stimulants, in which they included herbs, meats, coffee, and tea, could lead to overstimulation and, therefore, disease. The most radical authorities, especially Sylvester Graham, thought that foods much more tasty than a Graham cracker (named for Sylvester) were very dangerous. He urged complete abstinence from coffee, tea, meat, spices, and condiments. Granting that coffee and tea were stimulants, other authorities thought Graham’s position too extreme and believed that healthy people could consume these drinks in moderation without causing disease.

By 1800 the influential doctor Benjamin Rush had persuaded many authorities that all disease could be traced to overstimulation, and therefore all illness could be treated by so-called “heroic” methods of releasing the patient’s excess energy. Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin died in 1823 after a doctor’s dose of mercurous chloride blocked rather than purged his digestive system. Joseph Smith and most Latter-day Saints had little confidence in the fledgling medical profession and its heroic practices. In the days of primitive diagnostic techniques before diseases were well understood, an 1831 revelation to Joseph Smith taught Saints that “whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand

of an enemy” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:43). This counsel matched most closely the relatively innocuous naturopathic practices of Samuel Thomson, and many Latter-day Saints followed his advice until advances in medical science increased their confidence in professionals late in the nineteenth century.³⁷²

The world into which the Lord revealed the Word of Wisdom was quite different from our own. Advances in medical science have provided much more certainty about the dangers of consuming many of the substances that were thought by many in Joseph Smith’s world to have medicinal value. Moreover, his contemporaries were in the process of reconsidering their certainty about the value of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, meats, fruits, and some herbs. There was no prevailing view to which everyone subscribed, even inside the Church. There were more questions than answers.

Outspoken temperance crusaders added tobacco to their list of noxious substances in the 1830s, and it became as warmly debated as alcohol. Was tobacco a powerful medicine capable of curing all kinds of afflictions or a noxious weed that was loathsome to the lungs? Was it a filthy habit or a socially acceptable pastime? Uncertainty about these questions may have been the immediate catalyst for Joseph Smith’s reception of the Word of Wisdom.

Nearly two dozen men gathered for school in a second-story room of Newel and Ann Whitney’s Kirtland, Ohio, store on February 27, 1833. “The first thing they did,” according to Brigham Young,

was to light their pipes, and, while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter and he inquired of the Lord.³⁷³

With one of the elders for his scribe and perhaps one or two others present, Joseph Smith, in a nearby room, received the revelation

known as the Word of Wisdom. Besides answering the immediate question of whether the brethren should smoke or chew tobacco, or “the filthy weed and their disgusting slobbering and spitting,” as one colorful account put it, the revelation clarified several other issues that were being debated by Joseph’s contemporaries.³⁷⁴

One of the most unusual aspects of the Word of Wisdom is that although it came in answer to pressing questions in 1833, its primary purpose is to forewarn future saints of conspiracies to undermine their agency. Notice the doctrinal basis of the revelation. It assumes, as an earlier revelation to Joseph Smith said, that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:15). Whereas some Christians think of the body as evil and look forward to leaving it behind at death, Latter-day Saints regard the body as godly and look forward to a literal, glorious resurrection. They believe God and Christ are perfectly embodied and that through the process of birth, earth life, death, and resurrection, men and women are being created in their image. To preserve the soul and its agency to act for itself, the Lord forbade drinking strong drinks and also wine, unless it was for the sacrament.³⁷⁵

The revelation instructs people how to act relative to distilled (“strong”) and fermented drinks, domesticated and wild animals, tobacco, hot drinks, grains, herbs, fruits, and vegetables. These are all things God has made and given mankind to use. The revelation tells us how to use them in ways that please God. “All these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving,” for example, speaking of herbs and fruits (Doctrine and Covenants 89:11), or “they are to be used sparingly,” speaking of meat and poultry (v. 12). A seldom-noted aspect of stewardship in the Word of Wisdom is the repeated command to use what God has provided “with thanksgiving” (vv. 11–12). The repeated emphasis is on righteous *use*, not *abuse*. God created this earth and its life-sustaining abundance to be used by wise stewards who thankfully acknowledge him, not abused by the ungrateful or gluttonous.

The Word of Wisdom is more than a simple health code. It is a covenant. Elder Boyd K. Packer testified that “while the Word of Wisdom requires strict obedience, in return it promises health, great treasures

of knowledge, and that redemption bought for us by the Lamb of God, who was slain that we might be redeemed.”³⁷⁶

Some critics of the Word of Wisdom assert that because it addressed the circumstances of Joseph Smith’s world, it must not be real revelation. That is silly, since it assumes that a revelation that answers timely questions is somehow suspect. What good is an irrelevant revelation? Another simplistic assumption is that the Word of Wisdom mimicked the prevailing idea of Joseph’s time. There was no prevailing idea, no single opinion. Then as now, there were many competing ideas, debate rather than consensus.

The Word of Wisdom sorts out and clarifies the strengths and weaknesses among the variety of opinions. Forbidding the ingestion of nearly all alcoholic beverages, as well as coffee, tea, and tobacco, the revelation ran counter to the mainstream culture. It was consistent, however, with an emerging medical opinion regarding meats, herbs, fruits, and vegetables. The revelation did not give Joseph Smith, his followers, or family members what they wanted to hear. Many of the men in the church used tobacco. Emma Smith took coffee and tea. Joseph liked whiskey.³⁷⁷ They all consumed more meat than was needful.³⁷⁸ The revelation was not what they wanted to hear. It was the wisdom they needed to hear.

Section 90

There is nothing in the historical records to tell us what problem(s) section 90 resolved—nothing but the revelation itself.³⁷⁹ In such cases it is extra important to read it carefully. It is full of financial instructions. It is safe to conclude that Joseph was concerned about the expensive commands the Lord had given to buy land in Missouri, establish a storehouse, print the revelations, and gather Israel to Zion.

The revelation was given, at least in part, to answer Joseph’s prayers for forgiveness, mentioned in verse 1, which also says that prayers of Joseph’s brethren that have reached the Lord’s ears. It seems that those

brethren were Sidney Rigdon, who had been serving as Joseph's counselor, and Frederick Williams, who just a few weeks earlier received a revelation through Joseph that he was "called to be a Councillor & scribe unto my Servent Joseph."³⁸⁰ The Lord refers "again" to these "brethren" by name in verse 6.

Section 90 blesses those who bear the keys of the kingdom, the authority to exercise the priesthood to govern the church of Jesus Christ. It grants them the oracles—the revelations to govern the Church—and commands the Saints not to take them lightly.

The revelation takes the next step in forming what section 81 called the "Presidency of the High Priesthood," or what became known by 1835 as the First Presidency.³⁸¹ The Lord forgives Sidney Rigdon and Frederick Williams and makes them equal with Joseph in holding the keys of the kingdom. Verse 9 nevertheless clarifies that Joseph presides over his counselors, who preside over the earth and are commanded by the Lord to spread the gospel and gather Israel in anticipation of His coming.

Beginning in verse 13, the Lord gives the Presidency their day-to-day duties: to finish revising the Old Testament, to preside over the Church and the School of the Prophets (see section 88), to receive revelations as needed, to study and learn all they can, and to preside over and set the Church in order.

Verses 13 through the end include the kind of revelation needed to set the Church in order. Here the Lord micromanages his affairs with specific instructions about a variety of people, property, and finances. Joseph and his counselors are reproved for their pride and directed to be better. The Church is to provide a home for Frederick Williams, who had consecrated his farm to obey the same revelation that called him to be a counselor to Joseph. Joseph's parents are to live on Frederick's farm, Sidney to remain where he lives, and the bishop to find an agent both faithful and wealthy enough to help pay the Church's debts.

The Lord refers to the United Firm's covenant (section 82) in verse 24, which is itself a covenant. In verse 25 he counsels Joseph's father to conserve his financial resources by not assuming responsibility for

more people than he can afford in his advancing years. Vienna Jacques, a converted Bostonian who had gathered with the Saints and consecrated her considerable wealth, is promised an inheritance in Zion for her faithfulness.

Not so with William McLellin, whom the Lord rebukes after he forsook two mission calls and circumvented the law of consecration to purchase two lots on Main Street in Independence, Missouri (see sections 66, 75, and 85).³⁸² The Lord also reproved Church leaders in Zion who were badgering Joseph to come to Missouri to live.

Ten days after the revelation, a council of high priests convened. Joseph ordained Sidney Rigdon and Frederick Williams “by the laying on of hands to be equal with him in holding the Keys of the Kingdom and also to the Presidency of the high Priesthood.”³⁸³

The pressures of building Zion weighed on Joseph. One can hear subtextually that Joseph did not know how to resolve some pressing problems, but the Lord did. He coached Joseph how to cope, strategize, delegate, prepare, and press forward. The revelation reassured Joseph that the keys were his forever and he would receive revelations as needed. Section 90 treated Joseph’s anxiety, uncertainty, and stress. Zion “shall not be removed out of her place. I, the Lord, have spoken it” (Doctrine and Covenants 90:37). If the Lord was so cool and confident in Zion, Joseph could be too. He would need that reassurance. Things in Zion were about to get much worse.

Section 91

There was a hot debate among members of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the late 1820s. Some members advocated that the Society should include in its Bibles the Apocrypha—“the dozen or so books not found in the Hebrew canon but that were included in the Greek version of the Old Testament.”³⁸⁴ Other members of the Society thought they were “adulterating the Scriptures, by circulating the lies and fables of the Apocrypha along with the words of eternal life.”³⁸⁵

That debate had been ongoing among Christians for centuries. Joseph did not know whose argument was best.

Joseph's version of the King James Bible included the Apocrypha. Section 90, revealed on March 8, 1833, told Joseph to finish his revision of the Old Testament before moving on to other pressing duties. The next day he asked the Lord whether he should read the Apocrypha and revise it along with the rest of the Old Testament. His history says, "Having come to that portion of the ancient writings called the Apocrypha, I received the following" revelation.³⁸⁶

The Lord tells Joseph that he need not translate the Apocrypha, and he explains why. Much of it is true and already translated correctly. Much of it is also not true, uninspired, and uninspiring, and it includes late additions. The revelation hinges on the *therefore* that begins verse 4. Because there is much truth and much else in the Apocrypha, let it be understood by the Spirit, which testifies of truth. That is the way to get the most from the Apocrypha.

Section 91 helps us understand the nature of scripture and of revelation. There have been many historical arguments and dogmatic positions taken relative to the Apocrypha. The revealed answer may be the least dogmatic. Rather than declaring the highly varied books of the Apocrypha absolutely true or false, the Lord focuses on truth and error within the texts. Nor does he seem worried about errors in or sufficiency of scripture, a term Latter-day Saints do not even use. He gives instead an infallible principle that can be applied to all texts and all subjects. The principle is that seeking truth in the light of the Holy Spirit will enable people to discern truth from error wherever it may be found.

Section 92

People live by the law of consecration and stewardship. When people say that early saints *lived* the United Order, they do not understand what it is—or was. United Order is actually a pseudonym for the United Firm, a group of several Church leaders the Lord named specifically in

section 82. “As a governing financial council, the firm was responsible for printing church publications, holding church properties in trust, assisting the poor, and operating general stores in Independence, Missouri, and Kirtland, Ohio, to generate funds for the church.”³⁸⁷

The Lord established the United Firm in 1832 (see section 82).³⁸⁸ In 1833, the Lord called Frederick Williams to be a counselor and scribe to Joseph and to consecrate his substantial farm to the Church. “Let thy farm be consecrated for bringing forth of the revelations and tho[u] shalt be blessed,” the Lord told Frederick.³⁸⁹ Section 92 made Frederick a member of the United Firm.³⁹⁰ The minutes describing what that means say that Frederick “should be received into the United Firm in full partnership agreeable to the specification of the bond” mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 78:11 and 82:11.³⁹¹ Section 92 instructs the members of the United Firm to receive Frederick and instructs him to be a “lively member.”

Joseph sent a copy of the revelation to the members of the firm in Missouri. They apparently raised some questions about Frederick’s role. He joined the firm, consecrated his farm, was ordained a counselor to Joseph Smith, continued to serve as a scribe, and was otherwise “lively” though soft-spoken in building Zion. Joseph’s journal says, “Brother Frederick is one of those men in whom I place the greatest confidence and trust for I have found him ever full of love and Brotherly kindness. . . . He is perfectly honest and upright and seeks with all his heart to magnify his presidency in the church.”³⁹²

Section 93

In his inimitable way, BYU philosophy professor Truman Madsen related an anecdote during a presentation he gave at the Yale Divinity School. He told of a conversation with some Catholic priests, very learned Jesuits who expressed their inability to conceive of God as an intimate father intent on raising mankind to fully share in his glory

and status. Brother Madsen said he told them it was hard for Latter-day Saints to conceive of God as anything other than a concerned father whose work and glory is to exalt all of his willing children.

What does that have to do with section 93? It's about the nature of God as Father, Christ as Son, and it parents as well as chastises Bishop Whitney and the members of the First Presidency, saying they need to be better parents.³⁹³ The Lord explains why he gave the revelation in verse 19: "I give unto you these sayings that you may understand, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness."

The Lord's use of the word *fulness* tells us that we have in section 93 a revelation about exaltation. *Fulness* is used occasionally in the Book of Mormon and early revelations to describe the gospel, but in section 76, the first of the revelations to describe progress beyond simple salvation from sin and death, the word bursts onto the page nine times. In section 93 we hear it fifteen times and sometimes enriched, as in "fulness of truth" (v. 26) or "fulness of joy" (v. 34). Section 93 is an introductory text on how to come into the Lord's presence and become like him.

Section 93 adds *intelligence* to section 88's impressive catalog of synonyms that include light, life, law, power, and glory—most memorably in section 93:36: "The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth." We worship "The Father," the organizer of eternal elements and intelligent beings whom he designs to inherit his attributes and with them his "fulness of joy." We worship a God who did not create us *ex nihilo*, or from nothing, but rather from eternally existing element and intelligence (vv. 33–35). We worship a God whose work is to frame worlds and inhabit them with his children, to provide them a sphere in which they can act independently, truly free to do their father's will or their own.

We worship God by choosing of our own free will to receive the intelligence, or light and truth, he offers us, to keep his commandments and therefore receive more truth, more light, more intelligence,

until we know all he knows and have become all he is. We worship our Heavenly Father by becoming like him. To emulate him is the highest worship we can offer him. In section 93, Christ holds himself up as the example. “He received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace.” He obeyed His Father and grew by degrees of glory “until he received a fulness” (vv. 12–13). In section 93, Christ declares that we have similar potential for growth and godliness (v. 20).

There is an abrupt transition at verse 40 to pragmatic instructions, and the conclusion of the revelation “descend[s] from the heavens into the everyday concerns of Joseph and his friends. The Lord scolds them for not keeping order in their families.”³⁹⁴ This part of the revelation is not disconnected from the lofty preceding verses. All of them tell how to raise children and why. God organizes life and provides his children a setting in which they can act freely. He endows them with light, truth, and knowledge to act upon independently, leaving them free to obey or disobey when “that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:39).

In section 93, Joseph received God’s theology of parenting and a pragmatic commandment to go and do likewise (v. 40). Moreover, since the glory of God is intelligence, there is a commandment to worship by learning, by obtaining knowledge as a means to the end that is exaltation. Exalting knowledge comes by obedience to God’s light and truth. “He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things” (v. 28).

Professor Madsen cited section 93 as a profound solution to several theological problems:

- How can something come from nothing? Answer: The universe was not created from nothing. “The elements are eternal.”
- How can Christ have been both absolutely human and absolutely divine at the same time? Answer: He was not both at the same time. Christ “received not of the fulness at the first, but continued . . . until he received a fulness.”

- If man is totally the creation of God, how can he be anything or do anything that he was not divinely pre-caused to do? Answer: Man is not totally the creation of God. “Intelligence was not created or made, neither indeed can be. Behold, here is the agency of man.”
- How can man be a divine creation and yet be “totally depraved”? Answer: Man is not totally depraved. “Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.”
- What is the relationship of being and beings, the one and the many? Answer: “Being” is only the collective name of beings, of whom God is one. Truth is knowledge of things (plural), and not, as Plato would have it, of Thinghood. “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.”
- How can spirit relate to gross matter? Answer: “The elements are the tabernacle of God.”
- Why should man be embodied? Answer: “Spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy.”
- If we begin susceptible to light and truth, how is it that people err and abuse the light? Answer: People are free; they can be persuaded only if they choose to be. They cannot be compelled.
- The Socratic thesis that knowledge is virtue (that if you really know the good you will seek it and do it) is mistaken. It is through disobedience and because of the traditions of the fathers that light is taken away from mankind.³⁹⁵

That is impressive even for Joseph Smith, the twenty-seven-year-old farmer/revelator whose history casually contextualizes section 93 by saying, “on the 6th [of May 1833] I received the following.”³⁹⁶

Section 94

Section 94 may make more sense after you have studied sections 95, 96, and 97, because it was actually revealed right after section 97, though for many years it was misdated and thus misplaced. It makes the most sense when it is read as an extension of section 97.³⁹⁷ It addresses similar concerns as section 97 and says that the Lord had already revealed the pattern for the House of the Lord in Kirtland, which he did in section 95.

In section 97 the Lord required the Saints in Missouri to build a temple. In section 94 he commands the Saints in Ohio to build a stake to Zion, beginning with another temple in Ohio, as commanded in section 88 and again in section 95. The Lord calls for the construction of an office for the First Presidency next to the temple in Kirtland, Ohio. He specifies its design and the conditions on which he will abide there. On the next lot south, the Lord wants a printing office, perhaps to replace the Church's press destroyed by a mob just a few days earlier in Missouri (unbeknownst to Joseph). The members of the Church's building committee—Hyrum Smith, Reynolds Cahoon, and Jared Carter—are appointed lots or "inheritances" near the building sites. Verse 16 is not in the early manuscripts. Joseph probably added it as clarification before the revelation was published in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*.

In the letter to Missouri Church leaders that included section 94, the First Presidency explained that the Saints in Zion should build similar buildings for meetings and printing the scriptures.³⁹⁸ But the Saints in Zion were already being forced from their land and homes, and Saints in Kirtland struggled to muster enough resources to build the temple. They eventually scaled down the instructions in section 94, built one building instead of two, and used it as a printing office, a school, and office space for the First Presidency.

Section 95

Six months after the Lord told the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, to build a house of the Lord where they could learn his law, be endowed with his power, and come into his presence (see section 88), the Saints had not begun to build the Lord's house. Joseph wrote to the Saints in Missouri. "The Lord commanded us in Kirtland to build an house of God," he said "and we must—yea the Lord helping us we will obey, as on conditions of our obedience, he has promised us great things, yea even a visit from the heavens to honor us with his presence."³⁹⁹

Joseph seemed to be the only one who sensed any urgency in the command. It was the dead of winter in 1833. In the spring the Saints got around to having a meeting about building the Lord's house and appointed Jared Carter, Reynolds Cahoon, and Hyrum Smith to a committee to raise money for construction and oversee it.⁴⁰⁰ The meeting ended after that, and nothing more happened for a month. Then the Lord gave section 95.⁴⁰¹

It is a revelation of God's love, his conditional love. "Thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you" (Doctrine and Covenants 95:1). Given the premise that God loves the Saints and chastens those he loves as a means to their forgiveness, the revelation's next passage is a predictable rebuke for what the Lord calls the "very grievous sin" of not building the temple.

Then the Lord reemphasizes the importance of the temple. It is the school for prophets, the way to "pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Doctrine and Covenants 95:4), the way out of darkness, the venue for receiving an endowment of heavenly power. The Lord wanted the elders to remain in Kirtland to receive this endowment, but they were contentious, and he sent them into the field to be chastened—because he loved them.

Beginning in verse 11, the Lord promises the Saints power to build the temple *if* they keep his commandments. “If you keep not my commandments,” he emphasized, “the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness” (Doctrine and Covenants 95:12). The revelation does not say that the love of God will not continue, only that it will not continue with those who choose to reject it, who “love darkness rather than light” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:45). By juxtaposing his love with darkness, the Lord equates his love with light and the synonyms for it described in sections 88 and 93, including truth, glory, intelligence, power, and life. Why, the Lord seems to lament in section 95, would Saints choose to walk in darkness at noon when God’s loving light shines for all who choose to obey the conditions on which he offers it?

So what would be the wise course? “Let the house be built,” the Lord says, and gives the dimensions and a promise to reveal it to “three” (Doctrine and Covenants 95:13–14). The building committee sent a letter to all the Saints the same day the revelation came, urging them to “make very possible exertion to aid temporally as well as spiritually in this great work,” and “it is as important as our salvation is that we obey this . . . command.”⁴⁰²

The Saints got the point. They went to work at enormous cost. The Lord revealed the building to the First Presidency (Doctrine and Covenants 95:14).⁴⁰³ Hyrum Smith broke ground on June 5, 1833, in a wheat field on the bluffs above the Chagrin River. Everyone helped. Saints consecrated funds, labor, and expertise, but “the project was far out of proportion to the Church’s pitiful resources.” They had to rely on the Lord’s promise of power to build it if they kept his commandments. Joseph borrowed money to finance the construction, “but the economic realities gave Joseph no pause.” He understood the Savior’s “great and last promise” to be worth any cost, any sacrifice (Doctrine and Covenants 88:68–69).

After receiving section 95, the Saints no longer walked in darkness at noon. “Beginning in Kirtland,” wrote historian Richard Bushman, “temples became an obsession. For the rest of his life, no matter the cost

of the temple to himself and his people, [Joseph] made plans, raised money, mobilized workers, and required sacrifice” (see section 97).⁴⁰⁴

Section 96

Reading section 96 is like walking in on an interesting conversation that is already underway. You try hard to catch on, to understand what’s being said, but you realize there’s so much you’ve missed that you just can’t make sense of what you’re hearing. It would be nice, in such cases, if there were a way to catch up on the earlier parts of the conversation. Those parts are sections 42, 72, 78, and 82. Those sections reveal the law of consecration and establish an organization (of Church leaders) called the United Firm to be trustees of Church properties, manage storehouses, and relieve poverty.

Members of the Firm and others strategized in the spring of 1833 to acquire several farms in the Kirtland, Ohio, area, especially a farm and brick tavern owned by an early settler named Peter French. The Saints hoped to build a stake of Zion surrounding the House of the Lord, which they intended to build on French’s farm. They sent a committee to ask the farm owners the terms on which they would be willing to sell. The committee returned with news that the farms were available, and the council decided to buy them, appointed agents to negotiate the sale, and called the elders out of their school to go raise funds among the Saints.⁴⁰⁵ The funds were raised and the farms purchased, leading to another council on June 4, which disagreed about who should manage the French farm, “but all agreed to inquire of the Lord.”⁴⁰⁶

The Lord answered that Newel Whitney, the bishop in Kirtland, was to “take charge of the place” as a good steward. The Lord, however, is the owner of “the place . . . upon which I design to build [my] holy house” (Doctrine and Covenants 96:2). He begins the revelation by stating the rationale for buying the farm: “It is expedient in me that this stake that I have set for the strength of Zion should be made strong” (v. 1). The Lord instructs the bishop and others how to

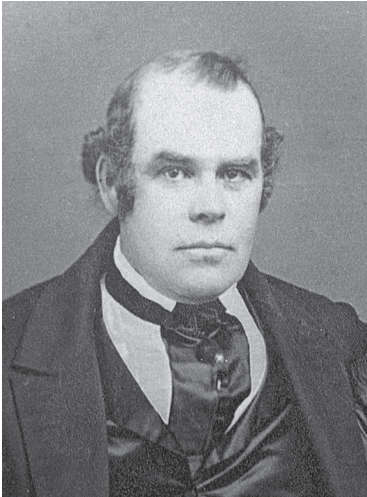
act relative to the land, by dividing it among the Saints and using the proceeds to fund the United Firm, called the “order” in verses 4 and 8 but “the Firm” in early manuscripts (see sections 70, 78, 82, and 92). The Lord says John Johnson “should become a member of the order” and use his financial resources and skills to pay the Church’s debts (Doctrine and Covenants 96:8).⁴⁰⁷

Bishop Whitney became steward of the farm and acted on the revelation’s instructions to divide it and to finance the Church’s publications with the proceeds. John Johnson moved from Hiram to Kirtland, joined the United Firm, became steward of the tavern, and tried to obey the revelation by paying the firm’s debts.⁴⁰⁸

Section 97

Parley Pratt described Zion during the summer of 1833 as the opposition escalated: “Immigration had poured into the County of Jackson in great numbers; and the Church in that county now numbered upwards of one thousand souls.” He described how they industriously improved their situations by building homes and cultivating farms. He said that they observed the Sabbath according to section 59 but made no mention of building the temple described in section 84. “I devoted almost my entire time in ministering among the churches,” Parley wrote,

holding meetings; visiting the sick; comforting the afflicted, and giving counsel. A school of Elders was also organized, over which I was called to preside. This class, to the number of about sixty, met for instruction once a week. The place of meeting was in the open air, under some tall trees, in a retired place in the wilderness, where we prayed, preached and prophesied, and exercised ourselves in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Here great blessings were poured out and many great and marvelous things were manifested and taught. . . . To attend this school I had to travel on foot, and sometimes with bare feet at that, about six miles. This I did once a week, besides visiting and preaching in five or six branches a week.



Photograph of Parley P. Pratt by C. R. Savage, ca. 1845.

Parley and his brethren wrote to Joseph, seeking the Lord's will concerning their school. While "thus engaged," Parley wrote, "and in answer to our correspondence with the Prophet, Joseph Smith, at Kirtland, Ohio, the following revelation was sent to us by him, dated August, 1833."⁴⁰⁹

Joseph Smith did not know when he received section 97 that the Saints in Zion had received an ultimatum from their antagonistic neighbors—stop obeying the revelations or we will force you to. In section 97, the Lord issues a counter ultimatum. "The ax is laid at the root of the trees," he says, "and every tree

that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. I, the Lord, have spoken it" (v. 7).⁴¹⁰

Section 97 highlights the Lord's priorities for Zion. "I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion, and also with my servant Parley P. Pratt, for he abideth in me" (v. 3). Right away, however, the Lord notices that there is no temple in Zion yet. He requires one to "be built speedily, by the tithing of my people," by obedience to the law of sacrifice set forth in section 97 (vv. 8–12). The temple—or, rather, the keeping of covenants required to build and worship in the temple—will be the salvation of Zion.

Section 97 is conspicuously full of if/then statements. It prophesies conditionally that *if* the saints obey the commandment to sacrifice to build a temple in Independence, *then* Zion will prosper and become great and immovable. She will escape her enemies "if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her" (v. 25). If not, Zion will be visited with sore afflictions. The future of Zion is in the hands of the Latter-day Saints. If the Saints want Zion as their

first priority, they will sacrifice to build it and keep it holy. In verse 27, the Lord gives Zion a second chance. If Zion has since been, at least temporarily, “moved out of her place,” it is because too few Latter-day Saints share the Lord’s priorities set forth in section 97 (v. 19).

Parley Pratt testified that the Lord poured forth the promised blessings of section 97 when he did as the revelation commanded regarding the school for the elders. “The Lord gave me great wisdom,” Parley wrote, “and enabled me to teach and edify the Elders, and comfort and encourage them in their preparations for the great work which lay before us. I was also much edified and strengthened.”

Parley also noted that “this revelation was not complied with by the leaders and Church in Missouri, as a whole.” As section 97 shows, the Saints in Zion were not unified, not all committed to keeping their covenants. Thus, “notwithstanding many were humble and faithful,” Parley noted, “the threatened judgment was poured out to the uttermost.”⁴¹¹

Section 98

In the summer of 1833, Oliver Cowdery wrote from Independence, Missouri, to Church leaders in Kirtland, Ohio, informing them that opposition from the Saints’ Missouri neighbors was rising. By the time the letter arrived in Ohio, Bishop Partridge had been tarred and feathered in Missouri, the Church’s press there had been destroyed, and the Saints had been given an ultimatum to leave Jackson County or face escalating violence.

In Kirtland, Doctor Philastus Hurlbut had been excommunicated twice from the Church in a short period, and he thereafter “sought the destruction of the saints,” Joseph wrote, “and more particularly myself and family.”⁴¹² Section 98 is the Lord’s prescription for peace and diplomacy amidst the strife and violence.⁴¹³

Foreseeing the Saints’ emotional reactions to hostility and violence, the Lord prescribes “be comforted,” “rejoice,” “give thanks,” and

wait “patiently” for him, the Lord of Hosts, the defender of his people, to answer their prayers, for he has covenanted to do so. He promises that “all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory” (Doctrine and Covenants 98:3).

The revelation then upholds the rule of constitutional law applied without bias. Freedom comes from God and “belongs to all mankind” (Doctrine and Covenants 98:5, 8). The Saints should therefore do all that lies in their power to preserve freedom for themselves and everyone else.

Section 98 reiterates the law of sacrifice described in section 97. The Saints are being tried and proven to see “whether you will abide in my covenant,” the Lord says, “even unto death” (Doctrine and Covenants 98:14; cross-reference Mosiah 18:8–10). Saints are commanded to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (Doctrine and Covenants 98:16).

At verse 19, the Lord expresses his displeasure with materialistic Saints in Kirtland. Condemning pride, covetousness, and “all their detestable things,” he repeats the terms and conditions on which he will save or damn them (vv. 20–22).

Beginning in verse 23, the Lord reveals his law of forbearance and justified retaliation. It is the same law Nephi and Israelite patriarchs knew and obeyed. It applies to all people (Doctrine and Covenants 98:32, 38). Simply put, the law requires Saints to bear attacks “patiently and revile not . . . neither seek revenge” (v. 23). After three offenses, patiently endured, the Saints are to warn their attackers in the name of the Lord to stop. If they do not, the Lord says, “I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands” (v. 29). At that point, the Saints can opt to spare the transgressor or deliver justice. “If he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou are justified” (v. 31).

The Lord’s law includes the commandment that his people should “not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them” (Doctrine and Covenants 98:33). When an enemy declares war, the Saints “should first lift a standard of peace” (v. 34). If that gesture is rejected three times, the Saints should

testify to the Lord of their good faith efforts. “Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation,” and then the Lord would be on the Saints’ side (vv. 36–37).

Beginning in verse 39, the Lord adds another dimension to the law. It is that enemies are to be forgiven as often as they repent—truly repent. The Lord’s vengeance is just and sure, but it evaporates just as soon as there is real repentance (Doctrine and Covenants 98:46–48).

Three days after section 98 was revealed, Oliver Cowdery arrived in Kirtland with the latest news from Missouri about the violent persecution and the Saints’ pending expulsion from Jackson County. Joseph was passionate about Zion and responded to the crisis with a long letter in his own hand, written to the leaders in Missouri. Joseph’s letter begins with a broken-hearted prayer that the Lord would comfort the Saints and curse their enemies before concluding, “O Lord glorify thyself thy will be done and not mine.”

Joseph’s first reaction was to curse the Saints’ enemies, but he believed section 98’s promises and bowed to its moderating instructions in response to the crisis. For example, he urged the Saints to “wait patiently until the Lord come[s] and resto[res] unto us all things and build the waist places again for he will do it in his time.” He wrote to Zion,

th[ere] is no saifty only in the a[r]m of Jehovah none else can deliver and he will not deliver unless we do prove ourselves faithful to him in the severeest trouble for he that will have his robes washed in the blood of the Lamb must come up through great tribulation even the greatest of all affliction but know this when men thus deal with you and speak all maner of evil of you falsly for the sake of Christ that he is your friend and I verily know that he will spedily deliver Zion for I have his immutable covenant that this shall be the case but god is pleased to keep it hid from mine eyes the means how exactly the thing will be done.

Joseph concluded his letter “by telling you that we wait the Comand of God to do whatever he plesse and if <he> shall say go up to Zion and

defend thy Brotheren by <the sword> we fly and we count not dear our live[s] dear to us.”⁴¹⁴

Section 99

Section 99 fits chronologically between sections 83 and 84. Generically it is like sections 32–34 and 66. It is a mission call for John Murdock, but his is unique. No other missionaries were given the option to inherit Zion or serve as missionaries for the rest of their lives.⁴¹⁵

John was among the early converts in Ohio, and from the time of his baptism in November 1830, he had hardly stopped preaching the gospel. His wife Julia had died after giving birth to twins, giving John five children under age seven to care for.

Then section 52 called John to preach and travel to Missouri in the summer of 1831. John shouldered and balanced his family and missionary calling as best he could. He made a selfless decision to accept an invitation from Emma and Joseph Smith, whose twins had just died, to adopt John and Julia’s twins. John left his other children in the care of relatives and fellow Saints and endured a long, sickly, and extremely successful mission to Missouri and back. He found his children well with the exception of little Joseph, who had succumbed to measles in March 1832.

John nurtured his children, regained his health, and served in the Church at headquarters until August 1832, when section 99 called him back to the mission field. The revelation shows the Lord’s familiarity with John’s family situation and tells him how to both provide for his motherless children and perform his mission. John, meanwhile, is given the unusual choice to inherit Zion in a few years or continue his missionary labors for the rest of his life.

John wrote that having received section 99, “I immediately commenced to arrange my business and provide for my children and send them up to the Bishop in Zion,” Edward Partridge. Then John set out to preach the gospel. Some received him as section 99 predicted.

Others, including his in-laws, rejected his message. When John “met with a Dr. Matthews, a very wicked man” who rejected his offering, John and his companion followed the revelation’s instruction: “We bore testimony according to the commandment and the Lord helped us in tending to the ordinance” of cleansing their feet “in the secret places by the way for a testimony against them” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 99:4).⁴¹⁶

Section 100

The adulterous apostate Doctor Philastus Hurlbut threatened to wash his hands in Joseph Smith’s blood.⁴¹⁷ Besides that, the Saints in Missouri were in the midst of being forced from the promised land. On the bright side, missionary work around the Great Lakes was thriving. In the midst of the chaos, Joseph and Sidney accepted the invitations from prospective converts and referrals from friends and relatives and went on a mission through Pennsylvania to upstate New York and Ontario, Canada.

On October 12, 1833, Joseph did something he rarely did. He wrote his own journal entry, or at least part of it. “I feel very well in my mind,” it says in his handwriting, “the Lord is with us but have been much anxiety about my family.”⁴¹⁸ The Lord was with them and gave Joseph section 100 that day. It addresses Joseph’s mission with Sidney Rigdon and the two concerns that occupied his anxious mind: Zion and the safety of his family and other Saints.⁴¹⁹ The revelation begins with the Lord’s omnipotent assurance that Joseph’s and Sidney’s families are well: “They are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 100:1).

About the mission, the Lord gives Joseph and Sidney specific, omniscient counsel that could guarantee their success, depending on how they decide to act on the counsel. If Joseph and Sidney speak the thoughts the Lord puts into their hearts, he says, they will not be confounded. If they solemnly, meekly declare the gospel in the Lord’s

name, he promises that the Holy Ghost will testify of their words. He promises Joseph a powerful testimony and Sidney the ability to expound scripture. He makes Joseph a revelator for Sidney and Sidney a spokesman for Joseph.

Beginning in verse 13, the Lord offers “a word concerning Zion.” He promises protection and salvation to the brethren Joseph sent to Missouri with messages. “Zion shall be redeemed,” the Lord promised, after she is chastened and becomes pure and willing to serve the Lord.

Joseph Smith possessed a dogged tenacity. He did not want to give up on Zion, on New Jerusalem being built around a holy temple in Jackson County, Missouri. Oliver Cowdery had recently suggested that the Saints could start over somewhere else. Joseph resisted that thought. He told the Saints in Missouri that the Lord wanted them to hold onto their land, not sell it, not give up on Zion. He promised them that Zion would flourish in spite of hell, though he did not pretend to know how or when.

Joseph described himself as praying fervently and often in the past weeks after Zion had been beaten. He could not understand why. He even said that he murmured about it. Section 100 comforted Joseph. It reinforced his faith in Zion, though it did not answer his questions about how or when the Lord would put the Saints back in the promised land. Joseph wrote that based on section 100,

I know that Zion, in the own due time of the Lord will be redeemed, but how many will be the days of her purification, tribulation and affliction, the Lord has kept hid from my eyes; and when I enquire concerning this subject the voice of the Lord is, Be still, and know that I am God! all those who suffer for my name shall reign with me, and he that layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again.⁴²⁰

Section 100 eased Joseph’s anxieties about his family’s safety in the hostile environment of Kirtland, Ohio. On returning from his month-long mission, he dictated the following journal entry: “Found my family all well according to the promise of the Lord for which blessings I feel to thank his holy name.”⁴²¹

Section 101

On December 10, 1833, the morning mail brought Joseph Smith “the melancholy intelligence” that the Saints in Missouri were being exiled from the promised land.⁴²² He had already learned that leading citizens had mobbed the Saints, destroyed their press, and forced on them an ultimatum to leave the county. Joseph hoped, however, that the rule of law would prevail, that the Saints could get redress for the illegal acts against them, and that they would not have to leave the land they had legally purchased and occupied. The letter disappointed that hope.

The news depressed and bewildered Joseph. Why had the Lord let the Saints be driven from the promised land? Would they return? If so, how? It was the Lord who had told Joseph to consecrate Independence, Missouri, as Zion, a refuge and gathering place for the Saints. “Therefore I ask thee,” Joseph prayed, “in the name of Jesus Christ, to return thy people unto their homes . . . [and] that all the enemies of thy people, who will not repent and return unto thee be destroyed from off the face of that Land.”⁴²³ Section 101 came a week later to answer these questions and Joseph’s prayer, though not as he had hoped.

The Lord explains that he will let the Saints be tried and chastened even as much as Abraham was if it will lead to their sanctification. They must choose to stop being contentious, jealous, covetous, and lustful or there will be no Zion even if he rescues them. Then he promises emphatically that he will rescue them. “Notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them. I will not utterly cast them off; and in the day of wrath I will remember mercy” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:9).

Just a week earlier, Joseph felt like murmuring because “those who are innocent are compelled to suffer for the iniquities of the guilty; and I cannot account for this.”⁴²⁴ The Lord acknowledges the injustice in verse 41 and has his own “wisdom” in allowing it. From the Lord’s perspective, a potent dose of “trouble” can be useful. For when

the Saints were well and good, they treated lightly the revelations to gather, to consecrate, to buy land and to build a temple. Now all of a sudden, “of necessity they feel after me,” the Lord says (Doctrine and Covenants 101:8).

Section 101 reaffirms that Zion will be established despite the Saints being driven. It prophesies the millennial day, when the pure in heart will inherit Zion, enmity will cease, Satan will be rendered powerless, the Lord will reveal all things, and death, like sorrow, will depart. With that perspective, the faithful, persecuted Saints can afford to “fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:36).

Beginning in verse 43, the Lord relates a parable to explain his will concerning how to get Zion back. It implies that the unfaithful Saints in Zion were bad stewards. Rather than building the temple as commanded, they second-guessed the Lord, used his money selfishly, and opened themselves to attacks that could have been prevented by obedience. “Ought ye not to have done even as I commanded you?” the nobleman of the parable asks the disobedient servants (Doctrine and Covenants 101:53).

The nobleman’s plans for reclaiming his vineyard from enemies includes gathering an army of his servants, “the strength of mine house,” to go to battle (Doctrine and Covenants 101:55–58). The nobleman promises to redeem his overrun vineyard and the servants ask when. “When I will,” comes the answer; “go ye straightway, and do all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (v. 60). The servants go and do as the nobleman commanded, “and after many days all things were fulfilled” (v. 62).

Immediately following the parable, the Lord resumes as if he were the nobleman commanding his servants what to do, or, in the words of verse 43, “my will concerning the redemption of Zion.” He commands the Saints to obey sections 57, 63, and 86—that is, to continue the work of gathering by preaching the gospel, gaining converts, and gathering together to pool resources so they can systematically (not hastily or haphazardly) purchase land and build Zion legally. The Lord

calls for wise men to be sent to purchase the lands, buy out the settlers of Jackson County, satisfy them for their land and resolve the controversies between them (Doctrine and Covenants 101:73). There is no shortage of money among the Saints in the eastern branches, the Lord says. They have enough to buy the land if they are willing to consecrate it for Zion (v. 75).

In verse 76, the Lord calls for the Saints to continue to appeal to government for redress of their civil and property rights, like the biblical parable of the unjust judge who finally relented to an insistent woman's pleas for justice. Similarly, the Saints are to petition for justice at the feet of every government official, including the president. "And if the president heed them not, then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place; and in his fury vex the nation" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:89). The Saints are to pray for their government officials to be responsive and therefore escape the Lord's vengeance.

The revelation closes with a command that the Saints not sell the storehouse nor any of the land they legally own. Though driven unjustly, they must not relent to their oppressors. They must not sell the promised land.

Section 101 explains why Zion was postponed. God could stop every mobbing and prevent every Saint from being lustful, covetous, and contentious. He chooses instead to put agency in his individual children. He gives them power to act and commandments to act upon. When they (or some of them) act disobediently to His commands, the blessings promised for obedience are not forthcoming. That's how some of the Saints—and their enemies—postponed Zion. It is our fault, not God's, that there is still no holy city in Jackson County, Missouri.

Section 101 promises an ultimate redemption of Zion, though its timing is dependent on the Saints' decisions. In several places the Lord guarantees that Zion will come. In just as many he speaks ambiguously about when. *When* depends on what the Saints decide to do with the Lord's commandments.

Section 102

Joseph Smith convened councils to arbitrate and adjudicate Church decisions, especially disciplinary decisions. These councils were called as needed, according to the law of the Church revealed in February 1831 (Doctrine and Covenants 42). By 1834 experience and Church growth revealed the need for standing councils to deal with complex issues. On February 17, 1834, Joseph told a group of priesthood leaders that he “would show the order of councils in ancient days as shown to him by vision.”

Joseph explained that “Jerusalem was the seat of the Church Council in ancient days.” He said that

the apostle, Peter, was the president of the Council and held the keys of the Kingdom of God on the earth [and] was appointed to this office by the voice of the Savior and acknowledged in it by the voice of the Church. He had two men appointed as Counsellors with him, and in case Peter was absent, his counsellors could also transact business alone.

Joseph explained that church councils operated on different principles of jurisprudence than secular courts. “It was not the order of heaven in ancient councils to plead for and against the guilty as in our judicial courts (so called) but that every councilor when he arose to speak, should speak precisely according to evidence and according to the teaching of the Spirit of the Lord.”

Clerks kept minutes of Joseph’s teachings on how the council should be organized. They record that “many questions have been asked during the time of the organization of the Council and doubtless some errors have been committed, it was, therefore, voted by all present that Bro. Joseph should make all necessary corrections by the Spirit of inspiration hereafter.” Joseph began that job the next day, February 18, and the following day an even larger gathering of priesthood holders and general members met to review and consent to the new “constitution of the high council of the Church of Christ.” The

minutes Joseph refined were subsequently canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants and are currently found in section 102.

At the February 19 meeting, Joseph then laid hands on his two counselors and blessed them with “wisdom to magnify their office, and power over all the power of the adversary.” He then laid hands on the twelve men called as high counselors and set them apart. He blessed them with “wisdom and power to counsel in righteousness upon all subjects that might be laid before them.” He also prayed that they might be delivered from those evils to which they were most exposed and that their lives might be prolonged on the earth. Then, in the name of Jesus Christ, Joseph gave his counselors and the high council a charge to “do their duty in righteousness and in the fear of God.” They signified their acceptance of Joseph’s charge by raising their right hands. Joseph pronounced the council organized “according to the ancient order, and also according to the mind of the Lord.”⁴²⁵

Section 102 restores the ancient order of church councils. The organization of the high council also went far toward establishing a stake of Zion in Kirtland, an ecclesiastical jurisdiction drawn on imagery from Isaiah 33:20 and 54:2 and applied to the Church in a May 1833 revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 94:1; 96:1). Moreover, these minutes provided for other standing high councils to be established, as well as temporary councils to be organized beyond Zion and her stakes.

The Church’s first high council went to work immediately. As specified in the minutes, the counselors drew numbers 1–12, with even numbers responsible to prevent insult and injustice against the accused person and the odd-numbered counselors responsible to ensure the interests of the Church. Ezra Thayer charged Curtis Hodges, an elder, with preaching too loudly and unclearly and demanding that he was justified in doing so when corrected. Hodges said he was not guilty. Witnesses confirmed “that bro. Hodges was guilty of hollowing so loud that he, in a measure, lost his voice.” Oliver Cowdery, who had drawn number 1, summarized the Church’s case against Curtis. Joseph Coe, who had drawn number 2, summarized the case for Brother Hodges

“but could say but few words.” Ezra restated his accusations and Curtis restated his pleas.

In other words, the case, which was not considered complicated, was conducted exactly as section 102 specifies, including the ruling of Joseph Smith, president of the council. He announced

that the charges in the declaration had been fairly sustained by good witnesses, also, that bro. H[odges] ought to have confessed when rebuked by bro Thayer also that if he had the spirit of the Lord at the meetings when he hollowed, he must have abused it, and grieved it away. All the council agreed with the decision.

Brother Hodges then confessed, acknowledging that he could now see his error and would repent.⁴²⁶

Not all high council hearings are this straightforward but, remarkably, the specific instructions set forth in section 102 continue to guide the standing high councils of the church in each stake of Zion.

Section 103

As 1834 dawned, the Saints in Missouri were “exiles in a land of liberty.”⁴²⁷ They sent Parley Pratt and Lyman Wight to seek Joseph’s counsel in Kirtland, Ohio. The messengers probably carried a letter from William Phelps informing Joseph that Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin was willing to help the Saints get their Jackson County lands back, but he would not maintain a militia to defend them indefinitely.⁴²⁸ Would eastern Saints come to the aid of Zion? Joseph counseled with his brethren, resolved that “he was going to Missouri, to assist in redeeming it,” and asked for volunteers to go with him. Sometime in this sequence of events, the Lord revealed section 103 to Joseph. It is not clear whether the revelation motivated Joseph’s actions or affirmed them after the fact.⁴²⁹

Zion depended on the Latter-day Saints. They had been driven *by* wicked people acting on their own free will. In section 103 the Lord

promises to punish them “in mine own time” (Doctrine and Covenants 103:2–3). But the Saints were driven “*because* they did not hearken altogether unto the precepts and commandments which I gave unto them” (v. 4, emphasis added). The Lord offers another chance at Zion by revealing the conditions on which the Saints can prevail against their enemies. First he states these positively (what will happen if they do, verses 5–7), then restates them negatively (what will happen if they do not, verses 8–10). Section 103 reaffirms section 58’s promise that Zion will come “after much tribulation” (v. 12). Even that promise, the Lord qualifies, is conditional. “If they pollute their inheritances,” he says of the Saints again, “they shall be thrown down” (v. 14; cross-reference Doctrine and Covenants 84:59).

Beginning in verse 15, the Lord maps out the way Zion will be reclaimed “by power.” Then the Lord evokes section 101, reminding the Saints of his promise to raise up a Moses to lead the modern Israelites. He calls on Joseph to gather an army of Israel. It could get violent, the Lord suggests, perhaps as a test to see who is willing “to lay down his life for my sake” (Doctrine and Covenants 103:27).

The Lord appoints eight recruiters, including Joseph, to gather five hundred more men to march to Zion, though he acknowledges that, because they are free agents, “men do not always do my will,” and that relatively few may respond to the call (Doctrine and Covenants 103:31–32). He forbids the undertaking unless at least one hundred men are willing to consecrate their lives to Zion. The Lord leaves the outcome in the hands of the free agents. “All victory and glory is brought to pass unto you through your diligence, faithfulness, and prayers of faith” (v. 36).

Heber Kimball described the action motivated by section 103:

Brother Joseph . . . thought it best to gather together as many of the brethren as he conveniently could, with what means they could spare to go up to Zion and render all the assistance that we could to our afflicted brethren. We gathered clothing and other necessities to carry up to our brethren and sisters who had been plundered; and

putting our horses to the wagons and taking our firelocks and ammunition, we started on our journey.⁴³⁰

They were a faltering band, to be sure, but willing to give their lives for Zion. Section 103's most significant result is the way it tested that resolve. A local newspaper reported on section 103: "In obedience to a revelation communicated to their great Prophet, Joseph Smith, three hundred young men are to 'go well armed and equipped to defend the *promised land* in Missouri.'" ⁴³¹ The revelation seems purposefully ambiguous, leaving Joseph and his followers uncertain how Zion would be redeemed. "By power," they knew, but what kind of power? Were they to take the promised land by the force of arms? Would the God of Israel lead them with "a stretched-out arm" (Doctrine and Covenants 103:17)? Would they lay down their lives? The revelation raised these questions but did not answer them, making it a suitable test of faith and sacrifice (Doctrine and Covenants 101:4–5).

The Camp of Israel, as it came to be known, literally walked in faith, the considerable faith required to kiss one's family goodbye and march with a small, poorly equipped band to an unknown encounter for the cause of Zion. As a result of section 103, the Lord let many, though not as many as he asked for, pledge their allegiance to him and his cause. Their lives were his. He let them march all the way there before explaining that the power to redeem Zion would come not from a confrontation in Missouri but from an endowment in the House of the Lord back in Kirtland (see section 105).

Section 104

The Savior told a story in Luke 16:19–31 about a rich man who "fared sumptuously" in life while a "beggar named Lazarus" waited in vain for some of the rich man's table scraps. When the two men died, angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom while the rich man went to hell.



Lazarus in the Home of the Rich Man by Crispijn van de Passe the Elder after Maerten de Vos (1589).

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments,” begging for Lazarus to relieve his suffering. Section 104 evokes that story and applies it to Latter-day Saints, but it is hard to recognize that now.⁴³²

Early manuscripts of the revelation refer to “Dives,” a proper name: “He shall with Dives lift up his eyes <in hell> being in torment.”⁴³³ The intertextual relationship of this passage and the story in Luke is obvious, but who is Dives? *Dives* is Latin for “rich, opulent, wealthy” and is the word in the Latin Vulgate Bible translated into English as *rich* in Luke 16:19: “there was a certain rich man.” In the Middle Ages, the word *dives* was adopted as the name of the rich man, and that’s how it’s used in Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.

The revelation came when the problems of the United Firm had become acute. The Firm was composed of Church leaders, including

the two bishops, and was responsible to manage the Church's two mercantile firms and its printing office. The printing office had been destroyed in Independence, Missouri, and the mercantile there had also been shut down by the mob's ultimatum. The United Firm still owed debts on these unprofitable losses, and its members were growing more indebted to Bishop Whitney's remaining mercantile in Ohio, which in turn owed its creditors. Section 103's expensive command to lead a large group of men to Missouri to aid the Saints there added to the pressure.

Joseph counseled with the other members of the United Firm. He sought and received the revelation in section 104 to address the complex financial reality. It is no overstatement to say that Joseph was pretty frustrated with Saints who could and should have relieved the Church's financial obstacles but chose not to.⁴³⁴

The Lord was pretty frustrated, too, including with some members of the United Firm whose covetousness was complicating the problem. Joseph and the members of the United Firm who were in Kirtland met on April 10, 1834, and reluctantly decided to dissolve the Firm and make its members individual stewards over its various properties. Section 104 affirmed those decisions.

All of that helps explain why the revelation emphatically sets forth the law of consecration. The Lord declares the first principle of consecration—"the earth is the Lord's" (Exodus 9:29)—repeatedly and clearly: "I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine" (Doctrine and Covenants 104:14).

The Lord's logic is potent: He made the earth; it is therefore His. He endowed mankind with agency to act on the ample, abundant earth as stewards. He decreed that the rich must share with the poor (Doctrine and Covenants 104:16). "Therefore," the next premise follows, "if any man . . . take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment" (v. 18).

Section 104 begins with a curse upon the members of the United Firm who had broken the covenant of section 82. “I the Lord am not to be mocked in these things,” he says, referring to making covenants with “feigned words” (Doctrine and Covenants 104:4–6). Covenants are serious, and section 104 announces that those who break the covenant to consecrate cannot escape the Lord’s wrath and the buffetings of Satan, as prophesied in section 82:21. So the Lord offers the members of the United Firm an opportunity to repent and consecrate in verse 10, after which he reviews the law of consecration in verses 11–18 before getting very specific in verses 19–46 about the stewardships for which he will hold each members of the Firm accountable.

Beginning in verse 47, the Lord dissolves the United Firm into two firms, one in Kirtland, Ohio, and the other in Missouri. Again, he emphasizes that this Firm, which was supposed to last, and would have, according to the terms of the covenant in section 82:20–21, has been undermined by the broken covenants of free agents, “the covenants being broken through transgression, by covetousness and feigned words” (Doctrine and Covenants 104:52).

Beginning in verse 54, the Lord reviews the principle of stewardship with emphasis on how it relates to the specific stewardships he gave to the Literary Firm in section 70 (and the United Firm’s responsibility to support the Literary Firm as revealed in sections 78 and 82). Verses 55–56 reaffirm the first premise of consecration—“the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 24:1)—with an inescapable logic that brings covenant-breaking Saints face-to-face with hypocrisy: If the Lord is not Creator and Owner of the earth, why worship him? If he is, why pretend to be “owners” of anything or to resent or resist his prerogative to distribute his resources in what he calls “mine own way” (Doctrine and Covenants 104:16)? In other words, to acknowledge the Lord at all is to accept one’s role as an accountable steward, not an unaccountable owner determined to “play-act just a little longer—risking righteousness and true happiness merely in order to be reassured about our independence.”⁴³⁵

The revelation ends by reminding the brethren that the Lord is the sovereign master who has given them agency to act and stewardships to be acted upon and that he will continue to hold them accountable. He concludes with what must have been a reassuring guarantee that his house will not be broken up (Doctrine and Covenants 104:86).

After the Lord revealed section 104, Joseph and his brethren in the United Firm at Kirtland acted on properties the Lord had assigned each of them as stewardships. They also forgave each other all debts they owed to the Firm. This relieved Joseph of paying \$1,151.31, and the six men combined forgave debts to each other totaling \$3,635.35.⁴³⁶ That did not satisfy the debts they owed other creditors, however.

Mindful of those obligations, Joseph and his brethren acted on this revelation. They did the specific things the Lord set forth as terms on which he promised to “soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, until I shall send means unto you for your deliverance” (Doctrine and Covenants 104:80–82). Joseph’s journal records humility, diligent effort, and faithful prayers for this deliverance and documents that it came as prophesied. On the day the revelation came, Joseph and other members of the Firm “united in asking the Lord” to bless Zebedee Coltrin and Jacob Myers in their efforts “to borrow for us.”

Meanwhile, donations began to pour in from consecrating Saints. Joseph and Oliver Cowdery “united in prayer” for such blessings to continue and covenanted, as the Lord was enabling them to pay their debts, they would return one-tenth of what they received “to be bestowed upon the poor of his Church, or as he shall command, and that we will be faithful over that which he has entrusted to our care.”⁴³⁷ They prayed and prayed, asking the Lord “to lift the mortgage on the farm upon which the temple was being built.”⁴³⁸

One evening they received an impression “that in a short time the Lord would arrange his providences in a merciful manner and send us assistance to deliver us from debt and bondage.”⁴³⁹ Two months later, as creditors were about to foreclose on the temple site, a converted hotel owner from New York, John Tanner, arrived in Kirtland with

\$2000, “with which amount the farm was redeemed.”⁴⁴⁰ Good for his word, the Lord had delivered the “means” as promised (Doctrine and Covenants 104:80). In the meantime, Joseph and his brethren learned to trust in the Lord, pray in faith, and be humble and diligent. The Saints in general also rose to the occasion and, though belatedly, consecrated to the building of Kirtland and its crowning temple. As a result of their offerings, the Lord poured out blessings in that temple that no amount of money could buy (see sections 109–110).

Section 105

As the Camp of Israel journeyed to Missouri in the summer of 1834, Governor Daniel Dunklin backed away from his promise to provide a militia force to assist the Saints’ return to their Jackson County land.⁴⁴¹ Meanwhile, Joseph knew very well that the camp was “altogether too small for the accomplishment of such a great enterprise.” He repeatedly urged the eastern Saints to provide men and means to reclaim Zion, but they offered too little, too late.⁴⁴²

The camp was preceded by exaggerated rumors of its size and intentions. When it arrived, local citizens were already alarmed. Several hundred of them gathered, threatening attack. Joseph assured the sheriff and militia officers that the camp had come to defend, not to attack. “We are anxious for a settlement of the difficulties existing between us,” Joseph assured them, “upon honorable and constitutional principles.”⁴⁴³

Wondering when and how, not if, Zion would be reclaimed, Joseph sought revelation to know what the Lord wanted the camp to do next. While encamped near Fishing River, he received the landmark revelation in section 105.⁴⁴⁴

“I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion,” the revelation said of the camp (Doctrine and Covenants 105:14). It assured them that their prayers were heard, their offering accepted, and that they had been “brought thus far for a trial of their faith” (v. 19).

Because too few Saints had chosen to live the law of consecration and respond to the Lord's will and Joseph's repeated invitations to send men and means to redeem Zion, the Lord postponed Zion (vv. 1–10). He said it had to wait until the elders could be endowed with the necessary power. The power, it turned out, would come through a priesthood endowment in the House of the Lord being constructed back in Kirtland (vv. 11, 33).

The revelation is a document of *détente*. It calls for proclamation of peace now and foreshadows a future role for the army of Israel in redeeming Zion. It postpones Zion in Jackson County for an ambiguous “little season” (Doctrine and Covenants 105:9). It commands Saints in the meantime to receive the anticipated endowment of power to help them gain experience, learn their duty and doctrine better, and increase in number and in holiness. In the “little season,” the Saints are to continue to purchase all the land in western Missouri but to avoid gathering in quantities perceived as threatening by neighbors.

Section 105 gives Joseph and his army orders to retreat. They were instructed to seek redress lawfully, but the war was far from over. These tactics would buy time “until the army of Israel becomes very great” while more and more land in Jackson and adjoining counties could be legally purchased (Doctrine and Covenants 105:26). Once it was, the revelation said, “I will hold the armies of Israel guiltless in taking possession of their own lands, which they have previously purchased with their moneys, and of throwing down the towers of mine enemies that may be upon them” (v. 30). Meanwhile, Latter-day Saints are to “sue for peace, not only to the people that have smitten you, but also to all people; and lift up an ensign of peace, and make a proclamation of peace unto the ends of the earth” (vv. 38–39).

Section 105 led Joseph to disband the camp and direct its members to return to their families or, if they had none, to remain in Missouri to assist the exiled Saints. The revelation reoriented Joseph Smith and the Church. Zion remained the ultimate goal, but the revelation declared that Zion would not be redeemed until the Saints were endowed with

power. Now, having submitted to the trial of their faith, the brethren could understand section 103's promise that Zion would be redeemed by power. They were to return to the House of the Lord in Kirtland, there be endowed with power on conditions of humility and faithfulness (Doctrine and Covenants 105:12), and then spread out over the globe to gather Israel. Then, when the army became very great both numerically and by obedience to the law of consecration, they would regain Zion.

Joseph organized the Saints in Missouri and appointed many of them to return to Ohio to participate in the solemn assembly. Back in Kirtland, Joseph and the Saints finished the temple and received an endowment of priesthood power (see section 110). These were means to the end of Zion, and Joseph turned his attention back to regaining the promised land. He anticipated that the "little season" (Doctrine and Covenants 105:9) leading up to Zion would end within a few months, and it could have if the Saints had done the specific things listed in verse 10.

We remain in the "little season," perhaps in part because we have not acted on section 105's specific instructions to learn obedience to the law of consecration and gain experience obeying it. Some commentators have suggested that Doctrine and Covenants 105:34 rescinds, postpones, or suspends the law of consecration, but that is not what it says. It says that the specific commands for the bishop to give the Saints inheritances of the land in Zion, and to establish a storehouse and print the scriptures there, will necessarily need to wait until after the Saints reclaim the land on which to keep those commandments (see section 57).

Section 105 charts the way to Zion by obedience to the law of consecration. It declares that "Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself" (Doctrine and Covenants 105:5). So Zion will be postponed as long as Latter-day Saints postpone fidelity to the law. Verse 34 cannot be to blame for that. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that "the law of sacrifice and the law of consecration have not

been done away with and are still in effect.”⁴⁴⁵ Just as when section 105 was given, however, “there are many who will say: Where is their God? Behold, he will deliver them in a time of trouble, otherwise we will not go up to Zion, and will keep our moneys” (vv. 8–9).

Section 106

Warren Cowdery, Oliver’s older brother, lodged and fed Joseph and his companions when they were recruiting for the Camp of Israel in the spring of 1834. Warren was sympathetic to the Saints’ suffering in Missouri, and that summer he joined the Church. There were a few dozen other converts in the area, all converted by missionaries who passed through. Warren wrote to Oliver that they could really use a permanent preacher.⁴⁴⁶ He wrote again a few weeks later saying he “had thoughts of requesting you to enquire what is the will of the Lord concerning me.”⁴⁴⁷ Joseph asked, and the Lord answered with section 106.

The revelation says the Lord wants Warren to devote all of his time to the high and holy calling of presiding over the Saints in and around Freedom, New York, and preaching the gospel in that area. In verse 3 the Lord promises Warren a living if he obeys the revelation and in verses 4–5 explains that he should serve in order to prepare himself and his neighbors for the Lord’s coming.

Beginning in verse 6, the Lord reveals the joy he experienced when Warren joined the Church and blesses him for it. The language of this verse suggests that what pleased the Lord was Warren’s willing submission to his divine authority, his kingly scepter. The Lord exposes Warren’s vanity and promises to preserve him at the Second Coming on the condition that Warren will choose to be humble. The last verse, too, is a conditional promise, a covenant between the Lord and Warren in which the Lord promises him his own kingly crown in heavenly mansions “if he continue to be a faithful witness and a light unto the church” (Doctrine and Covenants 106:8).

Warren presided over his fellow Saints in New York until he and his family moved to Kirtland early in 1836. There he served the Church as a scribe and recorder, but by 1838 he became one of many in that era who did not “continue to be a faithful witness and a light unto the church” (Doctrine and Covenants 106:8).⁴⁴⁸

Section 107

The members of the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the last dispensation were called and ordained between February and April 1835. They met frequently to receive instructions from Joseph. In their March 12 council meeting, Joseph proposed that the Apostles spend the coming summer traveling “through the Eastern States, to the Atlantic Ocean, and hold conferences in the vicinity of the several branches of the Church for the purpose of regulating all things necessary for their welfare.”⁴⁴⁹

The Apostles were all young men, the oldest ones being in their mid-thirties. They began to comprehend “that we have not realized the importance of our calling to that degree that we ought, we have been light minded and vain and in many things done wrong.” They repented, and as their mission approached, they united in prayer and asked God to “grant unto us through his Seer, a revelation of his mind and will concerning our duty the coming season even a great revelation that will enlarge our hearts, comfort us in adversity and brighten our hopes amidst the powers of Darkness.” Section 107 answered that prayer.⁴⁵⁰

According to Heber Kimball, one of the Apostles, the revelation “was given to Brother Joseph as he was instructing us, and we praised the Lord.”⁴⁵¹ In its current form, section 107 includes not only what Joseph received on that occasion but also the text of a revelation he dictated in November 1831 and other information on the duties of bishops and on the newly called Seventy. The amalgamated revelation was composed in time to be included in the 1835 Doctrine and

Covenants, and it highlights the priesthood precepts that Joseph had received to that point.⁴⁵²

Section 107 begins with a clear description of the two divisions of priesthood and the names given to them—Aaronic and Melchizedek. In 1841 Joseph taught that “All Priesthood is Melchizedek; but there are different portions or degrees of it.”⁴⁵³ Verses 18–19 declare the exalting power of the Melchizedek priesthood and verse 20 the preparatory power of the Aaronic.

Several offices are described within these divisions of priesthood and several quorums and councils composed of priesthood holders. Most notably, the revelation describes a First Presidency as a quorum of three presiding high priests who preside over all priesthood holders (Doctrine and Covenants 107:21–22). Twelve Apostles, “or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world,” form a quorum whose authority is equal to the First Presidency (v. 23). Seventy missionaries to the Gentiles form a quorum whose authority is equal to the quorum of Apostles. These quorums are to arrive at their decisions by consensus and, finally, unanimity in order to be binding. And the decision-making process is to be characterized by the Christlike attributes listed in verse 30 because they are the condition on which the Lord will endow the presiding quorums with His “knowledge” (v. 31). Verse 32 provides an appellate process in case decisions are made “in unrighteousness.”

Beginning in verse 33, section 107 describes the order and relationship of the quorums of twelve Apostles, Seventy, and stake high councils. The Apostles preside under the First Presidency and travel the globe to build and regulate the Church because they hold the keys to open doors through which the gospel is proclaimed (Doctrine and Covenants 107:35, cross-reference Doctrine and Covenants 112:16–19). The Seventy also travel the world to build and regulate the Church but under the direction of the Apostles, who call on the Seventy for assistance. Verses 35–36 explain that the presidencies of the Church in Zion (Missouri) and the stake in Kirtland, Ohio, as well as future stakes, with the twelve high priests in each location that served as

councilors to these presidencies, functioned with the same authority in their local jurisdictions as the general authorities did worldwide.

Patriarchs, or what verse 39 calls “evangelical ministers,” are to be identified by revelation to the Apostles, who have the duty of ordaining them in any area where there are a large number of Saints, which, today, generally means a stake. Before section 107 describes the next duty of the Apostles in verse 58, verses 40–57 explain the rich history and provenance of the patriarchal priesthood, as recorded in the book of Enoch, as it was handed down from Adam to his posterity. They tell how Adam gathered his righteous posterity prior to his death for a patriarchal blessing. Adam, though “bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:56).

Verse 58 transitions between the two major segments of section 107 and gives the Apostles responsibility for implementing the November 1831 revelation (generally verses 59–100) by ordaining priesthood holders and setting the Church in order under their direction. Much of the subsequent verses restate, or, more accurately, were restated by, the first part of section 107 as well as section 68, including the nature of being a bishop, a provision for a “common council of the church” headed by the presiding bishop in case the president of the Church is tried for transgression (Doctrine and Covenants 107:76–84).

Verses 85–88 describe the duties of presiding in Aaronic priesthood quorums, and beginning in verse 89, the Lord sets forth the duties of presiding in Melchizedek priesthood quorums both generally and locally. Having declared the duties of priesthood holders, quorums, and presidents clearly, the Lord finishes section 107 with a statement of accountability, a terse restatement of the oath and covenant of the priesthood that emphasizes learning and acting diligently in one’s appointed office or else being judged unworthy of that office in the holy priesthood (Doctrine and Covenants 107:99–100).

Section 107 came at a time when American culture was beginning to erode fatherhood. Noting how section 107’s exalting priesthood principles seemed to have a powerful redeeming influence on Joseph’s

own father, historian Richard Bushman went so far as to say that “in restoring priesthood, Joseph restored fatherhood.”⁴⁵⁴ Section 107 continues to do that work.

It has evoked a response from countless men to quit being “slothful” and instead learn their duty and act accordingly. It inspires many men to “stand” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:99–100). It’s a divine version of Lehi’s admonition to “arise from the dust, my sons, and be men” (2 Nephi 1:21).

Section 108

Joseph Smith was studying his Hebrew lesson on December 26, 1835, when Lyman Sherman, who was serving in the new Quorum of the Seventy, came to his home. “I have been wrought upon to make known to you my feelings and desires,” Lyman told Joseph, “and was promised that I should have a revelation which should make known my duty.” Joseph received section 108 for Lyman that day.⁴⁵⁵

When Lyman said he was “wrought upon,” he meant that he was unsettled, even disturbed. “Let your soul be at rest” the Lord counsels him, and “wait patiently until the solemn assembly . . . of my servants.” Lyman waited patiently for the meetings in the House of the Lord. There he and others received sacred ordinances and blessings in 1836 (Doctrine and Covenants 108:2, 4).

Joseph Smith taught that revelations were universally available to mankind directly, but also that there was order to revelation. Both principles are evident in section 108. The Lord revealed to Lyman personally that he should seek revelation through Joseph, presumably because Lyman’s role as a general authority and his invitation to the upcoming solemn assembly were matters to be revealed through Joseph Smith. In verse 1, the Lord forgave Lyman because he submissively acknowledged and followed the revealed order. He was a loyal, devoted Saint. In January 1839, the First Presidency called Lyman as an Apostle, but he died before being ordained.⁴⁵⁶

Section 109

What does one pray for when dedicating the first House of the Lord in the last dispensation, having never done anything like it before? Joseph thought about that question on March 26, 1836, the day before he dedicated the Kirtland temple. He met with his counselors and secretaries “to make arrangements for the solemn assembly.”⁴⁵⁷ Oliver Cowdery’s sketch book adds the detail that he assisted Joseph “in writing a prayer for the dedication of the house.”⁴⁵⁸

The next morning the House of the Lord filled to capacity with nearly a thousand Saints. An overflow meeting convened next door. The solemn assembly began at 9:00 a.m. with scripture readings, choir singing, prayer, a sermon, and the sustaining of Joseph Smith as Prophet and Seer. In the afternoon session the sustaining continued, with each quorum and the general body of the Church sustaining, in turn, the leaders of the Church.⁴⁵⁹ Another hymn followed, “after which,” Joseph’s journal says, “I offered to God the following dedication prayer.”⁴⁶⁰

Joseph read section 109 from a printed copy. It is an inspired temple prayer. It begins with thanks to God, then makes requests of him in the name of Jesus Christ. It is based heavily on section 88’s temple instructions, as well as other temple-related scriptural texts. It “sums up the Church’s concerns in 1836, bringing before the Lord each major project.”⁴⁶¹

Joseph began by asking God to accept the temple on the terms he had given in section 88, which the Saints had tried to fulfill in order to obtain the promised blessing of entering the Lord’s presence (Doctrine and Covenants 88:68; 109:4–12). Joseph prayed that all the temple worshippers would be endowed with God’s power and “that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:15). Joseph prayed, in other words, a temple prayer that the Saints would become like

their Heavenly Father by degrees of glory as they obeyed his laws and prepared to enter his presence. He prayed for what section 88 had taught him to pray for.

Joseph prayed that the Saints, “armed” or endowed with priesthood power from the temple, could go to “the ends of the earth” with the “exceedingly great and glorious tidings” of the gospel to fulfill the prophecies that declared they would (Doctrine and Covenants 109:22–23). He asked Heavenly Father to protect the Saints from their enemies (vv. 24–33). He asked Jehovah to have mercy upon the Saints and to seal the anointing ordinances that many of the priesthood brethren had received in the weeks leading up to the solemn assembly (vv. 34–35). He asked for the gifts of the Spirit to be poured out as on the biblical day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2–3). He asked the Lord to protect and empower the missionaries and postpone judgment until they had gathered the righteous (Doctrine and Covenants 109:38–40). He prayed that God’s will be done “and not ours” (v. 44).

Joseph prayed that the Saints would be delivered from the prophesied calamities. He asked Heavenly Father to remember the Saints oppressed and driven from Jackson County, Missouri, and prayed for their deliverance. He asked how long their afflictions would continue until avenged (Doctrine and Covenants 109:49). He asked for mercy “upon the wicked mob, who have driven thy people, that they may cease to spoil, that they may repent of their sins if repentance is to be found” (v. 50). He prayed for Zion.

Joseph prayed for mercy on all nations and political leaders so that the principles of individual agency captured in the Constitution of the United States would be established forever. He prayed for “all the poor, the needy, and afflicted ones of the earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:55). He prayed for an end to prejudices so that the missionaries “may gather out the righteous to build a holy city to thy name, as thou hast commanded them” (v. 58). He asked for more stakes to facilitate the gathering and growth of Zion. He asked for mercy for the Native Americans and for the Jews; indeed, he prayed for “all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth,

[to] come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed from oppression” (v. 67).

Joseph prayed for himself, reminding the Lord of his sincere effort to keep his covenants. He asked for mercy upon his family, praying that Emma and the children “may be exalted in thy presence” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:69). This is the first usage of *exalted* in the Doctrine and Covenants to refer to the fulness of salvation through temple blessings.⁴⁶² Joseph prayed for his in-laws to be converted. He prayed for the other presidents of the Church and their families. He prayed for all the Saints and their families and their sick and afflicted. He prayed, again, for “all the poor and meek of the earth,” and for the glorious Kingdom of God to fill the earth as prophesied (vv. 68–74).

Joseph prayed that the Saints would rise in the first resurrection with pure garments, “robes of righteousness,” and “crowns of glory upon our heads” to “reap eternal joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:76). Thrice repeating his petition, Joseph asked the Lord to “hear us” and accept the prayers and petitions and offerings of the Saints in building the house to his name (v. 78). He prayed for grace to enable the Saints to join the choirs surrounding God’s throne in the heavenly temple “singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb” (v. 79). “And let these, thine anointed, be clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy. Amen, and Amen” (v. 80).

Section 109 dedicated the first House of the Lord in the last dispensation and set the pattern for all subsequent solemn assemblies met for the same holy purpose. It teaches the Saints how to pray, including what to pray for and to ask according to the will of God. It teaches the doctrine and evokes the imagery of the temple, perhaps most poignantly in the idea that temple worshippers can “grow up” by degrees of glory until they become like their Heavenly Father (cross-reference section 93). That is the meaning of being exalted in God’s presence. Joseph’s temple revelations call this “fulness,” including fullness of joy. Section 109 continues the expansive work of the temple revelations in sections 76, 84, 88, and 93 and points us forward to the culminating revelation on exaltation, section 132:1–20. Section 109

invites mortals who occupy a polluted telestial planet where they cannot think of more than one thing at a time, and generally only in finite terms, to be endowed with power that will enable them to journey to the real world where God lives “enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, might, dominion, truth, justice, judgment, mercy, and an *infinity of fulness*, from everlasting to everlasting” (Doctrine and Covenants 109:77, emphasis added).⁴⁶³

Section 110

April 3, 1836, was the second-greatest Easter Sunday in history. Joseph attended an afternoon sacrament meeting in the temple at Kirtland. When it ended, he and Oliver Cowdery retreated behind the heavy curtains used to divide the room. They bowed in what Joseph’s journal describes as “solemn, but silent prayer to the Most High.” Then they beheld a series of visions.⁴⁶⁴

First, they saw and heard the Lord standing before them. Four times, in a voice like rushing water, he declared, “I am,” evoking Old Testament revelations in which he repeatedly identified himself by saying, “I am the Lord your God” (see Exodus 20 and Leviticus 19). It seems like he meant to evoke the related words of the Hebrew verb for *to be* and the name transliterated into English as “Jehovah.” In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ was declaring that he is the God who told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus Christ was affirming that he is the God of Israel, the promised Messiah.

In a powerful but understated juxtaposition of present and past verb tenses, Christ declares himself the crucified Christ who conquered death. “I am he who liveth. I am he who *was* slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:4, emphasis added). Who else can say, “*They killed me, but here I am, in Kirtland, Ohio, forgiving your sins, accepting my temple and promising to visit my people here and pour out an endowment of power from here?*”

Section 110 fulfills the Lord's conditional promise to the Saints that if they would move to Ohio and build him a holy house, he would endow them with power in it (see sections 38, 88, and 95). It fulfills section 88's great and last promise that the sanctified would come into the presence of the Lord. Indeed, Joseph promised the Saints that "on conditions of our obedience," the Savior had promised "a visit from the heavens to honor us with his own presence."⁴⁶⁵

After the vision of the Savior ended, Moses appeared to Joseph and Oliver and gave them the priesthood keys needed to gather Israel. Next Elias appeared and dispensed keys for the gospel of Abraham, "saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed" (Doctrine and Covenants 110:12). Then Elijah appeared and said that it was time to fulfill a multi-layered prophecy.

Through Malachi, the Lord prophesied, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5). Moroni paraphrased and personalized that prophecy for Joseph Smith in 1823 (see section 2). Elijah fulfilled it nearly thirteen years later, as recorded in section 110. Jews had long awaited Elijah's prophesied return and welcomed him during the Passover *Seder*. On the very day Elijah appeared in the temple, some Jews were celebrating the sacred meal with the hope that Elijah would return.

Moses showing up was pretty impressive too. "His appearance in company with Elijah offers another striking parallel between Mormon teachings and Jewish tradition, according to which Moses and Elijah would arrive together at the 'end of time.'"⁴⁶⁶

Section 110 reenacts the endowment received in the biblical account of the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–9). Joseph received priesthood keys from the heavenly messengers. He had received all the priesthood when he was ordained by Peter, James, and John years earlier (see Doctrine and Covenants 27:12), but he did not have all the keys they had, and which he needed, until after section 110. In other words, Joseph had power but not permission to send missionaries globally or to perform temple ordinances until Moses,

Elias, and Elijah brought him the keys—the permission to exercise the priesthood in those ways.

Section 110 welds dispensations together. Given on Easter and during the Passover season, the revelation links Israel's Old Testament deliverance with Christ's New Testament resurrection and affirms that Joseph Smith and the temple-building Latter-day Saints are the heirs of God's promises to the Israelite patriarchs. Christ is the Passover lamb who "was slain" and then resurrected and now appears to Joseph in Kirtland, Ohio, to approve of the Latter-day work and to commission Joseph to fulfill the work of Moses (the gathering of Israel), Elias (the gospel of Abraham), and Elijah (the sealing of families).

Joseph went to work putting the keys to use, against great opposition. Not long after receiving the keys to gather Israel from Moses, Joseph whispered in Heber Kimball's ear a mission call to Great Britain. Joseph had previously sent missionaries on short local or regional missions. Heber and his companions began the ongoing process of gathering Israel from the ends of the earth. Though oppressed by what seems like a concerted opposition that included financial collapse, widespread apostasy, an executive order driving the Saints from Missouri, and then unjust imprisonment in Liberty, Missouri, Joseph began to teach and administer the ordinances of the temple. In sum, the endowment of priesthood keys he received on the second-greatest Easter in history authorized him to begin performing temple ordinances.

Section 110 communicated temple knowledge and power. It came in the temple, behind a veil, was recorded but not preached, and acted on but not publicly explained.⁴⁶⁷ After the revelation, Joseph used the keys to gather, endow, and seal in anticipation of the Savior's second coming. Section 110 marks the restoration of temple-related power and knowledge that Moses possessed and "plainly taught" but which had been forfeited by the children of Israel (Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–25).

Section 111

The revelation of section 111 on August 6, 1836, reoriented Joseph and his companions. They had been preoccupied with paying their debts to the point of pursuing an unwise strategy. The revelation taught them to think of treasure in terms of human lives (“people . . . whom I will gather”) and to not be overly concerned about their debts (Doctrine and Covenants 111:2, 5). It is a comforting revelation.

Just as the Saints in Missouri were being asked to leave another county there, Joseph and the Saints in Ohio finished the House of the Lord in Kirtland at great expense. The resulting blessings far surpassed the value of every penny, but the process left Joseph indebted around \$13,000, with more expenses looming.

Under these circumstances Joseph took a risk. A man named Jonathan Burgess had told him that there was a lot of money buried in the cellar of a house in Salem, Massachusetts. He said he knew where it was, and that he was the only living person who did. Joseph, his brother Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon set out for Salem in July, planning to meet Burgess, locate the house, and hopefully find the treasure. They eventually found the house, but it was not for sale or rent, and they left Salem without getting access to it.⁴⁶⁸

Church historian B. H. Roberts wrote that “while in Salem the Prophet received a revelation in which the folly of this journey is sharply reproved.”⁴⁶⁹ Elder Roberts may have been overly sensitive to the emphasis antagonistic writers placed on Joseph’s youthful treasure-seeking (see Joseph Smith—History 1:55–57).⁴⁷⁰ The Lord does not sharply reprove Joseph in section 111. He says, in fact, that he is not displeased with the prophet, despite his follies, by which he meant “a weak or absurd act not highly criminal; an act which is inconsistent with the dictates of reason, or with the ordinary rules of prudence.”⁴⁷¹

In this and other revelations that respond to Joseph or other Saints being in anxious, high-pressure situations, the Lord’s response is cool and in control. Joseph is overwhelmed with debt to the point of taking

unsound risks. The Lord replies that he will gather Salem's treasures and souls for Zion in due time. Joseph and his companions responded by seeking out the place the Lord wanted them to stay, a house on Union Street not far from where Nathaniel Hawthorne was writing tales of buried treasure in Salem and the local newspaper was reporting similar rumors.⁴⁷² They visited from house to house and did some preaching. On August 19, they visited the East India Marine Society Museum, comparatively relaxed in their efforts to obey the revelation and stop being too concerned with their debts and with things they could not control in Zion and focus instead on souls both past and present.

These efforts led to some of the "treasures" the Lord mentioned in verse 10. Returning from another trip to Salem in 1841, Hyrum Smith met with Erastus Snow, gave him a copy of section 111, and urged him to go there and harvest the "many people" the Lord promised to gather in due time (Doctrine and Covenants 111:1). At great sacrifice to himself and his family, Elder Snow went. He and Benjamin Winchester started the harvest and others followed. In 1841 the *Salem Gazette* announced that "a very worthy and respectable laboring man, and his wife, were baptized by immersion in the Mormon Faith." Six months later the *Salem Register* noted that "Mormonism is advancing with a perfect rush in this city."⁴⁷³ The Church has inquired into Salem's early inhabitants too. The early records of Salem and surrounding areas have been preserved and are accessible for genealogical research leading to the sacred ordinances of the House of the Lord.

With section 111, the Lord transformed folly into treasures in his own due time.

Section 112

Do you know someone who only hears the parts of a conversation that validate their thoughts or actions? Are you that person?

Apostasy swept through the Saints in Ohio in 1837, including the Apostles. Thomas Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, tried to reconcile the struggling members of his quorum and prepare them for a mission to Great Britain under his leadership. Thomas had scheduled a July 24, 1837, meeting of the Apostles in Kirtland. When he arrived, he discovered that Joseph had already called and sent Apostles Heber Kimball and Orson Hyde to England.⁴⁷⁴ After consulting with quorum member Brigham Young, Thomas went to Joseph for counsel and reconciliation.⁴⁷⁵ In that meeting, Thomas wrote section 112 as Joseph dictated.

Aspiring and full of potential, Thomas and some of the Apostles found themselves divided, unfulfilled, and undervalued. The revelation acknowledges the Apostles' receipt of priesthood keys and the greatness of their calling, but it also implies pride, even blasphemy and apostasy among some, and the need for Thomas and his quorum to repent and then to preach repentance and baptism (Doctrine and Covenants 112:23–26).

Though he wrote the Lord's words as Joseph spoke them, Thomas Marsh heard section 112 selectively. He took the revelation to Heber Kimball's wife, Vilate, and told her that Joseph had assured him that her husband's missionary work in England would not be effective until Thomas said so.⁴⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Heber and his companions sent letters reporting their successful labors back across the Atlantic. As Heber put it, "It was all right to prepare the way for brother Marsh."⁴⁷⁷

Thomas Marsh had an arrogance problem. He heard and self-servingly interpreted the passages of the revelation that reminded him of his high position, the greatness of his calling, his possession of powerful priesthood keys, and his impressive role in spreading the gospel to the nations. He did not hear the revelation's command to be humble (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10), to "exalt not yourselves," or "rebel not against my servant Joseph" (v. 15).

Thomas returned to his home in Missouri as commanded in verse 5 and continued to serve as the Church's publisher there. In the autumn of 1838, he exalted himself and rebelled against Joseph. He

famously repudiated the decisions of Church councils to defend his wife in a domestic dispute with another sister.⁴⁷⁸ Then he signed an affidavit charging Joseph Smith with treason, leading to his incarceration. Thomas was subsequently excommunicated in March 1839 and remained estranged from the Church for nearly two decades.

In May 1857 he wrote a humble letter to, of all people, Heber Kimball, then serving in the First Presidency. “I deserve no place among you in the church as the lowest member,” Thomas confessed, “but I cannot live without a reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured.” In the same letter Marsh referred back to his apostolic commission affirmed in section 112. “A mission was laid upon me & I have never filled it and now I fear it is too late but it is filled by another I see, the Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?”⁴⁷⁹

Don’t be that person. Be humble, don’t exalt yourself, and don’t rebel against the Lord’s servants, and the Lord will lead you by the hand and answer your prayers (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10).

Section 113

Section 113 answers questions about passages of Isaiah (chapters 11 and 52). It was recorded in Joseph’s Scriptorium Book in 1838 after Joseph moved to Missouri, but Joseph had been thinking about the meaning of Isaiah 11 since 1823, when Moroni began teaching him.⁴⁸⁰

Imagine being an obscure, poorly educated “boy of no consequence,” as Joseph described his teenage self (Joseph Smith—History 1:22). Seventeen-year-old Joseph prayed for forgiveness and an angel appeared. He started quoting and paraphrasing scripture: Malachi, Joel, Acts, and all of Isaiah 11, among others. He returned again and again that night and then again the next day, repeating Isaiah 11 each time, saying it was just about to be fulfilled.

That chapter invites readers to imagine a man named Jesse as a tree. Jesse is the father of the Israelite King David in the Old Testament.

God promised David that the Messiah would occupy his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:13; Luke 1:32). Isaiah 11 is about the genealogy (families are often represented as trees) of the rightful king of Israel. It also says that someone related to Jesse and Ephraim will raise an ensign (a signal, a standard, a rally point) for the gathering of the Lord's people in the latter days.

Now imagine that you are Joseph six years later, age 24, translating what's now 2 Nephi 21, the entire text of Isaiah 11. How much of it do you understand by now? Fast-forward to age 32. It has been 15 years since Moroni first quoted Isaiah 11 to you. You know what it means by now. It has been the story of your life. You have since seen the prophecies fulfilled, received the priesthood and its keys to gather the scattered remnants of Israel "to return them to the Lord from whence they have fallen," to be their revelator, and to bring again Zion (Doctrine and Covenants 113:8–10).

It's not clear whether Joseph or someone else posed the question in Doctrine and Covenants 113:1—"Who is the stem of Jesse, the tree trunk, spoken of in Isaiah 11?" The clear answer, however, is Jesus Christ. Scholars generally interpret that entire passage to refer to the same Messianic figure, but Joseph did not. Joseph had learned to see himself as the rod or branch that would grow out from the trunk, Jesus Christ. He said so cryptically rather than explicitly. But by age 32, if not at 17, Joseph knew what Moroni knew: Joseph was "a servant in the hands of Christ . . . on whom there is laid much power, . . . the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering" of the Lord's people in the latter days (Doctrine and Covenants 113:4, 6). Section 113 also answers Elias Higbee's questions about Isaiah 52, interpreting some of the symbolism in terms of Doctrine and Covenants 86 and what Joseph had learned by revelation about priesthood, Zion, and the gathering of Israel.

The Book of Mormon identified Joseph as a descendant of Joseph of Egypt (2 Nephi 3:6–16). When Joseph's father gave him a patriarchal blessing in 1834, it said:

I bless thee with the blessings of thy fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and even the blessings of thy father Joseph, the son of Jacob. Behold, he looked after his posterity in the last days, when they should be scattered and driven by the Gentiles, and wept before the Lord: he sought diligently to know from whence the son should come who should bring forth the word of the Lord, by which they might be enlightened, and brought back to the true fold, and his eyes beheld thee, my son: his heart rejoiced and his soul was satisfied.⁴⁸¹

It is not clear exactly when Joseph understood himself to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies of a servant of Christ who would establish a gathering place for Israel and bring again Zion. The recording of section 113 in early 1838 testifies that these ideas were on his mind then. The Church was in upheaval. Joseph was trying to exercise the priesthood keys he had recently received to loose the scattered Israelites from the bands around their necks and bring them to Zion (Doctrine and Covenants 110 and 113:8–10).

Section 114

What would happen if one-third of the Apostles apostatized or were killed? Section 114 is an answer. Elder David W. Patten was second in seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles when he and his wife, Ann, moved from Kirtland, Ohio, to Far West, Missouri, in late 1836 or early 1837. With his quorum president, Thomas Marsh, David led the Saints in Missouri as several Church leaders apostatized in the early months of 1838. After Joseph arrived in Missouri that spring, David asked Joseph to seek a revelation for him. Section 114 was recorded in Joseph's Scriptorium Book, his journal for 1838.⁴⁸² That book is full of records of councils in which several of the Apostles, as well as Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, were disciplined or excommunicated from the Church.

The brief revelation instructed David and other Apostles to prepare for a mission the following spring (1839). Although the revelation

does not mention where the Apostles would serve, Apostles Heber Kimball, Orson Hyde, and their companions had sent reports of their success in Great Britain. Section 114 implies a call to the entire quorum to serve a follow-up mission to the British Isles the next year. David Patten did not live to serve that mission. He was killed on October 25, 1838, after being wounded in a conflict between Saints and Missouri militiamen. The Apostles did go to Britain, however. On July 8, just over two months following the receipt of this revelation, Joseph received another with more details of their call (see section 118).

The vacancies left by David Patten's death and the apostasy of Oliver Cowdery, the entire presidency of the Church in Missouri, and a third of the Apostles, did not remain. Rather nonchalantly, the revelation says their "bishopric," or office, can be filled by others; the Lord seems unconcerned. Section 114 shows how the Lord grants individual agency, including the potential for apostasy, without compromising the kingdom. Sad as the casualties are, the work rolls forward when someone opts out. Replacements are ready. In this case, men named John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff, among others, were called and filled in nicely (see section 118).

Section 115

In December 1836, the Missouri state legislature created Caldwell County for Latter-day Saints to settle and named Far West as its seat. Some two thousand Saints gathered to Far West, with a few thousand more in the surrounding area. On April 6, 1837, the Church's seventh anniversary, they made plans to build a temple like the one in Kirtland, Ohio. They chose a site in the center of town and came together to break ground. Then the work stopped. When Joseph visited Far West in November, a council decided to postpone temple building until the Lord revealed otherwise.⁴⁸³ A few weeks after Joseph moved to Far West in March 1838, the Lord revealed his will concerning the temple, the name of his Church, and the gathering of the Saints.

At its organization on April 6, 1830, the Church was called the “Church of Christ” (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:1). Then, beginning on May 3, 1834, Church leaders officially adopted the title, “The Church of the Latter Day Saints.” Section 115 commands that it be called “the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” a designation Joseph had already begun using.⁴⁸⁴

Shortly after the Lord revealed section 115, Thomas Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote of its content to Wilford Woodruff:

Since Br. Joseph came to this place, we have been favored with a lengthy revelation in which many important items are shown forth. First, that the Church, shall hereafter be called. ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.’ Second, it saith ‘Let the City Farwest be a holy and a consecrated land unto me, and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy: Therefore, I command you to build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my Saints, that they may worship me.’ 3d. It also teaches, that the foundation stone must be laid on the 4th of July next, and that a commencement must be made in this following season; and in one year from that time, to continue the work until it is finished. Thus we see that the Lord is more wise than men, for [some] thought to commence it long before this, but it was not the Lords time, therefore, he over threw it, and has appointed his own time. The plan is yet to be shown to the first presidency, and all the Saints, in all the world, are commanded to assist in building the house [of the Lord].⁴⁸⁵

Section 115 is an optimistic declaration. In the face of overwhelming opposition, including indebtedness, persecution, and poverty, the Lord is building Zion. The temple is all-important. Having recently received the priesthood keys to authorize temple ordinances (see section 110), Joseph is the Lord’s choice to carry Zion forward, establish its stakes, oversee its temples, and gather the faithful of all nations to be endowed with power.

The Saints gathered on July 4, 1838, to obey section 115’s command to begin work on the temple. George Robinson, Joseph’s secretary,

reported, “We therefore met on this day in Far West Mo. To make our declaration of independence, and to Lay the cornerstones of the house of the Lord agreeably to the commandment of the Lord unto us given April 26th 1838.”⁴⁸⁶ The Saints then gathered building materials so that construction could proceed on April 26, 1839, as the revelation specified. Meanwhile, according to one Missouri historian, the walls inched upwards to nearly three feet before the Saints were driven from the state by the governor’s executive order in the fall.⁴⁸⁷

In obedience to verse 18, Joseph led three expeditions in the spring of 1838 to search out locations for “stakes in the regions round about” (Doctrine and Covenants 115:18). Additional explorations were conducted throughout the summer and land surveys conducted in anticipation of more Saints arriving in the fall. On June 28, 1838, at a small grove near the home of Lyman Wight, near Spring Hill in Daviess County, Joseph Smith organized the Adam-ondi-Ahman stake, the third stake organized in the Church.

Recently the Lord impressed on President Russell M. Nelson’s mind “the importance of the name He decreed for His Church.” President Nelson taught that because of section 115 “the name of the Church is not negotiable. When the Savior clearly states what the name of His Church should be even precedes His declaration with, ‘Thus shall my church be called;’ He is serious.” Using any substitute for the revealed name minimizes or removes the Savior, and “when we *discard* the Savior’s name, we are subtly *disregarding* all that Jesus Christ did for us—even His Atonement.” That would not be wise.⁴⁸⁸

Section 116

Shortly after Joseph moved to Far West, Missouri, in March 1838, the Lord commanded him that “other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions round about” (see section 115). Anticipating that large numbers of Saints would gather to the area from Ohio, Canada, and elsewhere, Joseph and other leaders set off to explore Daviess

County “for the purpose of . . . making Locations & laying claims for the gathering of the Saints for the benefit of the poor.”⁴⁸⁹ Near Lyman Wight’s home, Joseph revealed section 116.

Orson Pratt inserted the words “Spring Hill is named by the Lord Adam-ondi-Ahman” when he included this statement in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The original entry in Joseph’s journal, made by his secretary George Robinson, reads: “Spring Hill a name appropriated by the bretheren present, But afterwards named by the mouth of [the] Lord and was called Adam Ondi Awmen, because said he it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of days shall sit as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.”⁴⁹⁰

Section 116 links the past with the future, sacred history with prophecy. Adam-ondi-Ahman is a place Adam and Eve went after being expelled from Eden’s garden. They offered sacrifices and blessed their posterity there. Joseph learned by revelation in 1831 that Adam, prior to his death, gathered his posterity in a valley called Adam-ondi-Ahman and blessed them, and they blessed him. The Lord appeared to them and promised Adam that he would preside over a multitude of nations. Adam rose and, though aged, prophesied what would happen to his posterity (Doctrine and Covenants 78:15–16 and 107:53–56).

Section 116 identifies the specific site of that impressive occasion and says that the site will host a future meeting. Adam, or the Ancient of Days, as Daniel called him, will again gather his righteous posterity there, possibly for the sacrament and stewardship meeting prophesied in section 27.

Approximately fifteen hundred Latter-day Saints settled at Adam-ondi-Ahman in 1838. They planned a temple. They laid out a stake in obedience to section 115. They obeyed the law of consecration in obedience to section 119.⁴⁹¹ They were driven from the land later that year when Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs issued an executive “extermination” order that effectively enabled Missourians to steal the land by preventing the Saints from asserting their preemption rights. Even so, because of section 116, the Church has quietly acquired and preserved the sacred site.

Section 117

To understand section 117, you need to know about a revelation to Joseph Smith that is not in the Doctrine and Covenants. It came to him on January 12, 1838. That year began grimly as dissent from within and opposition from outside the Church pressured Joseph. The Saints' banking project had failed, and Joseph was mired in debt because of his efforts to turn Kirtland, Ohio, into a stake of Zion, including crowning it with a priceless but nevertheless expensive temple. Creditors, some of whom were Joseph's avowed enemies, hounded him. Some filed suits against him. Some of his associates and friends rejected his leadership. Dissenters started their own church.

In that context, Joseph sought direction and received the revelation mentioned above, telling him, his family, and faithful saints emphatically to flee Ohio or Missouri.⁴⁹² Joseph left immediately. His family and remaining members of the First Presidency followed him. The question remained whether his "faithful friends" would also. Would they "arise with their families also and get out of this place and gather themselves together unto Zion"?

Joseph moved to Far West, Missouri, and received a series of revelations that relocated, reorganized, and reoriented the Church, whose headquarters had been in Kirtland, Ohio, since 1831. One of the new revelations, section 115, declared Far West to be the new center of gathering for the Saints.

The First Presidency expected that William Marks, a bookseller who remained in Kirtland to preside over the Saints there, and Newel Whitney, the bishop in Kirtland, would obey the revelations to leave Kirtland and come to Far West. These men dragged their feet. Whitney was Kirtland's most prosperous merchant. He owned a store and a profitable ashery situated ideally near the main intersection through town. He was torn between material prosperity and the revelations.

Almost all the faithful Kirtland Saints left for Missouri in May. When neither Whitney nor Marks had arrived in Missouri by July,

Joseph received section 117 about their situations and about what to do regarding his indebtedness and the bankruptcy of the First Presidency.

In direct and certain terms, the Lord commanded Newel Whitney and William Marks to relocate to Missouri before winter to continue serving in their respective callings, Marks to preside over the Saints in Far West and Whitney to serve as a bishop, which in the 1830s meant to manage the Church's material assets to build Zion and relieve poverty.

There is a fascinating dynamic to section 117. No other revelation, no other scriptures, in fact, use the words "saith the Lord" as often. Some Old Testament prophets use the phrase nearly as often, and sections 124 and 132 use it frequently too. But its high frequency in section 117 may tell us something about Joseph's awkward position.

Newel Whitney was his friend and benefactor. Newel and Elizabeth Ann Whitney welcomed the homeless Joseph and Emma to their own hearth when they first moved to Ohio. The Whitneys repeatedly housed Joseph and Emma, as well as Sidney Rigdon's family. Emma gave birth to Joseph III in the Whitney home. Emma and Elizabeth Ann Whitney were dear, close friends. Newel served ably as a bishop and tried to implement the law of consecration. He largely financed the United Firm as one of its charter members (see sections 72, 78, 82, and 104). He used his own connections and resources to set Joseph up as a rival storekeeper in Kirtland.⁴⁹³ Joseph loved and admired Bishop Whitney but acknowledged "the narrow mindedness of his heart and all his covetous desires that so easily besetteth him."⁴⁹⁴

The Lord speaks directly to those desires in section 117. He speaks as the Creator and Owner of the earth with whom Newel had covenanted to consecrate and serve as a bishop. He commands Newel and William to "repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me" (Doctrine and Covenants 117:4). He points a series of penetrating questions at the two men who are still deciding whether to serve God or what section 98:20 called "all their detestable things." The Lord paints a comparative picture, juxtaposing what Joseph called

Newel's "narrow mindedness," his acquisition of a tiny telestial empire in Kirtland, Ohio, with the Lord's expansiveness as the Creator. He evokes terms from the "pure language" to describe northern Missouri, where Newel is commanded to relocate and serve the Saints (*Doctrine and Covenants* 117:8; see section 116 and *Abraham* 3:13).

In verse 11, the Lord associates Newel Whitney with a Nicolatane band, by which He means to accuse him of aiding and abetting the enemy. Nicolatans were followers of Nicholas of Antioch, an early Christian called and ordained to look after the "business" of ministering to widows (*Acts* 6:1–8). Nicholas apostatized, however, and led a faction that tried to justify their covetous and lustful impulses.⁴⁹⁵ Verse 11 is the Lord's potent way of conveying to Newel how evil the Lord finds the Kirtland apostates and how near Newel is himself to committing their sins.

Consider the possibility that Joseph may have been discomfited by the Lord's straightforwardness to Bishop Whitney, who had been so generous with Joseph. There is no way to know for sure, but it may be that Joseph wanted Newel to be sure that the rebuke came from Jesus, not Joseph. That could account for the striking repetition of "saith the Lord" in section 117.

Beginning in verse 12, the Lord commends and commissions Oliver Granger with the job of redeeming the credit of the First Presidency back in Ohio before returning to Missouri as a merchant for Zion. The Lord does not promise Oliver success in this labor, only that his repeated efforts and sacrifice will be sanctifying for him and that his name will be sacredly remembered (*Doctrine and Covenants* 117:13).

Oliver Granger returned from Missouri to Kirtland to obey his part of section 117 by representing the First Presidency in selling some property and settling some debts. One Saint on the scene noted Oliver's "strict integrity" and testified that his "management in the arrangement of the unfinished business of people that have moved to the Far West, in redeeming their pledges and thereby sustaining

their integrity, has been truly praiseworthy, and has entitled him to my highest esteem and ever grateful recollection.”⁴⁹⁶ Still, “there was not much chance that he could succeed,” Elder Boyd K. Packer taught. He emphasized that section 117 does not praise Oliver for his success but for his efforts, for earnestly contending at personal sacrifice. Thus, for efforts with which Oliver himself may not have been entirely satisfied, his name and example have been remembered.⁴⁹⁷

When Oliver returned from Ohio ready to fulfill the instructions in 117:14, the First Presidency wrote him a letter of commendation.⁴⁹⁸ Meanwhile, Oliver delivered section 117, together with a letter from the First Presidency, to Newel Whitney and William Marks. The revelation and the related letter put Newel and William in the position of the rich ruler of Luke 18 who kept all of the commandments except the full measure of consecration required to enter the kingdom of God. As Jesus counseled the rich man, so he counsels Newel and William in section 117 to sell what they have, distribute unto the poor; come (in their case, literally) to Missouri, and choose “treasure in heaven” instead of the comparatively tiny though highly coveted “drop” (Doctrine and Covenants 117:8; Luke 18:18–25).

The First Presidency’s letter to Newel and William said, “You will understand the will of the Lord concerning you.”⁴⁹⁹ Knowing the revelation compelled the brethren to act—either in obedience or disobedience. They could not remain indecisive about obeying Jesus Christ. The First Presidency was confident that they would “doubtless act accordingly,” and they did. Newel Whitney and his family left Kirtland in the fall of 1838, too late to join with the Saints in Missouri (being driven from the state) but soon enough to continue serving as a bishop in Nauvoo, Illinois. William Marks obeyed also and became the Nauvoo stake president.

Section 117 powerfully motivated Newel Whitney, William Marks, and Oliver Granger. Each of them believed it was indeed a revelation from the Lord and sacrificed selfish interests in order to obey it.

Section 118

Imagine that one-third of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have just been released or excommunicated for dissent. That's what happened in 1838, along with a host of other problems. A council including Joseph, his counselors, his secretary, the bishopric in Missouri, and Thomas Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, met to seek revelation. "Show unto us thy will O Lord concerning the Twelve," Joseph prayed, and section 118 followed.⁵⁰⁰

The Lord calls for a conference to immediately fill the vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Thomas Marsh, who besides presiding over the quorum was the Church's publisher in Missouri, is to continue in that role. The other Apostles are to continue preaching. The Lord covenants with them that if they endure in their ministries meekly and humbly, he will provide for their families and give them success.

In verse 4, the Lord elaborates on a call he mentioned in section 114 for the Apostles to cross the Atlantic Ocean early in 1839 for a mission to Great Britain. This time the call is very specific: "Let them take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building spot of my house, saith the Lord" (Doctrine and Covenants 118:5). The Lord then names the men he chose to replace the fallen Apostles and commands that they be officially notified.

The next day, the Apostles who were in Far West met with the First Presidency and acted on section 118's command to officially notify the new Apostles. Sidney Rigdon wrote to Willard Richards, who was already serving in England. Willard was later ordained there by Brigham Young in 1840. Wilford Woodruff was serving in the islands off the New England coast when "I received a letter from Thomas B. Marsh, informing me of my appointment to fill the place, in the Quorum of the Twelve, of one who had fallen, and I was requested to come to Far West as soon as possible, to prepare for a mission to England in the spring."⁵⁰¹

Obeying the rest of the revelation proved to be more problematic. In October 1838, the governor of Missouri issued an executive order to the state militia to drive the Saints from the state. The Saints lost their property and retreated east to the relative safety of Illinois. There, as April 1839 approached, the Apostles and others counseled about section 118's specific instructions to leave for England from the Far West, Missouri, temple site on April 26. Quorum president Thomas Marsh had since been excommunicated for rebellion and Apostle David Patten had been killed in the Missouri violence, leaving Brigham Young as the senior Apostle.

Wilford Woodruff reported that

as the time drew nigh for the accomplishment of this work, the question arose, "What is to be done?" Here is a revelation commanding the Twelve to be in Far West on the 26th day of April, to lay the cornerstone of the Temple there; it had to be fulfilled. The Missourians had sworn by all the gods of eternity that if every other revelation given through Joseph Smith should be fulfilled, that should not be, for the day and date being given they declared it would fail. The general feeling in the Church, so far as I know, was that, under the circumstances, it was impossible to accomplish the work; and the Lord would accept the will for the deed.⁵⁰²

But Brigham Young was presiding over the Apostles, and the Lord had commanded them to leave from the Far West temple site on April 26, 1839. Anyone who wonders whether the Apostles would do so is probably not familiar with Brigham's iron resolve.

Wilford joined Brigham Young and others on a journey west over the Mississippi River and into hostile Missouri. Wilford noted that the roads were full of Saints heading east, "fleeing from Missouri to Illinois for they were driven from their houses & lands by the State." Brigham, Wilford, and their party arrived at Far West on April 25.

In his journal entry for April 26, 1839, Wilford wrote about all the obstacles between the Apostles and their revealed instructions to leave for their mission to England from the Far West temple site that day. Then Wilford wrote, "We moved forward to the building spot of the house of

the Lord in the city of far west & held a council & fulfilled the revelation & commandment.”

Wilford noted that they also fulfilled section 115’s command to begin to lay the foundation for the temple on that day. They rolled a large stone to the southeast corner of the temple site (Doctrine and Covenants 115:11). Wilford sat on that stone as the Apostles led by Brigham Young ordained him an Apostle. George A. Smith was also ordained to replace Thomas Marsh. Each of the Apostles prayed, and Alpheus Cutler placed the cornerstone before, as Wilford put it, “in consequence of the peculiar situation of the Saints he thought it wisdom to adjourn until some future time when the Lord should open the way expressing his determination then to proceed with the building.”⁵⁰³

A few days later, William Phelps, who had apostatized and remained in Missouri, reported the event to his wife in a mocking, critical tone. “One of the least of all the forcible tricks of the Mormons, was performed in the morning of the 26th April, in secret darkness about three o clock in the Morning.” He said they

assembled at the big house cellar, and laid one huge stone, in addition to those already there, to fulfill the revelation given the 26th of April one year ago. I think they strained at a camel and swallowed a gnat. . . . I have also learned that, at the sham meeting at the big house cellar, there not being a quorum of the old “Twelve” present, they had recourse to “shift,” and ordained Wilford Woodruff, and Geo. Smith as apostles, which with HC Kimball Orson Pratt, Brigham Young (old ones) and John E Page and John Taylor (new ones), made seven. They prayed (in vain) sung Adam ondi Ahmah, and closed. There were others there. This looks a little like choosing or loving darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

Phelps continued with profound irony,

You know I think as much of pure religion as ever, but this foolish mocking disgusts me and all decent people. Force the fulfillment of Jo’s revelation! You might as well damn the waters of Missouri River with a lime riddle. It was undoubtedly done to strengthen the faith of weak members, and for effect abroad: as I understand the Twelve are

a going to try their luck again among the nations: It's really a pity they cannot get a Looking Glass large enough to see the saw log in their own eyes while they are endeavoring to pull the slab out of the neighboring nations. All I can say is "Physician save thyself"! Whether you laugh or cry, I have one thing to confess, and that is: I never was so lonesome before.⁵⁰⁴

While William Phelps pitied himself and mocked the Apostles, they turned east and continued to obey section 118. They returned to Illinois to make final preparations for their mission to Great Britain. They left their families sick and destitute and, some suffering from malaria, struggled to make their way to England. There they experienced an unprecedented harvest, converting thousands of souls.

Section 119

Though it is clearly worded and consistent with Joseph's earlier revelations, section 119 may be his most misunderstood revelation. That is because everyone reads the scriptures through a figurative pair of glasses. The glasses are made of presuppositions. The glasses can't be seen or felt, but they distort what is seen and understood. The 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants included a heading for section 119. The heading represents the glasses through which many Saints see section 119. It is largely accurate, but it includes two sentences that aren't. While many similar errors were corrected in 2013, that one wasn't.

To see how this works, read the revelation in section 119 without looking at the heading. Forget everything you think you know about tithing and just read the revelation. Note that it begins with a direct restatement of the law of consecration (Doctrine and Covenants 42:33, 54). Then verse 2 states the reasons for the revelation, and they are the same reasons for the law of consecration and related revelations given in sections 51, 70, 72, 78, 82, 104, and 105. "This," section 119 says, "is the beginning of the tithing of my people."

That is the first of the revelation's three uses of *tithing* or *tithed*. All of them refer to the voluntary offering of surplus property. "And after that, those who have thus been tithed," says verse 4, "shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually." Clearly tithing is not a lesser or lower law to be replaced someday but "a standing law unto them forever" and applicable to all Saints everywhere (Doctrine and Covenants 119:4, 7). The revelation ends with a covenant: "If my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you" (v. 6).

So why do Saints tell each other the story that the law of consecration is a higher law and tithing is a lower law? The Doctrine and Covenants doesn't say that. There's not enough space here to explain this misunderstanding completely, but the heading plays a role in it. There are erroneous sentences in the heading that conflict with the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants: "*The Lord had previously given to the Church the law of consecration and stewardship of property, which members (chiefly the leading elders) entered into by a covenant that was to be everlasting. Because of failure on the part of many to abide by the covenant, the Lord withdrew it for a time, and gave instead the law of tithing to the whole Church*" (emphasis in original). These sentences conflate two separate, distinct covenants into one, then mistakenly assert that section 119 is *instead* of that covenant.

The first covenant is the one all Saints are to make and keep to live the law of consecration in section 42. Saints were expected, not coerced, to live this law. All could. Some would and some would not (see sections 51, 66, 85, and 90).

The covenant for all Latter-day Saints to keep the law of consecration is different from the covenant made by the leading elders to own, administer, and share the Church's assets according to the law of consecration. That second covenant led to the United Firm, better known as the United Order, which existed from 1832 to 1834 and involved a few Church leaders, never the general membership of the Church

(see sections 78, 82, and 104). The Lord declared the United Firm's covenant broken and therefore void in section 104:4–9. He then dismantled the United Firm in section 104 but never repealed the law of consecration.

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that that law of consecration was not rescinded and is “still in effect.”⁵⁰⁵ So how could section 119 be *instead* of the law of consecration? The revelation doesn't say tithing is instead of consecration. It simply restates *the* law and adds clarification and perhaps even a level of greater obligation. It is best understood as part of, not instead of, the law of consecration. Section 119 is God's law and covenant to be kept or rejected by each individual's own free will.

Reading the revelation through broken glasses causes us to distort it to mean that tithing is a lower law that is going away someday. Seeing the revelation through the lenses of its original context shows us how it fits in the law of consecration, “a standing law unto them forever,” and that obedience to it is prerequisite to Zion (Doctrine and Covenants 119:4).

Section 120

Section 119 created a need to account for the tithes that would be paid as a result of the revelation. Section 120 was revealed to solved that problem. It says that the time has come for the Lord to appoint the First Presidency, bishopric, and high council as a standing council to dispose of the tithes “by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord.”⁵⁰⁶

Less than a month passed before this newly revealed council met in Far West, Missouri, to obey the revelation, that is, to “take into consideration the disposing of the publick properties in the hands of the Bishop, in Zion, for the people of Zion have commenced liberally to consecrate agreeably to the revelations, and commandments of the Great I Am of their surplus properties.” The council agreed that the First Presidency should keep all the property they needed “and the

remainder be put into the hands of the Bishop or Bishops, agreeably to the commandments, and revelations.”⁵⁰⁷

Section 120 created the council that continues to guide the Church’s financial and property management and declared the principle of revelation by which they do so. The council has a different composition today, however. When section 120 was revealed, Far West was Church headquarters, and its bishop and high council served with the First Presidency on the council. Over the years the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles grew into a governing body of the Church and a Presiding Bishopric was formed. Today, in other words, the council is composed of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric.⁵⁰⁸

There have been critics of this council for a long time. Their perspective is always from the outside. Speaking from the inside, with nearly two decades as a member of this council, Elder Robert D. Hales said, “It is remarkable to witness this council heed the Lord’s voice. Each member is aware of and participates in all the council’s decisions. No decision is made until the council is unanimous. All tithing funds are spent for the purposes of the Church.” Elder Hales continued, “I bear my testimony of the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes. . . . Without exception, the tithing funds of this Church have been used for His purposes.”⁵⁰⁹

Section 121

Section 121 puts a counterintuitive twist on the age-old problem of suffering and power. If God is benevolent and powerful, why do people suffer?

The problem becomes acute for those who assume that God should exercise his benevolence and power by preventing all suffering. That is apparently incongruous with his plan, in which Jesus Christ, the most innocent and loving being, suffered more than anyone and everyone



Liberty Jail in its deteriorating state in 1888. On the roof is Andrew Jenson, to the right is Edward Stevenson, to the left is Joseph S. Black. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays. LDS Church Archives.

else. Joseph internalized these lessons in a tiny, squalid, freezing cell near the Missouri River. It happened like this.

The Missouri governor issued an order for the militia to expel Latter-day Saints, who were abused, raped, and compelled to give up their property as citizen soldiers shot their livestock and pillaged their homes. General Lucas arrested Joseph. Emma and her children clung to Joseph as a guard cursed at six-year-old Joseph III and threatened to kill him if he didn't back off.⁵¹⁰ Joseph was carted off to Richmond, Missouri, where he wrote to Emma, as positively as he could, that he was shackled to his brethren "in chains as well as in the cords of everlasting love."⁵¹¹

On December 1, 1838, Joseph Smith and five of his brethren were committed to jail in Liberty, Missouri, having been charged with

treason against the state in a preliminary hearing. A committee of the Missouri legislature later concluded that the one-sided hearing was “not of the character which should be desired for the basis of a fair and candid investigation.”⁵¹² Joseph’s brother Hyrum called it a “pretended court” after the judge said “there was no law for us, nor for the ‘Mormons’ in the state of Missouri.”⁵¹³

Four winter months and five days later, Joseph and his brethren still languished in jail at Liberty, Missouri, a cramped dungeon without beds or a bathroom, awaiting trial on a capital charge without hope for due process. Meanwhile, the Saints had been driven mid-winter by a mob under the guise of official orders from the governor, aided and abetted by a host of apostates.

Indeed, many of Joseph’s most trusted and stalwart friends had forsaken him. Most of the Book of Mormon witnesses, still certain of their testimony, turned against him. Some of the Apostles were antagonistic, including Thomas Marsh and Orson Hyde, who had said it was treasonous for Joseph to prophecy the coming kingdom of God (see section 65). William Phelps turned his powerful pen against Joseph. Former Apostle William McLellin, who had no doubts that Joseph was a prophet (see section 66), plundered the Saints and expressed his desire to beat Joseph.⁵¹⁴

Some of the Saints lost all faith “that God has been our leader.” They had hoped for deliverance, but none came.⁵¹⁵ Even Sidney Rigdon, counselor in the First Presidency and fellow sufferer in jail, resented God for not using his power to spare the Saints from suffering. “If ever there was a moment to give up the cause, this was it,” Richard Bushman wrote.

Joseph puzzled over the Saints’ suffering and God’s power. Why had they been defeated? He never questioned his own revelations, never doubted the validity of the commandments. He did not wonder if he had been mistaken in sending the Saints to Missouri or requiring them to gather. He questioned God’s disappearance. Where was he when the Saints needed him?⁵¹⁶

Joseph put these questions to the Lord in a March 1839 letter to the Saints. Sections 121, 122, and 123 all come from this one profound letter.⁵¹⁷ Section 121:1–6 follows Joseph’s description of the jail as “hell surrounded with demons.” Even more concerning to him were the widows and orphans of the men murdered at Hawn’s Mill and “the unrelenting hand” of oppression. It is about the duration of these injustices that Joseph inquired “how long . . . yea, O Lord, how long?” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3).

Joseph reviewed the actions of apostates, judges, lawyers, the governor, “and the one sided rascally proceedings of the Legislature” before saying how letters from Emma, his brother, and Bishop Partridge had warmed his heart. “And when the hart is sufficiently contrite,” his letter says, “then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers,” followed by the answer to his prayer in verses 7–25.

The Lord’s answer to “how long” was “a small moment,” accompanied by a curse on Joseph’s enemies and the identification of their real motive—personal sinfulness (Doctrine and Covenants 121:17). The Lord severs them “from the ordinances of mine house” and promises just punishments for their sins (v. 20). Verses 26–33 are the promised blessings of a covenant, the terms and conditions of which precede the promises but were not included in the canonized part of Joseph’s letter:

Let honesty and sobriety, and cander and solemnity, and virtue, and pureness, and meekness, and simplicity, Crown our heads in every place, and in fine becum as little Children without malice guile or Hypocrisy: and now Bretheren after your tribulations *if* you do these things, and exercise fervent prayer, and faith in the sight of God, *then* God will grant the exalting blessings promised in verses 26–33. [emphasis added]

Verses 34–46 make the most sense in the context of consecration. The portion of the letter preceding those verses cautions against “any among you who aspire after their own aggrandizement and seek their own oppulance while their brethren are groning in poverty and are under sore trials.” Then Joseph explains why many are called but few

are chosen: “Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world and aspire to the honors of men that they do not learn this one lesson,” that a person who hides their sins, gratifies pride, has vain ambition, or exploits the weak and poor cannot have priesthood.

Sadly, most mortals choose not to submit to the Savior’s power to change the nature and disposition. Most mortals oppress their neighbors as soon as they can. This is forbidden by the gospel generally and by section 121 specifically. It prescribes the antidote of God-like qualities: persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, pure love, and knowledge. Reproof should come at precisely the right time, which is “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost,” and removing the problem should be done with sharpness, like a surgeon’s scalpel, leaving as little scar tissue and collateral damage as possible and “showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:43).

That is God’s way of governing—righteous dominion. Verses 45–46 sum how it works. Those who choose charity over covetousness and virtue over self-interest inherit “an everlasting dominion” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:46). Those who choose to share and not coerce when they have a little power are the only ones God trusts with more power. The maxim is wrong: absolute power does not corrupt absolutely. Rather, a little power, when misused, leads to the loss of priesthood, while faithfulness to priesthood accumulates more power—gently, like dew from heaven (v. 45).

What an ironic place was the jail at Liberty. Joseph was powerless—except profoundly not. He was the only person on earth at the time in full possession of the priesthood keys restored by ministering angels. The powerful people who oppressed him—former friends and arch foes—were about to become powerless. Perhaps because it was a place of suffering, Liberty (a microcosm of mortality) was an ideal environment in which to internalize the truth that mortals who overcome their nature and choose to wield power in the service of others as God does, with sacrifice and suffering, won’t have to compel anyone or anything, and yet their kingdom will grow forever.

Section 122

Section 122 immediately follows the last part of section 121 in Joseph's March 20, 1839, letter from Liberty Jail.⁵¹⁸ Several of the statements in it refer to his personal experiences. Verses 6–7, for example, evoke the awful events in Far West, Missouri, the preceding fall as Joseph was wrenched from his family, sentenced to execution, *later* charged with treason, and confined in the “pit”—the underground cell in Liberty, Missouri.

The revelation compounds Joseph's suffering in heavy *if* statements that build to an unbearable crescendo, as if they were rocks piling on his body or lashes across his bare back. The Lord does all that to make two profound points, communicated in what must have been, especially juxtaposed with what proceeded it, a reassuring voice of a loving Father: “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”

The revelation made the second point to Joseph by posing the profound question of verse 8: “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” The “therefore what?” follows as Joseph is encouraged to hold on and fear not and is promised the priesthood forever and life until his work on earth is finished.

Joseph wanted Emma to be first to read his long letter, and he pled with her in a letter the following day to have it copied immediately and circulated to the leaders of the Church and his parents. Though the letter from which sections 121–23 derives exhibited the limits of Joseph's schooling, he regarded it as the vessel of some of the most profound revelation he received and some of the best counsel he ever gave. The parts that became sections 121 and 122 reoriented and motivated Joseph, have had a similar effect on many others, and continue to be a primary source of Latter-day Saint resolve to this day to keep the faith in the face of adversity.

In a dark, confined space he was powerless to escape, Joseph pled “how long” with an implied “why?” From his timeless and infinite

vantage, the Lord answered “a small moment” and because “all these things shall give thee experience” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:7; 122:7). These words “turned the raw Missouri experience into a theology of suffering” that made sense from God’s perspective. Liberty Jail, in effect, served Joseph as a microcosm of life in a telestial world, a dog-eat-dog sphere of power-seeking, aspiration, materialism, and unrighteous dominion. There, in that hell, Joseph was powerless. Or was he?

B. H. Roberts called the jail

more temple than prison, so long as the Prophet was there. It was a place of meditation and prayer. A temple, first of all, is a place of prayer; and prayer is communion with God. It is the “infinite in man seeking the infinite in God.” Where they find each other, there is holy sanctuary—a temple. Joseph Smith sought God in this rude prison, and found him.⁵¹⁹

As a result, sections 121–122 endowed Joseph with power. While the bounds of his enemies were set, Joseph would always have the priesthood (Doctrine and Covenants 122:9). His oppressors, those who used their supposed power and influence to hurt, take, abuse, insult, misrepresent, and compel would be cursed, lose their posterity, and be severed from the temple and, thus, confidence in the presence of God. It was they who were powerless to “hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:33). The powerful on earth would, in a small moment, be impotent while Joseph and the faithful would reign with gentleness, meekness, and by love unfeigned forever and ever (vv. 41, 46).

These divine explanations helped Joseph see as if from God’s eyes that things were not as they seemed. Section 122 made sense of suffering. Mankind was on earth to gain “experience.” “The word ‘experience’ suggested that life was a passage. The enduring human personality was being tested. Experience instructed. Life was not just a place to shed one’s sins but a place to deepen comprehension by descending below them all.” In sum, sections 121–22 taught Joseph

that “the Missouri tribulations were a training ground” for godhood.⁵²⁰ Hell, it turned out, could serve as a temple, a place to be endowed with God’s heart and mind in anticipation of assuming His “everlasting dominion” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:46).

Joseph came to understand this because of his “experience” in Liberty. He wrote from that stinking but sacred space, “It seems to me that my heart will always be more tender after this than ever it was before.” He recognized that trials “give us that knowledge to understand the minds of the Ancients,” like Abraham, who typified the Savior’s unequaled unjust suffering. “For my part,” Joseph wrote, “I think I never could have felt as I now do if I had not suffered the wrongs that I have suffered.”⁵²¹

Renewed certainty resulted from these revelations. The day after he dictated them, Joseph still did not know how long he would be in jail, but he wrote to Emma that since he knew “for a certainty of eternal things, if the heavens linger it is nothing to me.”⁵²² After he finally escaped from Missouri a few weeks later, Joseph seemed the most determined soul on earth. He knew what he had to do and nothing could stop him. His days were not only known but numbered, and with them he pursued a course to mentor the Apostles and give them the priesthood keys he had received from ministering angels, build a temple, and begin offering the ordinances of exaltation to the faithful.

As a result of these revelations, Joseph emerged from his darkest unbroken, undaunted, and with his eyes fixed on eternity. So long as he saw the world through section 122, he could press forward, coping with any experience, come what may.

Section 123

Section 123 is in Joseph’s voice, not the Lord’s. It comes from a long letter composed in jail at Liberty, Missouri. It does not claim to be revelation, but it was nevertheless valuable counsel from the Prophet

for the Saints to document the injustices and atrocities they endured in Missouri in order to assert their First Amendment rights to petition the government to redress grievances.

In section 123 Joseph repeatedly says that documenting what happened to the Saints in Missouri is “an imperative duty” they owed to God, angels, each other, those who were murdered, the rising generation, “and to all the pure in heart” (Doctrine and Covenants 123:7, 9, 11). In powerful, metaphor-rich language, Joseph and his brethren urge the Saints to attend to this important matter. Joseph was not certain that the government would respond to the petitions, but he knew the Lord required the Saints to do all in their power, including this “last effort” to obtain justice, before He would “send forth the power of his mighty arm” (v. 6).

In response to Joseph’s suggestion, 678 Latter-day Saints wrote or dictated sworn statements documenting the abuses they suffered and property they lost in Missouri. In the fall of 1839, having escaped from Missouri, Joseph took the documents to the president of the United States. He literally knocked on the door of the White House and asked to see Martin Van Buren, whom Joseph had supported. Joseph presented the petitions and Van Buren, facing an election year, responded, “What can I do? I can do nothing for you! If I do anything, I shall come in contact with the whole state of Missouri.” Joseph turned to the Illinois congressional delegation for help in appealing to Congress. President Martin Van Buren pled impotence on the federalist doctrine of limited powers. He could not constitutionally intervene in a state matter, he said. The Senate referred the case to the Judiciary Committee, which, with pressure from Missouri, arrived at the same conclusion, knowing that the Saints had been driven for their religion. There would be no justice, no redress of grievances or guarantees of the free exercise of religious conscience.

The documentation of abuses “did have a long term effect on Mormonism’s public image. . . . The accounts of the persecutions turned the expulsion from Missouri into an asset in the battle for popular support.” The redress petitions were turned over to the Library of

Congress, where they remain to this day as a testimony of “diabolical rascality and nefarious and murderous impositions that have been practiced upon this people” (Doctrine and Covenants 123:5).⁵²³

Section 124

Joseph emerged from the depressing jail in Liberty, Missouri, with an undaunted spirit. He had known since January 1838 that he could only count on living for five more years and that his work was far from finished. So Joseph was laser-focused on preparing the Saints for the covenants and ordinances of the holy temple.

He led the Saints in purchasing land along the Mississippi River in the state of Illinois, including a townsite called Commerce. Joseph renamed it Nauvoo, the Hebrew word translated as “beautiful” in Isaiah 52:7. In October 1839 Joseph called for all Saints to gather there and build a holy city. Then Joseph prayed for and received a momentous revelation, the longest in the Doctrine and Covenants—section 124.

Coming shortly after a presidential election and just days before Nauvoo’s first city election, section 124 begins by expressing the Lord’s approval of Joseph’s efforts. Then, “that I might show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth,” the Lord commands Joseph to immediately write a proclamation “to all the kings of the world . . . to the honorable president-elect,” William Harrison, “and the high-minded governors of the nation in which you live.” Joseph was to write “in the spirit of meekness and by the power of the Holy Ghost” and declare the will of Christ to the world’s political authorities. The Lord says nothing of the will of *the people* but declares his will to “my people” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:10, 11, 21, 29, 40, 45, 84, 92, and 104). In the United States, the voice of the people was the voice of God. In Nauvoo, the Lord spoke directly through Joseph Smith.

The command for all the Saints to consecrate to the building of the temple begins with verse 25. The rationale for doing so follows, beginning in verse 28: “For there is not a place found on earth that he

may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood.” The Lord grants the Saints sufficient time to consecrate and build the temple as a sacred location for baptisms and the other sacred ordinances, after which he will not accept their ordinances, “for therein,” meaning the temple, “are the keys of holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:34, cross-reference section 128).

The Lord continues his rationale for building the temple through verse 41, which is a restatement of the promise to reveal fullness in the temple. Some have misread verses 31–34 in self-serving ways. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that verse 32’s condition (“and if ye do not these things at the end of the appointment,” that is, the period for building the temple) “does not mean ‘if ye do not build a temple at the *end* of the appointment,’ as our critics infer it does, but it refers to the ordinances that were to be performed in the temple.” President Smith clarified that if the Saints failed to perform the temple ordinances for the dead, then they would be rejected by the Lord per section 124:32.⁵²⁴

President Boyd K. Packer explained the revelation’s references to washing and anointing ordinances in verses 37–39.

The ordinances of washing and anointing are referred to often in the temple as initiatory ordinances. It will be sufficient for our purposes to say only the following: Associated with the endowment are washings and anointing—mostly symbolic in nature, but promising definite, immediate blessings as well as future blessings. . . . In connection with these ordinances, in the temple you will be officially clothed in the garment and promised marvelous blessings in connection with it.⁵²⁵

Covenants and specific instructions follow the verses on temple ordinances, including the spot on which to build and the terms and conditions on which the Lord will make it holy and on which the Saints will be able to remain in Nauvoo to see it finished. These covenants hinge on the inseparable doctrines of individual agency and accountability and culminate in verses 47–48:

If you build a house to my name, and do not the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfill the promises which ye expect at my hand, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads.

In verses 49–54, the Lord explains accountability in terms of agency. That is, he holds accountable those who have power to determine the outcomes he commands. Following that principle, verse 55 is another statement of rationale for building the temple in Nauvoo.

Nauvoo rose like a fortress on a hill, up from a swampy lowland along the Mississippi. Believers streamed into Illinois from Canada, the British Isles, and the Atlantic Seaboard. The population of Nauvoo rose quickly to twelve thousand because of this revelation and Joseph's counsel to gather and build Zion. Joseph began keeping the Book of the Law of the Lord with section 124, where he recorded it. The revelation oriented his life and the Church's. It gave Joseph the rest of his life's work, and he entered the names of those who consecrated to the temple in the book as well. At April conference in 1841 the revelation was read, and then Joseph rose and urged the Saints to obey it by building the temple and the Nauvoo House.⁵²⁶

Section 124 reorganized the Church, setting in order its presiding priesthood quorums, replacing apostates and filling the vacancies left by brethren who had passed away. The Saints acted on the Lord's commands to sustain those called to the priesthood quorums, which they did at April conference in 1841, as well as building offices for them in the temple.

Section 124 reoriented the Church by giving it specific work to do, most importantly in building the Nauvoo Temple as a means to the end of receiving the ultimate blessings—the fulness of priesthood ordinances. Knowing that his days were numbered, Joseph began giving the ordinances in May 1842 to a select few, fifty-seven brothers and sisters in all, even before the temple was finished. He sealed couples and confirmed the fulness of priesthood ordinances on a few, according to section 132. Joseph was killed in June 1844, before the

temple was ready for ordinances, but in March of that year he had commissioned the Apostles to carry on the work and given them all the necessary priesthood keys to do so. Beginning in December 1845, the Apostles and others who had been endowed by Joseph officiated in the temple ordinances for 5,600 Saints.

The temple blessings thus resulting from section 124 are inestimable. Speaking of temples, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared, “These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology.”⁵²⁷

Section 125

From the confines of a jail cell in Liberty, Missouri, Joseph wrote to Bishop Partridge in Illinois that the Saints could buy land in Iowa Territory for \$2 per acre over twenty years with no money down, and the Saints made a deal for the land.

Joseph escaped from Missouri and joined the Saints in Illinois a few weeks later. He purchased land on a peninsula pushing into the Mississippi River across from the Saints’ Iowa land and named it Nauvoo. The Illinois land was comparatively expensive. Joseph hoped that the Church could buy it with consecrated funds and offer lots to the poor at prices they could afford, but the offerings were insufficient. It became clear that the Church would have to sell lots in order to pay its mortgage. So Joseph urged Saints in outlying areas to gather to Nauvoo and help pay for the land. Saints across the river wondered if that applied to them. Joseph sought and received section 125 to answer their question.

The Lord’s will, declared in section 125, is for the Saints to build a city in Iowa across from Nauvoo and to call it Zarahemla. The Saints were to gather from everywhere else and settle there, in nearby Nashville, Iowa Territory, or across the river in Nauvoo. As usual, there is an explicit rationale in this revelation. The Lord gives a reason why

the Saints should do His will: “That they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come” (Doctrine and Covenants 135:2).

Saints moved as a result of section 125. It was read to the Saints at general conference on April 6, 1841. “Many of the brethren immediately made preparations for moving,” and came as soon as their planting was done.⁵²⁸ Alanson Ripley reported that “Joseph said it was the will of the Lord the brethren in general . . . should move in and about the city Zerehemla with all convenient speed which the saints are willing to do because it is the will of the Lord.”⁵²⁹

Section 126

Section 126 put Brigham Young in position to lead when Joseph’s mission was finished. Brigham answered the Lord’s call to serve in England (see section 118). Both he and his family were sick and homeless when Brigham left Nauvoo in the fall of 1839. While Brigham was in England, section 124 formalized his call as president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Doctrine and Covenants 124:127). Then, having converted hundreds, he returned to Nauvoo in July 1841 and found his family living in a small, unfinished cabin. A week later the Lord gave section 126 to Joseph.⁵³⁰

Joseph communicated the revelation to Brigham with his own affectionate introduction to his “Dear and well-beloved brother.” The Lord, having accepted Brigham’s offering in laborious missions away from home, no longer requires him to leave his family. Instead, the Lord commands Brigham to send the Lord’s word abroad and look to the care of his family “henceforth and forever” (Doctrine and Covenants 126:3).

Brigham set to work to care for his family. He chinked the cracks in the cabin, planted an orchard, built a cellar, and got up a garden to meet their needs. Joseph gave Brigham a few weeks and then assigned him to lead the Apostles in taking care “of the business of the church in Nauvoo,” including overseeing missionary work (in obedience to

section 126's command to "send my word abroad"), the gathering of converts, and consecration.⁵³¹ This represented a shift in the Apostles' responsibility. Joseph had often kept them at arm's length since their calling in 1835, testing them with tough assignments. Some of Brigham's fellow Apostles apostatized under that pressure. Brigham did everything the Lord asked of him. He had marched into hostile Missouri to obey a revelation. Then, sick and impoverished, he forsook everything else dear to preach the gospel in England.

As a result of section 126, Brigham remained near Joseph for the Prophet's few remaining years, learning and receiving the temple ordinances and ultimately also the keys angels had conferred on Joseph.

Section 127

In May 1838 in the Church's *Elders' Journal*, Joseph published questions he was frequently asked, including some provocative ones like "Do Mormons baptize in the name of Jo Smith?"⁵³² In July he published the answers, including some snarky ones like, "No, but if they did, it would be as valid as the baptism administered by the sectarian priests."⁵³³

Maybe the most important Q&A was this one:

If the Mormon doctrine is true what has become of all those who had died since the days of the apostles. Answer: All those who have not had an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and being administered to by an inspired man in the flesh, must have it hereafter, before they can finally be judged.

Two years later, on a Nauvoo summer day in 1840, at the funeral of Seymour Brunson, Joseph Smith had more to say about that. He read most of 1 Corinthians 15, in which Paul refers to the early Christian practice of being baptized for the dead in anticipation of the resurrection "and remarked that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought glad tidings of great joy." Noticing Jane Neyman in the congregation,

whose teenage son Cyrus had died without baptism, Joseph gave her the good news “that people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and that the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God.” It was “a very beautiful discourse.”⁵³⁴

Joseph taught baptism for the dead again at October conference in 1840, as the Saints eagerly performed the sacred ordinance in the Mississippi River in lieu of a temple baptismal font.⁵³⁵ One witness wrote that “during the conference there were some times from eight to ten elders in the river at a time baptizing.”⁵³⁶ But in their understandable zeal they were without knowledge. No one recorded the ordinances. A year later Joseph taught the doctrine in conference again and announced, as section 124 had declared in the meantime, that the Lord would no longer accept baptisms for the dead performed outside the temple (Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–35).⁵³⁷ The Saints thus pushed the temple toward completion, and just over a year later, in November 1841, they performed the first baptisms for the dead in the unfinished but rising Nauvoo Temple.

In the midst of teaching the temple ordinances to the Saints, Joseph was charged with masterminding an attempted murder of former Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs. There was no evidence for the charge, and Joseph regarded it as another attempt by his enemies to get him to Missouri and lynch him. He hid instead of subjecting himself to that. Joseph was finally arrested in August 1842 but then released, and the charges were finally dismissed a few months later.

Meanwhile, as Joseph moved from house to house in and around Nauvoo, protected by friends, he pondered the newly restored doctrines of the temple. There was something missing. He sought revelation while he was hiding and learned more about the nature of the ordinances. He looked for the first safe opportunity to teach the Saints. In August he taught the Relief Society that “all persons baptiz’d for the dead must have a Recorder present, that he may be an eye-witness to testify of it. It will be necessary in the grand Council, that these things be testified.”⁵³⁸ The next day Joseph dictated a letter

to the Saints, section 127, in which he shared some of what he had recently learned.

Joseph was nostalgic and melancholy as he hid from extradition officers bent on delivering him to a state in which there was no due process of law for Latter-day Saints. In section 127 he rehearses his eventful life, alternating between frustration at his enemies, the hostility that oppressed him, evidences of God's deliverance, and hope for a final triumph. Mixed in are two revelations, the first in verse 4 and the second in verses 6–9, before Joseph closes with a lament that he is unable to teach the Saints in person and a prayer for their salvation.

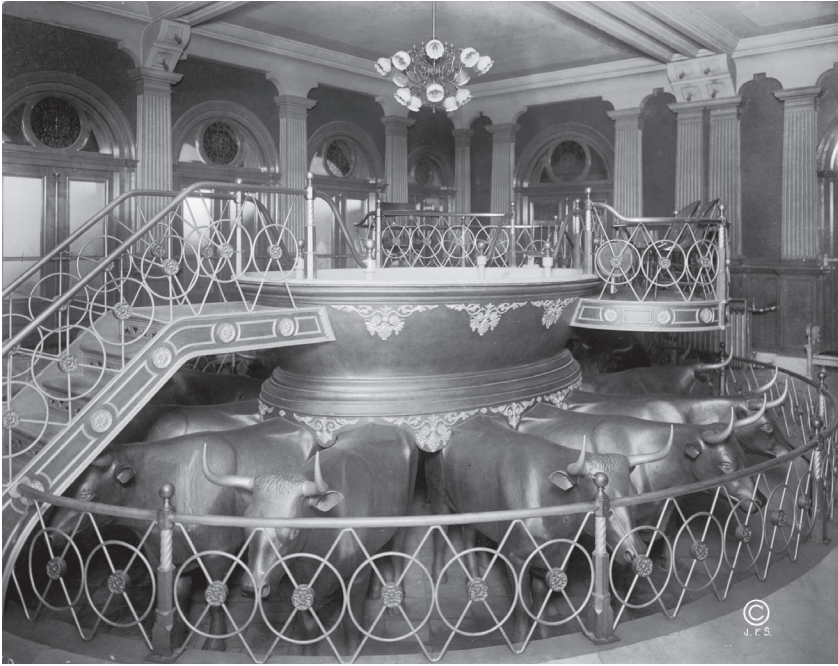
In the first revelation the Lord urges the Saints to finish the temple despite persecution. In the second he links recording the ordinances to their being sealed. That is, baptisms for the dead are not valid in heaven unless properly recorded by an eyewitness on earth. It is imperative that the Saints learn the conditions on which ordinances performed on earth are validated in heaven, for, as the Lord declares in verses 8–9, he is about to restore more that pertains to the priesthood ordinances of the temple, and the records of all such ordinances are to be in order and preserved in the temple.

Section 128

Wilford Woodruff wrote that

Joseph has been deprived of the privilege of appearing openly & deprived of the society of his own family Because Sheriffs are hunting him to destroy him without cause Yet the Lord is with him. . . . Joseph has presented the Church of late with some glorious principles from the Lord concerning Baptism for the dead & other interesting subjects, he has appeared occasionally in the midst of the Saints which has been a great comfort.⁵³⁹

Baptism for the dead “seems to occupy my mind,” Joseph wrote. Less than a week after dictating section 127, Joseph dictated a much longer, more detailed explanation of the order of sacred ordinances:



Photograph of the baptismal font in the Salt Lake Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Deseret News, 1912). Photograph by C. R. Savage. Library of Congress.

section 128. It adds practical instructions to 127's revelation that for baptisms for the dead to be valid, they must be recorded by an eye-witness. Joseph proposes a recorder for each of Nauvoo's four wards, each of whom will account to a general Church recorder who will be responsible to collect, certify, and keep the records.

Verse 5 uses three related words: *order*, *ordinance*, and *ordained*. Boyd K. Packer cited the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of *order* as "arrangement in sequence or proper relative position" and noted how often the scriptures emphasize the importance of order. *Ordinance*, wrote President Packer, derives from *order*. He defined an ordinance as "the ceremony by which things are put in proper order." *Ordain*, "a close relative of the other two words," is the process of

putting in order, including appropriately appointing someone to the ministry. “From all this dictionary work,” Elder Packer said, “there comes the impression that an ordinance, to be valid, must be done in proper order.”⁵⁴⁰ That is precisely Joseph’s point in section 128. To be valid, an ordinance must be ordained of God, or, in other words, done according to the order or procedure he dictates.

Beginning in verse 6, Joseph traces the doctrine of recording earthly ordinances full circle through the Bible to make his point and substantiate what he had previously taught. He begins with the biblical book of Revelation, in which John saw that the dead would be judged by what is recorded on earth, which is mirrored in the book of life kept in heaven (Doctrine and Covenants 128:6–8). “It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of,” Joseph says, speaking of the priesthood’s power to seal earthly ordinances in heaven. But in defense he evokes Matthew 16’s description of Jesus’s promise to give Peter sealing keys to bind on earth and in heaven (vv. 9–10). Joseph then turns to the symbolic significance of baptism and cites Paul’s teaching at 1 Corinthians 15 and Hebrews 11:40. Joseph adds Malachi’s prophecy of the mission of Elijah to unite generations before the Savior’s second coming and elaborates on its meaning.

With the teaching of temple ordinances, Joseph remarks that the dispensation of fulness “is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together” of generations, dispensations, and, indeed, of the human family can be accomplished (Doctrine and Covenants 128:11–18). Joseph turns exultant at this prospect. Beginning at verse 19, he launches into a celebration of the Restoration. Recounting the sources of his knowledge and priesthood power, Joseph lists a Who’s Who of heavenly messengers he has seen—Moroni, Michael, Peter, James, John, Gabriel, Raphael, “all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope” (vv. 19–22). At least one of the events to which Joseph

refers—Michael teaching him how to detect false messengers (v. 20)—must have taken place before Joseph moved from the Susquehanna River to Ohio in 1831, yet this is his first known mention of it. These verses are at least a partial answer to the questions of when and by whom was Joseph endowed with priesthood power, becoming able to give the temple ordinances to the Saints.

In sum, Joseph had revelatory experiences and learned glorious truths that he did not readily share except in the right places at the right times to prepared people. That is exciting, and in a final burst of rhapsody, Joseph celebrated the profundity of the revealed solution to the terrible theological problem that has perplexed every thoughtful Christian: “What about those who never heard?”⁵⁴¹ The answer? “The King Immanuel . . . *ordained*, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:22).

Joseph had spent the winter of 1838–39 in a cold, tiny cell in Liberty, Missouri, and when he dictated section 128, he was hiding from unlawful extradition efforts to get him back to Missouri. He had some sense of how it felt to be liberated from prison. Joseph closed section 128 excited about these “glad tidings of great joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:19) and tells the Saints what to *do* with them. It’s the same thing the Lord’s current prophets and Apostles are urging us to do: “Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book,” or, more recently, electronic files or cards “containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation” (v. 23). In other words, let us organize families in the order God ordained. Let’s take disordered families and put them in order via the performance of holy ordinances in the House of the Lord.

Having shown that baptism for the dead was practiced by the earliest Christians but not since, Professor Hugh Nibley asked,

Where did Joseph Smith get his knowledge? Few if any of the sources cited in this discussion were available to him; the best of these have been discovered only in recent years, while the citations from the

others are only to be found scattered at wide intervals through works so voluminous that even had they been available to the Prophet he would, lacking modern aids, have had to spend a lifetime running them down. And even had he found such passages, how could they have meant more to him than they did to the most celebrated divines of a thousand years, who could make nothing of them? This is a region in which great theologians are lost and bemused; to have established a rational and satisfying doctrine and practice on grounds so dubious is indeed a tremendous achievement.⁵⁴²

It is impossible to estimate the results of these revelations, these glad tidings. Because of them, innumerable spirit prisoners have gone free. “Shall we not go on in so great a cause?” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 128:22).

Section 129

Section 129 is esoteric. It can only be understood by people with temple knowledge. It is also euphemistic. It’s no more about hand-shaking than “kicking the bucket” is about actually kicking a bucket.

In January 1838 Joseph received a revelation. It cursed the Saints who had become his enemies, said his work in Kirtland was done, and told him and the faithful Saints to gather to Zion in Missouri.⁵⁴³ That night Joseph counseled with Church leaders and concluded, “Well, brethren I do not recollect anything more; but one thing, brethren, is certain; I shall see you again, let what will happen; for I have a promise of life five years, and they cannot kill me until that time has expired.”⁵⁴⁴

No one could kill Joseph during that time. He had to get the fullness of temple blessings restored first. But people sure made his life miserable in the meantime. He escaped from his persecutors in spring 1839. As soon as he could, knowing that his days were numbered and he had none to spare, Joseph gathered several of the Apostles on June 27, 1839, exactly five years before his violent death at the hands of a murderous mob, and taught the Apostles what he had learned



The relief of St. Peter at the portal of St Peter's church at Radovljica in Slovenia. The inscription, written in Slovene, translates as, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Photograph by Donald Judge, 2013. CC Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

a decade earlier from Michael about "detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light" (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20).

Wilford Woodruff drew tiny, symbolic keys in his journal, where he wrote what he learned about the "keys of the Kingdom of God Joseph presented . . . in order to detect the devel when he transforms himself nigh unto an angel of light."⁵⁴⁵ In December 1840 Joseph taught these keys to William Clayton, a trusted convert recently arrived from England. In April 1842 Joseph introduced the principles in section 129 to the Relief Society, and in May he gave the Saints a temple preparation sermon, including the explanation that there are "certain signs & words by which false spirits & personages may be detected from true—which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed."⁵⁴⁶ A few days later Joseph endowed a few Church leaders in a temporary temple in the attic story of his Nauvoo store. Heber Kimball was there and subsequently wrote to fellow Apostle Parley

Pratt, who remained in England to preside over the mission. “We have received some pressious things through the Prophet on the preast-hood that would cause your soul to rejoice,” Heber wrote. “I can not give them to you on paper fore they are not to be riten. So you must come and get them for your Self.”⁵⁴⁷

Parley arrived in Nauvoo early in 1843, eager to be taught by Joseph. At a February 9 meeting, Joseph instructed him in the keys he had learned from Michael and had subsequently taught to Wilford, Heber, and a few others. The entry in Joseph’s journal for that day is the source for section 129.

The rough journal entry captures only some of the teaching that took place. It reads

Parley Pratt & other come in—Joseph explained the following. There are 3 administrater: Angels, Spirits, Devils one class in heaven. Angels the spirits of just men made perfect—innumerable co of angels and spirits of Just men made perfect. An angel appears to you how will you prove him. Ask him to shake hands. If he has flesh & bones he is an Angel “spirit hath not flesh and bones.” Spirit of a just man made perfect. Person in its tabernacle could hide its glory. If David Patten or the Devil come. How would you determine should you take hold of his hand you would not feel it. If it was a false administrator he would not do it. True spirit will not give his hand the Devil will. 3 keys.⁵⁴⁸

Clearly there was more said on this occasion than what got cryptically recorded.

In its polished form, section 129 is more clear but still vague. In heaven there are resurrected beings and spirits who are not yet resurrected. Either kind can be sent as messengers. Satan or his angels can counterfeit this kind of revelation. But there are keys to discern such imposters, as explained in verses 5–9. It is not safe to draw the conclusion that Satan does not know these keys. It seems more likely, as Joseph taught, that there are boundaries to Satan’s power to deceive.

Part of being endowed with God’s power is the ability to discern true from false messengers (Doctrine and Covenants 128:20). As Joseph taught, if Satan could appear in the guise of an angel without our having any ability to know better, “we would not be free agents.”⁵⁴⁹

Section 130

“I am going to offer some corrections to you.” That’s what Joseph said to Orson Hyde at lunch on April 2, 1843, after Elder Hyde had spoken at a morning session of a stake conference in Ramus, Illinois. A Protestant preacher before his conversion to the restored gospel, Elder Hyde mixed unrestored ideas into his sermon. Elder Hyde wisely replied to Joseph, “They shall be thankfully received.”⁵⁵⁰

Joseph and Elder Hyde and everyone else were aware of the prophecies of a contemporary named William Miller, who had predicted that the Savior’s second coming would be April 3, 1843, the day after conference. Elder Hyde spoke about what John 14:23 and 1 John 3:2 had to say about that.

Joseph preached twice at the stake conference, offering corrections to Elder Hyde, answering William Clayton’s question about time relativity, and correcting Miller’s prediction of the Second Coming. William Clayton captured Joseph’s teachings in his journal and Willard Richards later copied them into Joseph’s journal. Some of the teachings were then clarified and prepared for publication in the Church’s newspaper in the 1850s and finally added to the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 130 begins by clarifying John 14:23, which prophesies that the Savior will appear and reveal his Heavenly Father. Joseph emphasized, contrary to what Elder Hyde had suggested, that the appearance of the Father and Son are literal. They are exalted, embodied Gods; the designation *Heavenly Father* is not a euphemism, and the social relationship sealed here will endure into eternity only with “eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:2).

Beginning in verse 4, Joseph answers a question William Clayton posed about the relativity of time depending on one’s proximity to God. Joseph declared that time is relative but that all angels who minister to our earth have themselves lived or will live on this earth. The angels now reside with God “on a globe like a sea of glass and fire”

where there is no time since “past, present, and future . . . are continually before the Lord” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:7). Joseph taught that this earth will become a celestial kingdom, a great seer stone in which its inhabitants will be able to see kingdoms of lesser glory. Even more exciting, each individual who enters this kingdom will get a personal “stone” as a means of learning and progressing eternally.

Beginning in verse 12, Joseph prophesies the American Civil War based on his Christmas 1832 revelation (see section 87). He refuses to prophesy specifically about the date of the Savior’s second coming, having learned his lesson from an earlier earnest prayer, which the Lord answered with intentional ambiguity, leaving Joseph “unable to decide” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:16).

One result of section 130 is clarification of what we do not know: the timing of the Savior’s second coming. The section leaves no doubt that Joseph was a true prophet, however. He knew by revelation the nature of the American Civil War long before it came to pass. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote, “The Prophet Joseph and the revelations confirm that God lives in an ‘eternal now,’ where the past, present, and future are continually before Him. He is not constrained by the perspectives of time as we are.”⁵⁵¹

Verses 18–21 teach principles revealed in sections 51, 58, 88, 93, and elsewhere about the relationship between God’s law, individual agency, and growth. Intelligence is gained by choosing to diligently obey God’s laws. This is one of Joseph’s most profound, exalting teachings.

The last two verses clarify the nature of the Godhead. Joseph’s teachings at the conference focused on the Holy Ghost. “The Holy Ghost is a personage,” he said, “and a person cannot have the personage of the H.G. in his heart. A man may have the gifts of the H.G., and the H.G. may descend upon a man but not to tarry with him.”⁵⁵² Church historians, Apostles, amended the text in the 1850s to more explicitly clarify the embodied nature of the Father and the Son.

Section 130 captures glimpses of the expansive Nauvoo teachings of Joseph Smith. In the last years of his life Joseph was teaching temple

ordinances to select Saints and related principles to the general body of Saints. Some of section 130 is simply fascinating answers to the questions of curious enquirers. But it is laced with temple teachings, including the eternal nature of social relationships, the exaltation of man in the image of God, the heavenly temple, eternal progression, and growth by degrees of knowledge or intelligence based on obedience to the laws of God.

Section 131

Section 131 also includes esoteric temple knowledge but maybe less new knowledge about the celestial kingdom than it has been interpreted to include. The first four verses came in the evening of May 16, 1843. Joseph was in the home of Melissa and Ben Johnson with his scribe/recorder, William Clayton. Melissa and Ben were in their mid-twenties, married two years prior on Christmas day, and parents of one child so far, Benjamin Jr. Joseph invited them to sit down and told them he was there to marry them according to the law of the Lord.

Ben had joked with Joseph before and thought he was joking now. Ben tried to join in the fun, saying he wouldn't marry Melissa again until she paid for their dates, since he paid the first time they courted. Joseph might have thought that was funny on a different day, but he was in a hurry, he was solemn, and this occasion was sacred. He scolded Ben for being light-minded in that moment. Then he invited Melissa and Ben to stand and sealed them together by the power of the holy priesthood vested in him by ministering angels of Almighty God. He promised that if they kept the terms and conditions of this covenant, no power on earth or in hell could prevent them from being resurrected together and crowned with exaltation and eternal lives (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–24).⁵⁵³

That got their attention. Joseph sat them down again and taught them about the new and everlasting covenant of marriage they had just “made and entered into” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:7). He said

there were three parts to it (see section 132), and its blessings wouldn't be sure unless and until Melissa and Ben made them sure by being faithful to the covenant. Using his secretary, William Clayton, as an example of one who had taken the step the Johnsons were taking, Joseph taught them the doctrine of exaltation through faithfulness to covenants sealed by sacred ordinances.

The context for the first four verses, then, is exaltation. All of the sources suggest that what Joseph taught the Johnsons that night is not the same as what Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–2 has been understood to mean—that there are three degrees inside the highest of the three degrees of glory. That idea hangs on nothing more than Doctrine and Covenants 131: “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees” and the assumption that “celestial” there means the highest of the three heavens revealed in Doctrine and Covenants 76. That is not the only possible interpretation, and in context it's not the best one. In the vocabulary of both Joseph and the Johnsons, “celestial” could still just mean heavenly. If we read Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 that way, it makes sense in context. In other words, Joseph probably taught the Johnsons what we are taught—there are three glories in heaven, and exaltation in the highest one comes from making and keeping the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Joseph meant what sections 76 and 132 teach.

According to William Clayton's journal, Joseph taught that “in order to obtain the highest [degree of glory] a man [and woman] must enter into this order of the priesthood,” meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Joseph explained that a man and a woman sealed together “by the power and authority of the holy priesthood” would continue to be married and have their family after resurrection, while those who weren't sealed would not.⁵⁵⁴ There are many, many descendants of the Johnsons today, and they will be their descendants forever, as a result of this revelation.

The day after he sealed the Johnsons, Joseph preached a sermon on 2 Peter 1 about making one's eternal destination sure. It included section 131:5–6. William Clayton noted Joseph teaching

that knowledge is power and the man who has the most knowledge has the greatest power. Also that salvation means a man's being placed beyond the powers of all his enemies. He said the more sure word of prophecy meant, a man's knowing that he was sealed up unto eternal life by revelation and the spirit of prophecy through the power of the Holy priesthood. He also showed that it was impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.⁵⁵⁵

In speaking of *knowledge* and *ignorance*, Joseph did not mean that book learning or secular subjects were sources of salvation. He meant that unless people know for themselves the fulness of temple ordinances and their promised blessings, they are not yet endowed with power over all enemies, including death, both spiritual and physical.

Joseph had taught the same principle in other words the preceding Sunday. He tried to help the Saints understand the difference between having a testimony that one *could be* saved if they obeyed the gospel and gaining the testimony that one *had been* saved because they obeyed the gospel. Step one is to gain a testimony of Christ and the possibility of salvation, Joseph taught. That was just the beginning of the quest for knowledge of God, which to Joseph was the equivalent of power over sin and death. "They would then want that more sure word of prophecy that they were sealed in the heavens & had the promise of eternal live in the Kingdom of God," Joseph taught. This is what he called "knowledge," which is what he meant in section 131—and what the Lord meant all the way back in section 84:19–24.⁵⁵⁶

Section 131 leads willing Saints to the knowledge of God, the certainty of a future exaltation by virtue of the sacred covenants sealed by priesthood. Ignorance of the knowledge of God leads to a less certain, or at least less celestial, future. One wants to be *more sure* in what the young Joseph called "matters that involve eternal consequences" (Doctrine and Covenants 131:5).

Samuel Prior, a Methodist, had listened to Joseph's sermon on 1 Peter 1 and come away unexpectedly impressed. Joseph returned the gesture in the evening by listening to Prior's sermon. Afterward Joseph "arose and begged leave to differ from me in some few points of

doctrine,” wrote Prior, “and this he did mildly, politely, and affectingly; like one who was more desirous to disseminate truth and expose error, than to love the malicious triumph of debate over me.” Drawing on section 93:33, Joseph noted that matter endures eternally and added verses 7–8. “I was truly edified with his remarks,” Prior noted, “and felt less prejudiced against the Mormons than ever.” Joseph invited Prior to visit him in Nauvoo, which he did.⁵⁵⁷

Section 132

Section 132 is heaven and hell, exaltation and damnation, the best thing in the Doctrine and Covenants and the worst. It made Joseph F. Smith feel like he had to qualify it. “When the revelation was written, in 1843,” he explained,

it was for a special purpose, by the request of the Patriarch Hyrum Smith [Joseph F.’s father] and was not then designed to go forth to the church or to the world. It is most probable that had it been then written with a view to its going out as a doctrine of the church, it would have been presented in a somewhat different form.

He said it included intensely personal things that addressed its immediate context but weren’t relevant “to the principle itself.”⁵⁵⁸

Joseph F. was spot on. Section 132 is about marriage, specifically Joseph’s marriage to Emma Hale. Would it endure beyond death? Would it even endure for another week? Those were Joseph’s questions in July 1843. The revelation answers them conditionally. Joseph had those questions because of the answers he had received years before to two questions about the Bible. Verse 1 restates Joseph’s question about the seemingly adulterous yet Biblical practice of polygyny—simultaneously having more than one wife—by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others. The other question comes from Matthew 22:30, Jesus’s teaching that “in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”

The answer to that one was wonderful news: Those who make and keep the new and everlasting covenant of marriage will be exalted. But the answer to the other question was more than Joseph anticipated. The Book of Mormon forbade plural marriage unless the Lord commanded otherwise (Jacob 2:28–30). Joseph's own revelations declared adultery an abomination and promised punishment. "With these prohibitions emblazoned on his own revelations, Joseph was torn by the command to take plural wives. What about the curses and the destruction promised adulterers? What about the heart of his tender wife?"⁵⁵⁹

Though he began to obey it within a few years, Joseph did not dare to write the revelation until its hard doctrines put so much strain on his marriage to Emma in the summer of 1843 that he decided to write it in hopes that it would help her. He entered a plural marriage with Fanny Alger in the 1830s, though it did not last. Then, between early 1841 and fall 1843, Joseph was sealed to approximately thirty women. About a third of them were already married at the time. As historian Richard Bushman noted, "Nothing confuses the picture of Joseph Smith's character more than these plural marriages." He continues, "What drove him to a practice that put his life and his work in jeopardy, not to mention his relationship with Emma?"

At times Emma worked up the will to consent to some of the sealings, but then her will to do so broke. She had forsaken her parents and siblings to marry and follow Joseph. She believed in him as much as anyone and made monumental sacrifices for her faith. But this one was Abrahamic. All she had was Joseph, and that was enough to compensate for all she had laid aside, but now she was being asked to share him. She would not do it willingly, at least not consistently. During a period of willingness, however, in May 1843, she and Joseph were sealed together.

By July, Emma was struggling to be reconciled to the revelation. Joseph and Hyrum counseled about what to do for her and decided to write the revelation and see if it would help. William Clayton, Joseph's secretary, wrote the revelation as Joseph dictated with Hyrum present

at Joseph's upstairs office in his Nauvoo store. It took nearly three hours and ten pages to write, after which William read it back to Joseph for accuracy. Hyrum optimistically took it to Emma, who rejected it. Clayton confided to his journal that Joseph "appears much troubled about E[mma]."⁵⁶⁰

By September Emma again reconciled to the revelation, and she and Joseph received the crowning ordinances of exaltation section 132 describes esoterically in verses 7 and 19.⁵⁶¹ Joseph was determined that if he were going to break Emma's heart to obey a command, he would not lose her eternally. He was heard to say, "You must never speak evil of Emma."⁵⁶²

Section 132 is an extraordinarily complicated text. Not only does it intertwine the answers to two questions, but it is the culmination of the Restoration, the most exalted of the exaltation revelations (see sections 76, 84, 88, 93, and 131). It sets forth gospel fulness in cryptic terms, as if some of its pearls are too precious to be viewed publicly. Moreover, though it contains much that was revealed to Joseph earlier, the actual text of section 132 was determined by events in the summer of 1843, including Emma's opposition to Joseph's plural marriages, an otherwise unknown test the Lord gave her, and her concerns about the economic security of herself and her children.

Section 132 is Abrahamic in every sense. If you choose to read it, pay special attention to the Lord's rationale throughout. Plural marriage is meant to be an Abrahamic test. The revelation ends with assurance the Lord will reveal more later (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:66). Meanwhile, "plural marriage was the most difficult trial of 1843," wrote Bushman and, he could just as accurately have said, of Joseph and Emma's life and the lives of many Latter-day Saints today.⁵⁶³ It is hard to imagine a more wrenching test for Joseph, and it was incomparably difficult for Emma. The revelation forced them—and us—to find out whether we will trust the God who gave it. That is characteristic of the God of Abraham, who puts his children through wrenching tests to "prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (*Abraham* 3:25).

Section 132 leads us to the conclusion that God requires all our hearts first and foremost before he finishes the work of sealing them to each other and exalting them forever. The same revelation that requires such an extreme sacrifice of Emma, after all, sets forth the terms and conditions on which she will be exalted with Joseph. It seems that one of the main points of section 132, in fact, is to assure Joseph that he and Emma will be exalted together, that despite the wedge plural marriage drove between them, the Lord will weld them eternally. Joseph specifically prayed in the Kirtland Temple that Emma and their children would be exalted. The Lord seems likely to answer that prayer (Doctrine and Covenants 109:68–69).

When he does, it will not be an exception to the law of exaltation in section 132:7, 19–20. Historical records show that Joseph and Emma met its terms and conditions. They made and entered the covenant on May 28, 1843, and received the confirming ordinance section 132 refers to as “most holy” on September 28, 1843 (Doctrine and Covenants 132:7).⁵⁶⁴ Though neither Joseph nor Emma was flawless, after meeting the conditions on which the Lord will exalt them, neither committed the unpardonable sin verse 27 describes as the only way to nullify the promised blessings. Emma was not excommunicated; her ordinances were not voided. She gave her children faith in the Book of Mormon but blamed Brigham Young for plural marriage. It seems as if the Lord spoke Doctrine and Covenants 132:26 specifically to set Joseph at ease about Emma’s eternal destiny. Perhaps that knowledge was an “escape” Joseph needed in order to make the extreme “sacrifices” for plural marriage that contributed to his death (Doctrine and Covenants 132:49–50; 135).

As they parted for the last time on earth, Emma asked Joseph for a blessing. He was under pressure and unable to bless her then, but he bade her to write the desires of her heart and he would seal them later. She wrote of her desire “to honor and respect my husband as my head, ever to live in his confidence and by acting in unison with him retain the place which God has given me by his side.”⁵⁶⁵ She wrote, in other words, that she wanted the blessings promised to her in section 132

and that she desired to obey its challenging commands. The next time Emma saw Joseph he had been shot to death. Section 132 makes that a small matter. It promises them, and all others who make and keep the same covenants, “Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths.”

There it is. Section 132 is heaven and hell, exaltation and damnation, heights and depths. Perhaps we are to learn from it that if we never plumb depths, we can’t expect to ascend the heights.

Section 133

Section 133 ends what section 1 began. The November 1831 conference at Hiram, Ohio, planned to publish ten thousand copies of Joseph’s revelations as *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*. Joseph began to edit the revelations, and Oliver Cowdery made plans to take them to Independence, Missouri, for publication by William Phelps on the Church’s press. Joseph’s history says,

At this time there were many things which the elders desired to know relative to the preaching of the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth, and concerning the gathering; and, in order to walk in the true light, and be instructed from on high, on the 3^d of November 1831. I inquired of the Lord and received the following Revelation, which from its importance, and for distinction has Since been added to the book of Doctrine and Covenants, and called the Appendix.⁵⁶⁶

Section 133 continues and even escalates the apocalyptic tone of section 1. It announces that Christ will dramatically come soon. He will come to judge all that forget God, including the ungodly Latter-day Saints. So the Saints should prepare for his coming by sanctifying their lives and becoming Zion. “Go ye out from Babylon,” the Lord says again and again (Doctrine and Covenants 133:5, 7, 14), solidifying

the dualistic “Zion versus Babylon” typology he chose in sections 1 and 133 to frame the Doctrine and Covenants.

Zion will be rescued when the Lord comes. Babylon will be destroyed. “Hearken and hear, O ye inhabitants of the earth. Listen, ye elders of my church together, and hear the voice of the Lord; for he calleth upon all men everywhere to repent” (Doctrine and Covenants 133:16). The angels have already been sent to announce that the hour of his coming nears. Indeed, that is the beginning of the Restoration. As section 133 explains, messengers commit the gospel to mortal prophets, who offer it to “some” who then go to “many” until “this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (vv. 36–37). Then the Lord answers the prayers of his people, who have long pled, “O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence” (v. 39). He will answer “as the melting fire that burneth, and as the fire which causeth the waters to boil” (v. 41). He comes soon to sanctify the repentant and to burn the unrepentant.

So how does the revelation answer the elders’ questions about preaching the gospel and gathering Israel? First, it emphasizes, the Saints must get themselves out of Babylon, and the only alternative is to “flee unto Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 133:12). Second, send the elders back in to rescue any who will repent. Send them first to the Gentiles and then to the Jews. They should “thrash the nations by the power of his Spirit” (v. 59) and send any who will repent on to Zion to be endowed with priesthood power and the blessings promised to the house of Israel. That’s why the revelations were given and why they are to be published to all mankind. “And unto him that repenteth and sanctifieth himself before the Lord shall be given eternal life. And upon them that hearken not to the voice of the Lord shall be fulfilled that which was written by the prophet Moses, that they should be cut off from among the people” (Doctrine and Covenants 133:62–63).

Section 133 answers the elders’ questions about preaching the gospel and gathering lost Israel. Other revelations give much more

detailed instructions how to do those things. This one emphasizes why and when. To a fledgling group of fallible Latter-day Saints gathered in a private home, it sets forth an audacious scope of covering the globe with the restored gospel. It reiterates Christ's great commission to take the gospel to every creature so that each can decide whether to repent or not. Moreover, there is no time to lose. The revelation's urgent tone emphasizes that Christ soon comes to judge an apostate world—Babylon.

What resulted from this revelation? That little group of faltering Saints has grown exponentially and sent tens of thousands of its sons and daughters to the ends of the earth to preach the gospel and gather scattered Israel to Zion in anticipation of the Lord's Second Coming. It would be hard to overstate the motivating power of sections like 133. It is, as one early Saint declared, "fraught with so much heavenly intelligence."⁵⁶⁷

Section 134

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been dubbed "quintessentially American," but in the beginning, it struck many people as anything but that. Direct revelations to a prophet—in which Christ reserved to himself ultimate executive, legislative, and judicial power—seemed undemocratic to the Saints' neighbors.⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, controversial statements made in a Church newspaper by editor William Phelps demanded that the Church clarify its position relative to slavery.⁵⁶⁹

A general assembly of priesthood leaders convened in Kirtland, Ohio, on August 17, 1835, to listen to Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon present the Doctrine and Covenants for their approval. Oliver introduced the book and its contents to the assembled councils, after which the priesthood leaders unanimously testified of their satisfaction with the work. Then Oliver Cowdery read section 134, "Of Governments and Laws in General," which may have been primarily, if not

exclusively, the product of his mind and pen. The assembly “accepted and adopted” it, too, for inclusion, and thus section 134, though not a revelation, became canonized as part of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁵⁷⁰

Section 134 mixes republican principles of constitutional government and individual liberties, emphatically including the right of religious conscience, with the Church’s concern for its ecclesiastical rights. Nothing in it was new or objectionable to Joseph. It informs a misled and sometimes hostile public that the Church is in harmony with mainstream American values at the time of its publication. It distances the Church from parties or causes other than sharing the gospel.

Joseph was in Michigan when the general assembly made these decisions. He did not author section 134, but he endorsed it in April 1836.⁵⁷¹ The principles in section 134 continue to guide the Church’s actions regarding political questions and controversies. The principles in verses 4–6 are more tersely expressed in Articles of Faith 1:11 and 12. While the Church took a pragmatic position relative to slavery in section 134, the Lord declared the doctrine of individual agency as the reason for his repudiation of slavery in section 101:77–79.

Section 135

It was “a deliberate political assassination, committed or condoned by some of the leading citizens of Hancock County.”⁵⁷² That’s how law professor Dallin H. Oaks and coauthor Marvin S. Hill described the murder of Joseph Smith, who was butchered with his brother Hyrum on June 27, 1844.

Apostles John Taylor and Willard Richards were voluntarily with Joseph and Hyrum in jail when they were murdered on June 27, 1844. They survived as witnesses of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ; the Prophet Joseph Smith, who restored it; and his brutal martyrdom. Their witness is declared in section 135.

Section 135 is a eulogy of the Prophet and an indictment of the state and nation that allowed him to be slain. As such, its tone is a rich

mixture of reverence and disdain, praise and contempt. Attributed to John Taylor, who was himself shot repeatedly in the massacre, the document has an apostolic air. It declares a witness in certain terms. It announces Joseph Smith's significance to mankind, his translation of the Book of Mormon and spreading of the gospel, his receipt of revelations, the gathering of Israel, the founding of Nauvoo, and, with Hyrum, the sealing of his testimony with his life.

Though critics have knowingly manipulated the language of verse 3 to make it sound as if Latter-day Saints value Joseph Smith more than Jesus Christ, the text does not say that, nor do Latter-day Saints believe it. Rather, they praise Joseph Smith because he revealed Jesus Christ, which no one had done for more than a millennium. Section 135 testifies that Joseph and Hyrum died innocent and that their deaths put their testaments in full force. It testifies that the Lord will avenge their deaths and that the honest-hearted in all nations will be touched by their testimony of Jesus Christ.

Section 135 emphasizes the enduring significance of Joseph Smith and his testimony. Joseph regarded himself as "obscure," a "boy of no consequence" (Joseph Smith—History 1:23), but at age seventeen, he received from an angel named Moroni the improbable news that "my name should be had for good and evil among all nations" (v. 33). In his own lifetime, his name became known for good and evil in Nauvoo, in Illinois, in the United States, and now globally. However unlikely, Moroni's prophecy has been fulfilled. Bostonian Josiah Quincy visited Joseph shortly before he went to Carthage. Quincy wrote that Joseph Smith was "born in the lowest ranks of poverty" and came of age "without book-learning and with the homeliest of all human names," and by the end of his shortened life, he had become "a power on earth."⁵⁷³

It is not remarkable that a flawed teenage Joseph sought forgiveness in the woods and at his bedside, nor that he had to repent relentlessly and grow into his demanding calling, nor that he often felt frustrated at both himself and the Saints, nor that his testimony deeply touched the hearts of some and antagonized others, nor that it

continues to do so. The remarkable thing about Joseph Smith, as section 135 emphasizes, is what he did. Who else has brought forth the equivalent of the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants? Who else restored the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ? “He left a fame and a name,” no matter how plain, “that cannot be slain” (Doctrine and Covenants 135:3). In every way, he gave his life for the Lord’s work. What a life!

“Fanatics and imposters are living and dying every day,” Josiah Quincy wrote,

and their memory is buried with them; but the wonderful influence which this founder of a religion exerted and still exerts throws him into relief before us, not as a rogue to be criminated, but as a phenomenon to be explained. The most vital questions Americans are asking each other today have to do with this man and what he has left us.⁵⁷⁴

That is Joseph Smith’s significance and his appeal—he revealed the answers to the ultimate questions: Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Is there purpose in life? What is the nature of people? Are individuals free agents or determined? What is the nature of the Savior’s atonement? Does it reach those who do not hear the gospel in mortality? And perhaps above all, what is the nature of God?

“If I am so fortunate as to be the man to comprehend God, and explain or convey the principles to your hearts, so that the Spirit seals them upon you,” Joseph taught just a few weeks before he was murdered, “then let every man and woman henceforth sit in silence, put their hands on their mouths, and never lift their hands or voices, or say any thing against the man of God, or the servants of God again.”⁵⁷⁵ Joseph answered the ultimate questions as a witness. He beheld angels, translated by the power of God, received visions and revelations. He knew God and Christ. He thus died as a testator—a witness. Section 135 announces that a testator had been killed but his testimony endures forever.

Section 136

Of all the would-be successors to Joseph Smith, only Brigham Young understood what was at stake. He explained that no one could lead the Church without the keys of the holy priesthood, which Joseph had received from ministering angels. Joseph had conferred those keys on Brigham and eight other Apostles.

Joseph had gathered them three months before his death and said,

It may be that my enemies will kill me, and in case they should, and the keys and power which rest on me not be imparted to you, they will be lost from the earth; but if I can only succeed in placing them upon your heads, then let me fall a victim to murderous hands if God will suffer it, and I can go with all pleasure and satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared in this dispensation of the fullness of times. Upon the shoulders of the Twelve must the responsibility of leading this church hence forth rest until you shall appoint others to succeed you. . . . Thus can this power and these keys be perpetuated in the Earth.

Joseph and his brother Hyrum then confirmed the ordinations of each of the Apostles who were present, and Joseph gave them a final charge. “I roll the burthen and responsibility of leading this church off from my shoulders on to yours,” he declared. “Now, round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest.”⁵⁷⁶

As president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young explained these principles to the Saints on August 8, 1844. Many, including Martha Tuttle Gardner, received a confirming witness from the Lord. She testified that Brigham Young “told the people that although Joseph was dead, Joseph had left behind the keys of the Kingdom and had conferred the same power & authority that he himself possessed upon the Twelve Apostles and the Church would not be left without a leader and a guide.” Martha had written reverently of witnessing the (capital *P*) Prophet Joseph Smith, and she now confidently

transferred that designation to “the Prophet Brigham Young.” She wrote that he “had the Nauvoo Temple finished” and endowed her with power there early in 1845. Then, under Brigham’s leadership, she and many other Saints fled Nauvoo for peace and safety somewhere in the West.⁵⁷⁷

President Young led them across Iowa Territory, and they camped for the winter on the banks of the Missouri River. There, in a January 1847 council meeting, the Prophet Brigham Young asked the Lord to reveal “the best manner of organizing companies for emigration.” The Lord answered. “President Young commenced to give the Word and Will of God concerning the emigration of the Saints”—section 136.⁵⁷⁸ It is concerned with three basic issues: governing authority, camp organization, and individual behavior.⁵⁷⁹

The key words in the early verses of section 136 are *organized* and *covenant*. The Saints were to be organized into companies “under the direction of the Twelve Apostles” (Doctrine and Covenants 136:3). “And this shall be our covenant—that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord” (v. 4). Like Martha, many of them had recently made temple covenants in Nauvoo. Section 136 tells them how to consecrate their lives to Zion. It reiterates the principles of consecration that pervade so many of Joseph Smith’s revelations. The first principle is agency. Section 136 tells the Saints how to act relative to organization, preparation, property, contention, the commandments to not covet and or take the Lord’s name in vain, alcohol, fear, sorrow, and ignorance. The Lord prescribes specific behaviors for each of these.

Another principle of consecration is stewardship. Free agents act upon stewardships, or what the Lord gives them to act upon. “Thou shalt be diligent in preserving what thou hast,” he commands in verse 27, “that thou mayest be a wise steward; for it is the free gift of the Lord thy God, and thou art his steward.” Section 136 gives commands that tell the Saints how to act relative to stewardships that include draft animals, seeds, farming tools, widows, orphans, the families of the men who have joined the United States Army, houses, fields, and the Saints who will follow in later waves of migration. He

adds instructions for the use of “influence and property” (Doctrine and Covenants 136:10) and even for borrowed and lost property.

Another principle of consecration is accountability. Verse 19 declares the consequence of failing to keep one’s covenant to walk in the ordinances of the Lord: “And if any man shall seek to build himself up, and seeketh not my counsel, he shall have no *power*, and his folly shall be made manifest,” suggesting that one’s endowment of *power* is dependent on keeping the covenants made in the endowment ordinance (Doctrine and Covenants 136:4, 19; emphasis added).

The motif of pilgrims in search of a promised land, of exodus as a sanctifying precondition to finding and becoming Zion, is common in scripture and the backbone of section 136. It casts the Saints as a modern camp of Israel (Doctrine and Covenants 136:1), following the “God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob” as they are led through the wilderness by a modern Moses in search of a promised land (vv. 21–22). They are wanderers, exiles even from the United States, upon which the Lord prophesies an imminent punishment for rejecting the Saints’ testimony and killing the prophets “that were sent unto them” (vv. 34–36). In these ways, section 136 includes the Latter-day Saints with all the former faithful of past dispensations, those section 45 describes as “pilgrims on the earth” who wandered in search of Zion and “obtained a promise that they should find it” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:12–14).

Finally, section 136 explains Joseph Smith’s martyrdom from the Lord’s perspective. “Many have marveled because of his death,” the Lord omnisciently knows, “but it was needful that he should seal his testimony with his blood, that he might be honored and the wicked might be condemned” (Doctrine and Covenants 136:39). From the Lord’s vantage, allowing Joseph to die as a testator was a wise move that left an enduring witness of His name even as it delivered the Saints, including Joseph, from their enemies (v. 40). The revelation ends with a poetic covenant in verse 42, promising deliverance on the condition that the Saints choose to diligently keep commandments.

Section 136 resulted in the best organized and executed overland emigration in American history. However, it may be more important for the way it established Brigham Young as a revelator. Saints exercised faith to see in him their (capital *P*) Prophet, and it required personal sacrifice. Section 136 confirmed the correctness of their choice. There was much outspoken criticism of Brigham before and after section 136. The Saints had other options besides him.⁵⁸⁰

Apostle Heber Kimball noted in his journal that section 136 was the first revelation “penned since Joseph was killed. . . . The Lord has given it through the President for the good of this people as they are traveling to the west.”⁵⁸¹ Jedediah Grant voiced what many Saints felt. “Since the death of Joseph, [I] have believed that the keys of revelation were in the Church. When I heard that [section 136] read I felt a light and joy and satisfied that the Holy Ghost had dictated the words within.”⁵⁸²

For Saints who had covenanted to literally “walk in all the ordinances of the Lord” up and over the Rocky Mountains as outcasts, section 136 would sustain them in the heat of the day (Doctrine and Covenants 136:4). Joseph was gone, but the Prophet Brigham Young was just as much a Moses (Doctrine and Covenants 28:3).

Section 137

Soteriology (so·te·ri·ol·o·gy) is theology about salvation. Christianity’s soteriological problem is based on three premises:

- God loves all people and desires their salvation (1 Timothy 2:3–4).
- Salvation comes to those who knowingly and willfully accept Jesus Christ as their Savior (John 3:16).
- Most people live and die without accepting Christ or even knowing that they could or should.

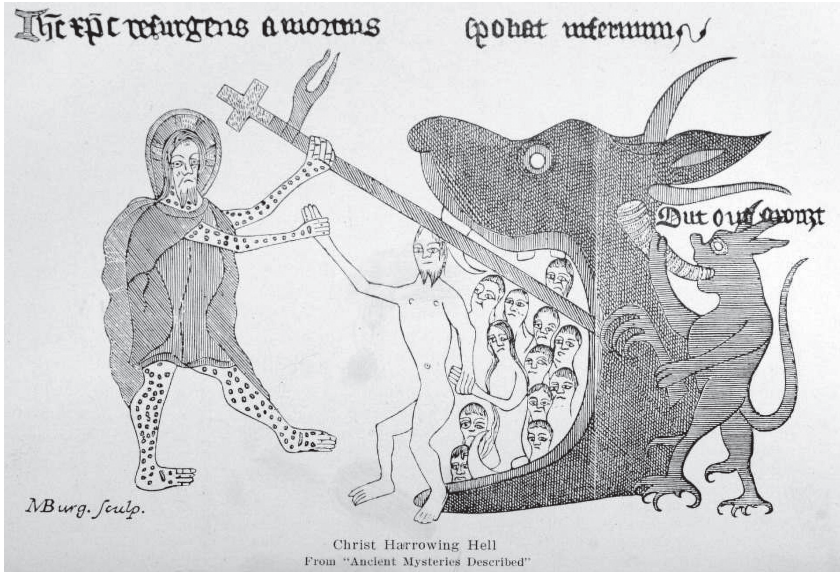
The problem says that all three premises are true, but they can't be reconciled. Proposed solutions tend to discredit one of the premises. Maybe God doesn't desire the salvation of all people. Or maybe Jesus saves people who don't knowingly and willfully accept him.

The first Christians didn't have this problem because they didn't make the unstated assumption that makes it a problem in the first place. In other words, the first Christians didn't believe that death was a deadline that determined a person's salvation. Peter taught that Jesus Christ preached his gospel to the dead so they could be judged as justly as the living (1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6). Paul taught that Christians could be baptized for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29).

Jeffrey Trumbower's very cool book *Rescue for the Dead*⁵⁸³ traces the doctrine of redemption for the dead through Christian history. It turns out that it was Augustine, not Jesus or his Apostles, who decided that death should be a deadline that determined a person's salvation. But Augustine's view prevailed in Christ's church, at least in the West. Many medieval Christians continued to believe that (after his death and before his Resurrection) Christ opened the spirit prison. They called this event the "harrowing of hell," and they created a lot of art depicting it.⁵⁸⁴ My favorite images are the ones in which hell is an awful monster, and Christ causes it to cough up its captive dead (as in 2 Nephi 9). However, the Protestant reformers, for all the good they did, generally followed Augustine on this point. Then along came Joseph Smith.

Joseph was immersed in Protestant culture and assumptions. His big brother died painfully in 1823. The loss was heartbreaking to Joseph. It stung even worse when Reverend Benjamin Stockton implied pretty strongly at Alvin's funeral that he would spend eternity in hell. Joseph couldn't reconcile Alvin's goodness, Reverend Stockton's doctrine, and a just and merciful God.

Fast-forward twelve years to 1836. Joseph now knows from the Book of Mormon that unaccountable infants who die are not damned, but as distasteful as Reverend Stockton's doctrine still sounds, Joseph



Descent into Hell with Hellmouth, engraving by Michael Burghers (d. 1727). "Christ Harrowing Hell," published in "Ancient Mysteries Described," 1823, copied from the 1904 work *Plays of Our Forefathers* by Charles Mills Gayley.

doesn't know that adults who die before embracing the Savior's gospel are not automatically damned. Sincere and devout but mistaken theologians have caused this problem.

If you're the Lord Jesus Christ, how will you solve it? How will you inform a world that has already decided otherwise that your saving grace reaches beyond death and saves all who choose to embrace your gospel? Joseph hasn't even thought to ask. He is so thoroughly acculturated by Protestantism. So how do you get him to become open to it? How do you help him become aware of things he doesn't know that he doesn't know?

You show him a vision of the future and of heaven, and you make sure he sees Alvin there. That makes him marvel and wonder. How will Alvin get past the flaming gates of God's kingdom? Having purposely provoked the question, you answer it:



Descent of Christ to Limbo, Andrea de Bonaiuto da Firenze, fresco, between 1365 and 1368, Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy.

All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom; For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desires of their hearts. (Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9⁵⁸⁵)

Desire, not death, is the determinant of salvation through Jesus Christ. He saves all who desire to be saved by Him once they know that good news. Which side of death they are on makes no difference. By removing the assumption that death determines salvation, Jesus resolved the soteriological problem for Joseph and for everyone else. There is no conflict between the premises now.

Section 138

Early Christians believed that people were not saved or damned based on when they lived or died but based on what they decided to do with Christ's offer of salvation when they learned about it. Over the subsequent centuries, however, death became "a firm boundary of salvation" in western Christianity.⁵⁸⁶

Based on teachings of Peter and Paul, medieval Christians continued to believe in what they called the "harrowing of hell," Christ's disembodied descent into the spirit world between his crucifixion and resurrection to redeem the captives. A rich tradition of drama and art depict the Savior's mission of "deliverance" in which he declared "liberty to the captives who had been faithful" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:18).⁵⁸⁷

A thousand years later, in 1918, the problem of death had not diminished and the aged Prophet Joseph F. Smith contemplated the same teachings of Peter and Paul. The Great War, known to us as World War I, raged, eventually claiming more than nine million lives. A global influenza pandemic dwarfed that total, reaping a grim harvest of perhaps fifty million souls or more worldwide. It killed over 195,000 Americans in October 1918, the deadliest month in American history, the month the Lord revealed section 138.⁵⁸⁸

In the midst of the dead and dying was Joseph F. His father Hyrum had been brutally shot to death when Joseph was five. "I lost my mother, the sweetest soul that ever lived," Joseph wrote, "when I was only a boy."⁵⁸⁹ His first child, Mercy Josephine, died at age two, leaving Joseph "vacant, lonely, desolate, deserted." His eldest son died unexpectedly in January 1918, leaving President Smith his "overwhelming burden of grief." In between those deaths, President Smith buried a wife and eleven other children.⁵⁹⁰

President Smith was ill as general conference approached in October 1918. He surprised the Saints by attending on October 4 and speaking briefly. "I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communications

with the Spirit of the Lord continuously.”⁵⁹¹ The day before, the Lord had given him the visions described in section 138.⁵⁹²

Section 138 is a Christ-centered testimony from beginning to end. It starts with President Smith pondering the Savior’s atonement, continues with a witness of Christ’s “harrowing of hell,” proceeds with the gospel of Jesus Christ being preached to departed spirits, and concludes in the name of Jesus. “I saw” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:11), “I beheld” (vv. 15, 57), “I understood” (v. 25), “I perceived” (v. 29), “I observed” v. 55), “I bear record, and I know that this record is true,” Joseph F. declared (v. 60).

He used powerful verbs to describe how he sought revelation. “I sat in my room *pondering* over the scriptures; And *reflecting* upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:1–2, emphasis added). He intellectually “*engaged*” the soteriological (relating to salvation) problem of Christian theology and the most terrible questions of his time in which “the sheer, overwhelming quantity of death awakened individual and communal grief on an unprecedented scale. With the loss came questions: What is the fate of the dead? Do they continue to exist? Is there life after death?”⁵⁹³ He returned to relevant Bible passages he already knew well and “pondered over these things which are written” (v. 11).

That resulted in a series of visions. Joseph F. saw an innumerable gathering of the righteous dead, those who had been faithful Christians in life, “rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:15). They had been eagerly waiting for Christ to deliver them from the bondage of being disembodied, what verse 23 calls the “chains of hell” (cross-reference Doctrine and Covenants 45:17 and 93:33). The Savior arrived and preached the gospel to them but not to those who had rejected the warnings of prophets in life.

This vision led President Smith to wonder and inquire further. Christ’s miraculous three-year mortal ministry resulted in few converts. How could his short ministry among the dead be effective? What did Peter mean by writing that the Savior preached to the spirits

in prison who had been disobedient? These questions brought another revelation, a recognition “that the Lord went not in person among the wicked and disobedient” but sent messengers.⁵⁹⁴ He mustered an army to wage war with death and hell. He “organized his forces” and armed them “with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:30).

Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and Wilford Woodruff all taught that the Savior unlocked the spirit prison and provided for redemption of the dead.⁵⁹⁵ Not until Joseph F.’s vision, however, did mankind know how Christ “organized his forces,” “appointed messengers,” and “commissioned them to go forth” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:30). That made it possible for the dead to act for themselves, to be fully developed free agents who were accountable for their new knowledge. The teaching fulfilled God’s just plan of salvation, making each individual responsible to receive or reject “the sacrifice of the Son of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:35).

President Smith saw “our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:39). He must have been moved to see his father, Hyrum Smith, together with his brother Joseph, “among the noble and great ones” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:55). Most comforting to me is his vision of

the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead. (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57)

As both orphaned son and grieving father, President Smith appreciated the vision’s confirmation of “the redemption of the dead, and the sealing of the children to their parents” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:48).

A survivor of the influenza pandemic repeatedly asked, “Where are the dead?” Section 138 “answers this question and speaks to the

great, worldwide need that underlies it.”⁵⁹⁶ On October 31, 1918, ailing President Smith sent his son Joseph Fielding Smith to read the revelation to a meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They “accepted and endorsed the revelation as the word of the Lord.”⁵⁹⁷ The *Deseret Evening News* published the revelation about a month later. In the meantime, Joseph F. passed from life to death knowing better than anyone else what he could expect on arrival.

Official Declaration 1

Plural marriage was an Abrahamic test. The Church’s essay on the topic begins,

Latter-day Saints believe that the marriage of one man and one woman is the Lord’s standing law of marriage. . . . By revelation the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to institute the practice of plural marriage among Church members in the early 1840s. For more than half a century, plural marriage was practiced by some Latter-day Saints under the direction of the Church president.

The next line acknowledges, “Latter-day Saints do not understand all of God’s purposes in instituting, through His prophets, the practice of plural marriage.”⁵⁹⁸ That seems to be key to at least part of what the Lord accomplished through plural marriage. He didn’t explain it any more than to say that it would be Abrahamic in its wrenching test and in its promised blessings. He left it at that and promised to explain more later (Doctrine and Covenants 132:66).

Saints went forward with faith and uncertainty. Plural marriage was a poorly kept secret in Nauvoo in the 1840s. In Iowa Territory and Utah Territory in the late 1840s and early 1850s, it was an open secret. In August 1852, Brigham Young appointed a special conference to have the revelation in section 132 read publicly, and Apostle Orson Pratt gave a lengthy defense of the practice of plural marriage. After that, the secret was out. More than one hundred missionaries were sent all over the world with instructions to preach it.

That was wildly unpopular in the United States and elsewhere. In 1862, in the midst of Civil War, the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, which was designed to punish the Church for plural marriage by confiscating its property. President Lincoln had bigger problems and didn't enforce the law. After the Union was reconstructed, Congress turned its attention back to the Saints. With encouragement from the First Presidency, George Reynolds allowed himself to be convicted under the Morrill Act to test the constitutionality of the law. Though the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution stipulates that Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion, the Supreme Court upheld Morrill in 1879, ruling that a person may believe in but not practice plural marriage.

Latter-day Saints generally responded with civil disobedience, since, when it came to a choice between the two, obeying God trumped fidelity to what they regarded as a bad law. Congress, meanwhile, passed tougher and tougher laws against the Saints, the Supreme Court upheld them, and federal marshals enforced them. Apostle and jurist Dallin H. Oaks testified before a congressional committee,

I know of no other major religious group in America that has endured anything comparable to the officially sanctioned persecution that was imposed upon members of my church by federal, state, and local government officials. . . . Most of these denials of religious freedom received the express approval of the United States Supreme Court. It was a dark chapter in the history of religious freedom in this country.⁵⁹⁹

Meanwhile, Lorena Larsen married Bent Rolfsen as a second wife. It was not her ideal arrangement. Most women in her time and place didn't think of marriage as an ideal. They thought of it as an obligation and a protection. They expected it to be a lot of hard work, child-rearing, and duty. And Latter-day Saint women expected it to end in exaltation.

Lorena wrote,

We had gone into that order of marriage because we fully believed God had commanded it, and while we had human nature to contend

with, we worked and prayed for strength to overcome selfishness and greed and live on a higher plain, learn to love each other, or there would never be happiness.⁶⁰⁰

In response to the “raid” on her family and others, Lorena left home to work in the Manti Temple so her husband would not be prosecuted. When she discovered she was expecting a baby, she and her family went to rural Colorado to avoid prosecution.

In his May 19, 1890, journal entry, President Wilford Woodruff noted: “The Supreme Court of the United States Decided to day Against the Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints. They Decided to Escheat all the Church Property Real & Personal.” That meant that for the first time, all of the teeth of the Morrill Act and others passed since would bite. The temples would be confiscated. President Woodruff worried continually about the wisest course to take.

In late September he wrote in his journal:

I have arived at a point in the History of my life as the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints whare I am under the necessity of acting for the Temporal Salvation of the Church. The United State Government has taken a Stand & passed Laws to destroy the Latter day Saints upon the Subject of poligamy or Patriarchal order of Marriage. And after praying to the Lord & feeling inspired by his spirit I have issued the following Proclamation which is sustained by My Councillors and the 12 Apostles.⁶⁰¹

About two weeks later at the Church’s October 1890 general conference, President Lorenzo Snow presented the Manifesto, as he called it, to the Saints for a sustaining vote. Consent appeared to be unanimous, but many were unsettled by the announcement and resentful of the government’s oppressive measures that led President Woodruff to seek the revelation.

Lorena Larsen learned of the Manifesto near Moab, Utah, on her way home from Colorado. She wrote vividly about the experience.

My husband came to our tent and told me about it, and my feelings were past description. I had gone into that order of marriage solely . . . because I believed God had commanded his people to do so, and

it had been such a sacrifice to enter it, and live it as I thought God wanted me to. And as I thought about it, it seemed impossible that the Lord would go back on a principal which had caused so much sacrifice, heartache, and trial before one could conquer one's carnal self, and live on that higher plane, and love one's neighbor as one's self. My husband walked out without saying a word, and as he walked away I thought, Oh yes, it is easy for you, you can go home to your other family and be happy with her, while I must be like Hagar, sent away.

My anguish was inexpressible, and a dense darkness took hold of my mind. I thought that if the Lord and the church authorities had gone back on that principle, there was nothing to any part of the gospel. I fancied I could see my self and my children, and many other splendid women and their families turned adrift, and our only purpose in entering it, had been to more fully serve the Lord. I sank down on our bedding and wished in my anguish that the earth would open and take me and my children in. The darkness seemed impenetrable.

All at once I heard a voice and felt a most powerful presence. The voice said, "Why this is no more unreasonable than the requirement the Lord made of Abraham when he commanded him to offer up his son Isaac, and when the Lord sees that you are willing to obey in all things the trial shall be removed."

There was a light whose brightness cannot be described which filled my soul, and I was so filled with joy, peace, and happiness that I felt that no matter whatever should come to me in all my future life, I could never feel sad again. If the people of the whole world had been gathered together trying with all their power to comfort me, they could not compare with the powerful unseen Presence which came to me on that occasion.

And as soon as my husband came back I told him what a glorious presence had been there, and what I had heard. He said, "I knew that I could not say a word to comfort you, so I went to a patch of willows, and asked the Lord to send a comforter."⁶⁰²

Through personal revelations like the one Lorena received, Latter-day Saints learned to accept plural marriage in the 1840s and to let it go beginning in the 1890s. There have been many significant changes in the Church throughout its history. The way to cope well with them is to live in the light of personal revelation that confirms the Lord's

revelations to the prophets. In a world where everything, including Church practices, is subject to change, revelation to prophets and ordinary folks remains constant. So does the love of the God of Abraham.

Official Declaration 2

I was seven years old in June 1978 when the Lord revealed to President Spencer W. Kimball that all worthy men, regardless of race, should be ordained to the priesthood and all worthy people could receive all the temple ordinances. I vaguely recollect the announcement. I didn't know that black people could not receive temple ordinances before that or that worthy black men were not ordained to the priesthood. If I had known, I would have assumed it was God's will and not thought about it. Everything I knew was black and white, and everyone I knew was white.

Things got more complex as I grew up—math, science, history, and the restored gospel. I learned that Europeans who enslaved Africans found justification in Genesis 9, where Noah cursed his grandson Canaan to be a servant, though it says nothing about race. Anti-slavery advocates argued from the Bible too.⁶⁰³

The Savior's restored Church came of age in the midst of this controversy. Nothing was more frequently in the news or engaged the passions of Americans more than the race-based antagonisms that led finally to Civil War, as Joseph had prophesied (see section 87). Early Latter-day Saints had various opinions, assumptions, and prejudices. They did not always align with the Lord's revelations. "It is not right that any man should be in bondage to another," the Lord revealed, because everyone should be free to act "according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:78). The Book of Mormon says the Lord "denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth

the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 16:33). With Joseph’s knowledge and consent, a few black men, including Elijah Abel, received the priesthood in the 1830s and 1840s, served missions, and remained faithful.⁶⁰⁴ The First Presidency declared in 1840 that “persons of all languages, and of every tongue, and of every color . . . shall with us worship the Lord of Hosts in his holy temple.”⁶⁰⁵

Early in 1852, Brigham Young declared black men should not be ordained to the priesthood, at least not yet. He reasoned that Cain had killed Abel, and until there was compensation for that, Cain’s descendants shouldn’t have priesthood. He was assuming, as many people did, that black people were Cain’s descendants, and therefore heirs of the curse.⁶⁰⁶

In the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, Enoch prophesied that Noah’s grandson Canaan and his descendants were destined to live in a land cursed with excessive heat and therefore barrenness. Enoch also saw that their skin became black and they were hated (Moses 7:7–8). The prophecy does not say that was cause and effect. Prophecies that are descriptive (things as they will be) are often misread as prescriptive (things as they should be), but it seems unlikely that God, who commands us to love one another, willed for Noah’s descendants to be “despised among all people” (Moses 7:8).

The book of Abraham suggests that the first pharaoh of Egypt was a son of Canaan and Egyptus and thus a grandson of Ham and a great-grandson of Noah. According to the book of Abraham, “Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate” the order of the priesthood (Abraham 1:26). Noah blessed him with wealth and wisdom “but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood” for unspecified reasons (Abraham 1:26). The Canaanites’ race is not mentioned, but some readers interpreted the Moses passage about black skin to apply to the Abraham passage about the righteous Pharaoh who was cursed “pertaining to the Priesthood.”

How should those passages to be interpreted? Is there a genealogical link between the ancient Canaanites and modern Africans, or

is that an unfounded assumption advanced by slavery proponents and accepted by Latter-day Saints? Were blacks denied the priesthood because of an inherited curse or because people misinterpreted the Pearl of Great Price or for some other reasons? In the face of unanswered questions, the restriction created tension between these truths:

- The Lord invites all to come to him, black and white, and all of us are alike to God—beloved children (2 Nephi 26:33).
- Apostles are commissioned to take the gospel to everyone.
- A race-based restriction existed.

Those coexisting facts created a theological problem. “A contradictory and confusing legacy of racist religious folklore” grew up to address the problem. People are black, this way of thinking went, because they chose to be less valiant in the premortal world.⁶⁰⁷ That satisfied some people, but mainly it complicated the problem. There was no evidence for it. It was simply a rationale to make sense of a restriction that didn’t otherwise make gospel sense.

The problem that had troubled a few people all along became acute for many, including the Apostles, as they confronted the tension between the restrictions and their commission to take the gospel global. As an Apostle in 1963, Spencer W. Kimball said, “I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter.” He did not know whether to characterize the restriction as “doctrine or policy” but acknowledged that it “has not varied in my memory.” He continued, “I know it could. I know the Lord could change his policy.”⁶⁰⁸ Little did Elder Kimball know then how the Lord would implement change through him.

Revelation came to Church president Spencer W. Kimball in 1978. By then thousands of West Africans had accepted the gospel and waited for baptism with great faith. Black Latter-day Saints all over the world hoped and prayed for the long-promised day when temple doors would be opened to them. President Kimball had a commission from Christ to get the gospel blessings to them, and he needed to know how to accomplish it.

Following the pattern for revelation established by Doctrine and Covenants 9:8–9, he thoroughly studied the history of the policy. He sought the views of others and asked his brethren to study the scriptures for understanding. At President Kimball’s request, some of the Apostles wrote analyses of the policy. They concluded that there was no scriptural reason it couldn’t change. President Kimball spoke privately with the Apostles and held council meetings to discuss the issue freely.⁶⁰⁹

On March 9, 1978, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles unanimously voted that a change would have to come by revelation to the Prophet. “President Kimball agreed but also wanted them to learn the will of the Lord for themselves. He urged them to fast and pray individually over the question.” Two weeks later President Kimball confided to his counselors that he felt impressed to lift the restriction. They agreed to sustain him and to discuss the issue again with the Apostles before making a final decision. Concerned that his brethren know for themselves that he intended to do the Lord’s will and not his own, President Kimball pled with the Lord to reveal it to the Apostles. “After everybody had gone out of the temple, I knelt and prayed. And I prayed with such fervency,” he said. “I tell you! I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. And I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and to put them into place.”⁶¹⁰

In late May, after more council meetings, the First Presidency and the Apostles planned to come to their next meeting, on June 1, fasting and praying to learn the Lord’s will. President Kimball canceled their lunch that day and suggested that they keep fasting.⁶¹¹

President Kimball described his tentative conclusion to lift the ban and the revelatory process that led him to it. He asked for the views of his brethren. Each of them favored ending the restriction. “Do you mind if I lead you in prayer?” President Kimball asked. They circled the temple altar and joined their faith. President Kimball prayed that they would be “cleansed and made free from sin so that we might receive the Lord’s word.”⁶¹² He asked for a manifestation that they had arrived at the right decision to do the will of the Lord. The Lord

answered “so clearly that there was no doubt about it,”⁶¹³ President Kimball later testified. So did others who were there that day.⁶¹⁴

A week later, the First Presidency announced the revelation to the general authorities in the temple and received their sustaining vote. Then President Kimball put his hand on his counselor’s knee and said, “Go tell the world.”⁶¹⁵ President Tanner released the statement, part of which is Official Declaration 2, to the press.

Official Declaration 2 is not a dictation of the words of Jesus Christ. There were no words in the revelation. Official Declaration 2 declares officially that the Lord had revealed his will. The First Presidency described the context of the revelation as expanding missionary work and their great desire to extend the blessings of the priesthood and temple to “every worthy member of the Church.” They explained that, in light of prophecies made by their predecessors that the priesthood would someday be extended to those who had been denied, they had “pleaded long and earnestly” for that day to come. God had heard their prayers, they testified,

and by revelation . . . confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. (Official Declaration 2)

The First Presidency emphasized the revelation’s theological consistency with Nephi’s teachings “that all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” and that the Lord “inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Nephi 26:28, 33). “We declare with soberness,” they wrote, “that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of *all* his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants” (Official Declaration 2, emphasis added).

Soon thereafter, Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke to nearly a thousand seminary teachers on 2 Nephi 26:33. “These words have taken on a new meaning,” he said.

We have caught a new vision of their true significance. This also applies to a great number of other passages in the revelations. Since the Lord gave this revelation on the priesthood, our understanding of many passages has expanded. Many of us never imagined or supposed that they had the extensive and broad meaning that they do have.

What about statements by earlier authorities to the contrary? “We spoke with a limited understanding,” Elder McConkie explained, “and without the light and knowledge that has now come into the world.”⁶¹⁶

Notes

1. “Minutes, 1–2 November 1831,” p. 15, The Joseph Smith Papers, Church Historian’s Press, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-1-2-november-1831/1>. “Revelation Book 1,” p. 125, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/111>. Joseph “dictated by the spirit the preface found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants while sitting by a window in the room. Sidney Rigdon wrote it down. Joseph would deliver a few sentences and Sidney would write them down, then read them aloud, and if correct, then Joseph would proceed and deliver more, and by this process the preface was given.”

2. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/5>.

3. “Journal, 1835–1836,” p. 24, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/25>.

4. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Deseret Book, 1989–92), 1:278.

5. Russell M. Nelson, “The Atonement,” *Ensign* 26, no. 11 (October 1996): 35.

6. “History, circa Summer 1832,” pp. 5–6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/5>.

7. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” p. 131, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/138>; “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” p. [6], bk. 7, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/86>.

8. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 10.

9. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (Knopf, 2005), 68.

10. “History, circa Summer 1832,” p. 1.

11. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” p. 72.

12. “Revelation Book 1,” p. 2.

13. “Revelation, February 1829 [D&C 4],” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-february-1829-dc-4/1>.

14. On Father Smith’s mission to his family, see Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 114.

15. Historical Introduction to “Revelation, March 1829 [D&C 5],” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-march-1829-dc-5/1#historical-intro>.

16. “History, circa Summer 1832,” p. [6].

17. “History, circa Summer 1832,” p. [6]; “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 15.

18. James H. Hart, “About the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret News*, April 9, 1884, 190; see also “Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” *Deseret News*, November 27, 1878, 674.

19. In his famous 1741 sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Jonathan Edwards described “the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation.” John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (Yale University Press, 1995), 90.

20. “Revelation, April 1829—A [D&C 6],” p. 14, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-april-1829-a-dc-6/1>.

21. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorised Version, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts . . .*, vol. 1 (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 631.

22. Historical Introduction to “Account of John, April 1829—C [D&C 7],” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/account-of-john-april-1829-c-dc-7/1#historical-intro>.

23. “Doctrine and Covenants, 1835,” 33:1 (Doctrine and Covenants 7:2), The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/168>.

24. “Doctrine and Covenants, 1835,” 33:2 (Doctrine and Covenants 7:4).

25. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Bookcraft, 1980), 83; Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Deseret Book, 2005), 108, 327.

26. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 16.

27. “Revelation, April 1829—B [D&C 8],” p. 13, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-april-1829-b-dc-8/2>; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 73; Robert J. Woodford, “Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 185–89.

28. See all of Alma 37; see also 1 Nephi 16:29; Mosiah 8:15–18; Doctrine and Covenants 10:1; and Joseph Smith—History 1:62.

29. “Revelation Book 1,” p. 14.

30. Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, in *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 1 (October 1834): 14.

31. Historical Introduction to “Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829–circa January 1830,” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/printers-manuscript-of-the-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829-circa-january-1830/1#historical-intro>; “Book of Mormon Original Manuscript (1829),” Church History Essays, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/library/book-of-mormon-original-manuscript-1829?lang=eng>.

32. Reuben Miller, Journal, October 21, 1848, MS 1392, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/2222322-f4fe-41e3-aa86-bfc54b94df92/0/15>.

33. “Revelation, Spring 1829 [D&C 10],” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-spring-1829-dc-10/1>.

34. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 19.
35. Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, p. 5, MS 3470, Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/37b7b91c-4148-45d6-8f32-df4acf06fe99/0/5>; Dean Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 35–36.
36. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 21.
37. "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 179, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/56>.
38. "History, 1834–1836," p. 48, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1834-1836/50>.
39. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 17.
40. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 17.
41. "History, 1834–1836," p. 48.
42. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 18.
43. Wilford Woodruff, "Journal (January 1, 1838–December 31, 1839)," June 27, 1839, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, accessed October 14, 2024, <https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/R8z>; President Joseph Smith's Journal 1843, as kept by Willard Richards, 170–72 (February 9, 1843), Church History Library.
44. Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:294.
45. Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Grandin, 1991).
46. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 23.
47. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 25.
48. "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," p. [11], bk. 8.
49. "Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon," p. 463.
50. "Book of Commandments, 1833," p. 34, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/38>.
51. Truman G. Madsen, "The Savior, the Sacrament, and Self-Worth," address given at Relief Society Women's Conference, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1999, https://womensconference.byu.edu/sites/womensconference.ce.byu.edu/files/madsen_truman.pdf.
52. M. Russell Ballard, "The Atonement and the Value of One Soul," address given at the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, April 2004, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2004/04/the-atonement-and-the-value-of-one-soul?lang=eng>.
53. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism: Biography of Its Founders and History of Its Church* (New York, 1867), 41, 50.
54. John H. Gilbert, Memorandum, September 8, 1892, photocopy, MS 9223, Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/162efea4-cb3f-459f-937f-949b3995e572/0/0>. "Mormon Leaders at Their Mecca," *New York Herald*, June 25, 1893, 12.
55. Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism*, 51.
56. Joseph Knight Sr., *Reminiscences*, pp. 6–7; Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," 37.

57. Martin Harris, Mortgage to Egbert B. Grandin, August 25, 1829, Mortgages, Liber 3, 325, Wayne County Clerk's Office, Lyons, New York.

58. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 29.

59. "Minutes, 9 June 1830," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-9-june-1830/1>.

60. Oliver Cowdery, "Articles of the Church of Christ," Church History Library.

61. "History, circa June–October 1839 [Draft 1]," p. [23], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-october-1839-draft-1/23>.

62. "Minute Book 2," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/4>.

63. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 29.

64. Boyd K. Packer, "Ordinances," devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, February 3, 1980, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/boyd-k-packer/ordinances/>.

65. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Yale University Press, 1989), 17; Jeffrey R. Holland, "Prophets, Seers, and Revelators," *Ensign* 34, no. 11 (November 2004): 6.

66. "Latter Day Saints; 1844," p. 404, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/latter-day-saints-1844/1>.

67. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng., 1855–86), 16:293–94 (November 2, 1873); see also "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 38, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/44>.

68. Francis Wayland, *Notes and Principles on the Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York, 1857), 98.

69. "The Golden Bible," *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, [3].

70. "Mormonism," *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, February 15, 1831, [1]; Thomas Campbell, "The Mormon Challenge," *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, February 15, 1831, [2].

71. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 38.

72. Steven C. Harper, "Oliver Cowdery as Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration," in *Days Never to Be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*, ed. Alexander L. Baugh (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 73–89.

73. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 48.

74. "Some of the Remarks of John S. Reed, Esq., as Delivered before the State Convention," *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844): 549–52; "History, 1838–1856, Volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844]," p. 48, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 17, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-vol-ume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/54>.

75. "Revelation, July 1830–C [D&C 25]," p. 34, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-july-1830-c-dc-25/1>.

76. "Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book," p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book/5>.

77. "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 164; see also Job 5:19.
78. Carol Cornwall Madsen, "The 'Elect Lady' Revelation: The Historical and Doctrinal Context of Doctrine & Covenants 25," in *The Heavens Are Open* (Deseret Book, 1993), 211–18.
79. "History, circa June–October 1839 [Draft 1]," p. [8].
80. "History, circa June–October 1839 [Draft 1]," p. [9].
81. "History, 1838–1856, Volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844]," pp. 1747–49, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/119>.
82. Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*, 1846, Church History Library.
83. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 51.
84. Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*.
85. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:92 (1877), also see 10:245 and 19:92; John Henry Smith, *Diary*, July 1906, Manuscripts Division, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
86. Compare Ephesians 6:11–18.
87. This teaching is distinctive to Joseph Smith. He equated the archangel Michael with the Bible's Adam, an idea apparently first documented in Oliver Cowdery's January 1, 1834, letter to John Whitmer (Oliver Cowdery Letterbook, 15, Huntington Library, San Marino, California). Similarly, Joseph interpreted references to the "Ancient of days" in the book of Daniel (7:9, 13, 22) as references to Adam. When Daniel "speaks of the Ancient of days," Joseph taught in 1839, "he means the oldest man, our Father Adam, Michael." Willard Richards, *Pocket Companion*, 63, Church History Library.
88. Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*.
89. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," pp. 53–54.
90. Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*.
91. Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*.
92. "Revelation, July 1830–A [D&C 29]," p. 36, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-september-1830-a-dc-29/1>.
93. Neal A. Maxwell, "Hope through the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign* 28, no. 11 (November 1998): 61.
94. Peter Whitmer Jr., *Journal*, Church History Library.
95. *Western Courier* (Ravenna, Ohio), May 26, 1831. Levi Jackman wrote that "something like one hundred persons joined the Church from that place [Kirtland], with many other branches of the Church organized in adjoining towns and counties." See Levi Jackman, *Autobiography*, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
96. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, eds., *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, rev. and enhanced ed. (Deseret Book, 2000), 39; Samuel Smith, *Journal*, April 24, 1832, Church History Library; Lee Yost to Deidrich Willers, May 18, 1897, cited in Larry C. Porter, "A Study of the Origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816–1831" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1971), 109.

97. *Millennial Star* 26, no. 24 (June 11, 1864): 375–76.
98. “History of Thos. Baldwin Marsh,” *Deseret News*, March 24, 1858, 18.
99. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, eds., *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Bookcraft, 1996), 259–77.
100. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Church History Library.
101. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 60.
102. “History of Parley P. Pratt,” *Deseret News*, May 19, 1858.
103. Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy, November 24, 1831, in *Ohio Star* (Ravenna, Ohio), December 8, 1831.
104. Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir* (Signature, 2001), 502–3.
105. Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 503.
106. “Testimony of Brother E. Thayer Concerning the Latter Day Work,” *Saints’ Herald* 3, no. 4 (October 1862): 79–80, 82–84.
107. “Testimony of Brother E. Thayer,” 79–80, 82–84.
108. Elden J. Watson, comp., *The Orson Pratt Journals* (self-pub., 1975), 9.
109. James R. B. Van Cleave to Joseph Smith III, September 29, 1878, Library and Archives, Community of Christ, Independence, Mo.; “History of Orson Pratt,” 10, Historian’s Office, Histories of the Twelve, ca. 1858–1880, Church History Library.
110. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:290.
111. Quoted in Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (University of Utah Press, 1985), xi.
112. Book of John Whitmer, chapter 1, Library and Archives, Community of Christ.
113. Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 504–5.
114. Book of John Whitmer, chapter 1.
115. Book of John Whitmer, chapter 1.
116. Richard L. Anderson, “The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio,” *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (1971): 489.
117. History of Edward Partridge Jr., 5, quoted in Anderson, “Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio,” 493.
118. Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 504–5.
119. “Revelation, 7 November 1835,” p. 20, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-7-november-1835/1>.
120. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” p. 4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-whitmer-history-1831-circa-1847/8>.
121. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” p. 5.
122. “Newel Knight Autobiography,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, comp. and ed. Dan Vogel, 5 vols. (Signature, 2002): 4:64.
123. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” p. 6.
124. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” p. 9.
125. William G. Hartley, *Stand by My Servant Joseph* (Deseret Book, 2003), 103.
126. Book of John Whitmer, chapter 1.
127. “Newel Knight Autobiography,” 4:64.

128. “We tend to think of consecration only as yielding up, when divinely directed, our material possessions. But ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God.” Neal A. Maxwell, “Consecrate Thy Performance,” *Ensign* 32, no. 5 (May 2002): 36.

129. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught the same principle in our time: “Pay your tithing as a declaration that possession of material goods and the accumulation of worldly wealth are *not* the uppermost goals of your existence. As one young husband and father, living on a student budget, recently told me, ‘Perhaps our most pivotal moments as Latter-day Saints come when we have to swim directly against the current of the culture in which we live. Tithing provides just such a moment. Living in a world that emphasizes material acquisition and cultivates distrust for anyone or anything that has designs on our money, we shed that self-absorption to give freely, trustingly, and generously. By this act, we say—indeed—we are different, that we are God’s peculiar people. In a society that tells us money is our most important asset, we declare emphatically it is not.’” Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Watered Garden,” *Ensign* 31, no. 11 (November 2001): 33, emphasis in original.

130. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 91.

131. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 92.

132. “Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833,” p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w- Phelps-11-january-1833/2>.

133. “History, 1838–1856, Volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842],” p. 1014, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/186>.

134. “Revelation, 4 February 1831 [D&C 41],” p. 61, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-february-1831-dc-41/1>; B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977–78), 1:244.

135. Edward Partridge Papers, May 26, 1839, Church History Library.

136. Anderson, “Impact of the First Mormon Preaching in Ohio,” 489.

137. History of Edward Partridge Jr., 5, quoted in Anderson, “Impact of the First Mormon Preaching in Ohio,” 493; Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 504–5.

138. Quoted in Scott H. Partridge, “Edward Partridge in Painesville, Ohio,” *BYU Studies* 42, no. 1 (2003): 59.

139. Scott H. Partridge, ed., *Eliza Maria Partridge Journal* (Grandin, 2003), 2–3.

140. “Letter to Martin Harris, 22 February 1831,” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-martin-harris-22-february-1831/1>.

141. “Revelation, 2 January 1831 [D&C 38],” p. 52, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-2-january-1831-dc-38/4>; see also Doctrine and Covenants 38:32.

142. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 93.

143. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” p. 11.

144. "Revelation, 4 February 1831 [D&C 41]," p. 61, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-february-1831-dc-41/1>; see also Doctrine and Covenants 41:3.
145. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 12.
146. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-9-february-1831-dc-421-72/1>; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:32.
147. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," p. 3.
148. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," pp. 3–4.
149. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 93.
150. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 17.
151. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Deseret Book, 1997), 639.
152. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," pp. 1–2.
153. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," p. 2.
154. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," pp. 2–5.
155. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," pp. 1–5. This concept was further clarified in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.
156. One question read, "How far it is the will of the Lord that we Should have dealings with the wo[r]ld & how we Should conduct our dealings with them?" The answer was, "Thou shalt contract no debts with them & again the Elders & Bishop shall Council together & they shall do by the directions of the spirit as it must be necessary." The other question was, "What preperations we shall make for our Brethren from the East & when [another manuscript asks where] & how?" The Lord answered, "There shall be as many appointed as must needs be necessary to assist the Bishop in obtaining places that they may be together as much as can be & is directed by the holy Spirit" ("Revelation, 9 February 1831, [D&C 42:1–72]," p. 6).
157. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 10.
158. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 18; "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 101; Ezra Booth letter, November 29, 1831, in *Ohio Star* (Ravenna, Ohio) December 8, 1831.
159. Booth letter; Book of John Whitmer, chapter 3; "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," pp. 101–3; Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., rev., 7 vols. (Deseret Book, 1971), 1:154.
160. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 10.
161. "Letter to Martin Harris, 22 February 1831," p. [1].
162. "Revelation, February 1831–B [D&C 44]," p. 70, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-february-1831-b-dc-44/1>.
163. "Act for the Incorporation of Religious Societies," *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 12 (Office of the Supporter, 1819), chapter 54.
164. "Letter to Hyrum Smith, 3–4 March 1831," p. [2], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-hyrum-smith-3-4-march-1831/2>.

165. "Minute Book 2," p. 3; "Minutes, circa 3–4 June 1831," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-circa-3-4-june-1831/1>.

166. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 104.

167. Patricia T. Holland, "God's Covenant of Peace," in *The Arms of His Love* (Deseret Book, 2000): 375–76.

168. "History, 1838–1856, Volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843]," p. 1434, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/77>.

169. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 23.

170. "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843," p. 46, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843/52>.

171. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 24.

172. "Minute Book 2," p. 3.

173. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 1.

174. "Revelation Book 1."

175. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (Columbia University Press, 2004), 258–59.

176. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-9-february-1831-dc-421-72/1>.

177. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 23.

178. F. W. Evans, *Believers Compendium* (1859), chapter 11.

179. Lawrence R. Flake, "A Shaker View of a Mormon Mission," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 1 (1979): 94–99.

180. Evans, *Believers Compendium*, chapters 3–10.

181. Flake, "Shaker View of a Mormon Mission," 94–99.

182. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 112.

183. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 26.

184. "Revelation, 7 May 1831 [D&C 49]," p. 80, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-7-may-1831-dc-49/1>.

185. Flake, "Shaker View of a Mormon Mission," 94–99.

186. Proctor and Proctor, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 69–70.

187. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 10.

188. [Matthew S. Clapp], "Mormonism," *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, February 15, 1831, [1]–[2].

189. Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (New York, 1874), 65.

190. "Revelation, 9 May 1831 [D&C 50]," p. 82, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-9-may-1831-dc-50/1>.

191. Jared Carter, *Autobiography*, Church History Library.
192. "History Draft [1 January–3 March 1843]," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-draft-1-january-3-march-1843/3>.
193. Proctor and Proctor, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 79.
194. Geauga County Tax Records 1832, 230; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:480; Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," 38–39.
195. "Revelation, 20 May 1831 [D&C 51]," p. 86, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-20-may-1831-dc-51/1>.
196. Newel and Joseph Knight sources.
197. Compare "Revelation, 20 May 1831 [D&C 51]," p. 86, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-20-may-1831-dc-51/1>, with "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," p. 150.
198. "The Elders Stationed in Zion to the Churches Abroad," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 14 (July 1822): 109.
199. *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, April 26, 1833, reprinted in Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981), 135.
200. "Letter to Edward Partridge, 2 May 1833," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-2-may-1833/1>.
201. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 271.
202. "Revelation, 6 June 1831 [D&C 52]," p. 87, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-6-june-1831-dc-52/1>.
203. "History, 1838–1856, Volume C-1," p. 872.
204. Historical Introduction to "Revelation, 8 June 1831 [D&C 53]," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-8-june-1831-dc-53/2#historical-intro>; "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 121.
205. Newel Knight, *Autobiography*, 30.
206. "Revelation, 20 May 1831 [D&C 51]," p. 86.
207. Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," 29–39.
208. Joseph Knight Jr., *Incidents of History 1827–1844*, Church History Library.
209. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 121; "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 29.
210. William W. Phelps, "Letter No. 6," *LDS Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 97.
211. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 124.
212. "Revelation, 15 May 1831," p. 85, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-15-may-1831/1>.

213. “Revelation, 15 June 1831 [D&C 56],” p. 92, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-15-june-1831-dc-56/2>.

214. “History of Thomas B. Marsh, Written by Himself,” Church History Library.

215. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 127.

216. “Revelation, 20 July 1831 [D&C 57],” p. 93, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-20-july-1831-dc-57/1>.

217. “Letterbook 2,” p. 54, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-2/59>.

218. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 127.

219. “Revelation, 1 August 1831 [D&C 58],” p. 94, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-august-1831-dc-58/1>.

220. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 164.

221. Martin Luther King Jr., April 3, 1968, Mason Temple (Church of God in Christ Headquarters), Memphis, Tennessee.

222. Booth thought that Joseph was too prone to joking and then again too easily irritated and provoked, that his revelations were “something short of infallible,” the products of “his own weak mind.” Ezra Booth, in *Ohio Star*, November 24, 1831.

223. Ezra Booth, in *Ohio Star*, November 24, 1831.

224. Edward Partridge to Lydia Partridge, August 5, 1831, Emily Partridge Papers, Church History Library.

225. Quoted in Scott H. Partridge, “Edward Partridge in Painesville, Ohio,” *BYU Studies* 42, no. 1 (2003): 64.

226. Quoted in Partridge, “Edward Partridge in Painesville, Ohio,” 64.

227. Partridge, “Edward Partridge in Painesville, Ohio,” 64–65.

228. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:160–61.

229. “Revelation Book 1,” p. 98; “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 139.

230. “‘Church History,’ 1 March 1842,” p. 708, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/church-history-1-march-1842/3>.

231. Quoted in Historical Introduction to “Revelation, 7 August 1831 [D&C 59],” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-7-august-1831-dc-59/1#historical-intro>.

232. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Look to the Future,” address given at the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, October 1997, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1997/10/look-to-the-future>.

233. Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” address given at the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, April 2015, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/04/the-sabbath-is-a-delight>.

234. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 163.

235. "Revelation, 8 August 1831 [D&C 60]," p. 100, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-8-august-1831-dc-60/1>.

236. *Times and Seasons* 5 (March 15, 1844): 464; Reynolds Cahoon, Journal, Church History Library.

237. See Historical Introduction to "Revelation, 12 August 1831 [D&C 61]," p. 101, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-august-1831-dc-61/1#historical-intro>.

238. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), 204.

239. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 142; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 164.

240. Ezra Booth to Edward Partridge, September 20, 1831, in *Ohio Star*, November 24, 1831.

241. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 142.

242. "Revelation, 12 August 1831 [D&C 61]," p. 101.

243. William Phelps, "The Way of Journeying for the Saints of the Church of Christ," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (December 1832): 52–53.

244. Short History of WW Phelps' Stay in Missouri, Church History Library.

245. "Revelation, 13 August 1831 [D&C 62]," p. 104, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-13-august-1831-dc-62/1>.

246. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 146.

247. Doctrine and Covenants 63:41. The Church History Library has an unpublished revelation in John Whitmer's handwriting, dated August 31, 1831, which says, "Behold thus saith the Lord by the voice of the spirit it is wisdom in me that my servant John Burk David Eliot Erastus Babit should take their Journey this fall to the land of Zion."

248. Sidney Rigdon Papers, Church History Library, published in Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 99–101.

249. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 37.

250. See Historical Introduction to "Revelation, 11 September 1831 [D&C 64]," p. 108, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-11-september-1831-dc-64/1#historical-intro>.

251. "Revelation, 11 September 1831 [D&C 64]," p. 108.

252. Ezra Booth, "Mormonism—No. V," *Ohio Star*, November 10, 1831, p. 3.

253. "Minute Book 2," p. 6.

254. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 155.

255. See Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836* (BYU Studies; University of Illinois Press, 1994), 243.

256. Henry William Bigler (1815–1900), Journal, Feb. 1846–Oct. 1899, Church History Library.

257. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 211–12.

258. Andrew F. Ehat, "'It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth': Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 253–79.

259. "History, 1838–1856, Volume C-1," p. 1285.
260. Shippo and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 46–47.
261. Shippo and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 57.
262. Shippo and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 87.
263. "Letter to Emma Smith, 6 June 1832," p. [2], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-6-june-1832/2>.
264. "History, 1838–1856, Volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," p. 796, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/250>.
265. "Minutes, 1–2 November 1831," p. 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-1-2-november-1831/2>.
266. "Minutes, 12 November 1831," p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-12-november-1831/1>; Oliver Cowdery Letterbook, 30–36.
267. "Minute Book 2," p. 15.
268. "Revelation, 1 November 1831–B [D&C 1]," p. 126, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-november-1831-b-dc-1/2>.
269. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 173–74.
270. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 161.
271. "Minutes, 25–26 October 1831," p. 11, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-25-26-october-1831/2>.
272. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 162; Shippo and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 251.
273. "Revelation Book 1," p. 121.
274. "Letter to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832," p. 4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-27-november-1832/4>.
275. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 162.
276. "Minute Book 2," p. 15.
277. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 163; "Revelation, 1 November 1831–A [D&C 68]," p. 113, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-november-1831-a-dc-68/1>.
278. "Resolved: that the mode and manner of regulating the Church of Christ Take effect from this time, according to a Revelation received in Hiram Portage County Ohio Nov 11, 1831." "Minute Book 2," p. 34 (July 3, 1832).
279. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "An Address," July 15, 1838, Harvard Divinity School, in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (Modern Library, 1950), 80.
280. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 38.

281. "Minutes, 12 November 1831," p. 18.

282. John wrote that he and Oliver left Ohio on November 20, 1831, and arrived safely in Independence, Missouri on January 5, 1832. "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," 38.

283. "Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-9-february-1831-dc-421-72/1>.

284. "Minutes, 12 November 1831," p. 18.

285. "Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 30 March 1834," p. 36, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-others-30-march-1834/7>.

286. "Minutes, 8 November 1831," p. 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-8-november-1831/1>.

287. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 174.

288. "Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 30 March 1834," p. 31.

289. "Minute Book 2," p. 18.

290. A. S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio* (Cincinnati, 1875), 250.

291. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 153.

292. Hayden, *Early History*, 250.

293. Wesley Perkins to Jacob Perkins, February 11, 1832, Perry Special Collections.

294. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 176.

295. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 599n2; Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Signature, 1994), 111.

296. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 179.

297. "Revelation, 10 January 1832 [D&C 73]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-10-january-1832-dc-73/1>.

298. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 176.

299. "Revelation, 4 December 1831–A [D&C 72:1–8]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-december-1831-a-dc-721-8/1>; "Revelation, 4 December 1831–B [D&C 72:9–23]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-december-1831-b-dc-729-23/1>; "Revelation, 4 December 1831–C [D&C 72:24–26]," p. [2], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-december-1831-c-dc-7224-26/1>.

300. Orson F. Whitney, "Newel K. Whitney," *Contributor* 6 (January 1885): 126; Larry Neil Poulsen, "The Life and Contributions of Newel Kimball Whitney" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), 38; "Aaronic Priesthood Minutes," 1857–77, March 3, 1877, Church History Library.

301. Elizabeth Ann Whitney, "A Leaf from an Autobiography. Continued," *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 7 (September 1, 1878): 51.

302. "Letter to William W. Phelps, 31 July 1832," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-31-july-1832/1>.
303. "The Elders Stationed in Zion to the Churches Abroad, in Love, Greeting," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (July 1833): 111.
304. For examples, see Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 138.
305. Historical Introduction to "Explanation of Scripture, 1830 [D&C 74]," p. 60, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/explanation-of-scripture-1830-dc-74/1>.
306. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 180.
307. Watson, *Orson Pratt Journals*, January 25, 1832; Edson Barney, statement reported in St. George, Utah Stake General Minutes, December 23, 1860, Church History Library; manuscript copies of section 75, Newel K. Whitney Collection, Perry Special Collections.
308. William McLellin to Beloved Relatives, August 4, 1832, typescript, Library and Archives, Community of Christ, in Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 79–86. See also Porter, "Man of Diversity," in Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 301–2.
309. *Millennial Star* 26 (December 31, 1864): 835.
310. Orson Hyde, "History of Orson Hyde," *Millennial Star* 26 (December 3, 1864): 776.
311. Events in the Life of Samuel Harrison Smith Including His Missionary Journal for the Year 1832, Church History Library.
312. Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (University of Utah Press, 1985), 29–31, 306.
313. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (February 1833): 69–70; (March 1833): 84; 2 (May 1834): 156; Mark B. Nelson and Steven C. Harper, "The Imprisonment of Martin Harris in 1833," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006): 113–15.
314. Hyrum Smith, Diary, 1831–1835, p. 27, Church History Library.
315. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (June 1833): 100.
316. Sylvester Smith to Dear Brother, May 16, 1833, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 107.
317. Eden Smith, Journal, typescript, Perry Special Collections.
318. E. Brooks Hollifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (Yale University Press, 2003), 335. Richard Bushman calls such texts "exaltation revelations." *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* 195.
319. Boyd K. Packer, "The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign* 25, no. 11 (November 1995): 18.
320. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 5 (May 1, 1844): 523; "History, 1838–1856, Volume E-1," p. 1953.
321. Wilford Woodruff, "Remarks," *Deseret Weekly News*, September 5, 1891, p. 322.
322. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 192.

323. "Discourse, 8 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton—A," p. [2], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-8-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-a/2>.

324. "History, 1838–1856, Volume D-1," p. 1523.

325. "Revelation, 1 March 1832 [D&C 78]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1>; "Revelation Book 1," p. 145.

326. Jared Carter, Autobiography, typescript, p. 9, Church History Library; "Revelation, 12 March 1832 [D&C 79]," p. 12, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-march-1832-dc-79/1>.

327. Carter, Autobiography, p. 7. Here Jared confused his first mission with his second. In both instances, the Lord crowned him with sheaves as prophesied for his second mission in section 79.

328. Eden Smith, Journal, Church History Library. Stephen Burnett had earlier preached with Eden Smith's father, John. See Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 170, 314.

329. Levi B. Wilder to the editor, February 15, 1835, in *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 5 (February 1835): 75.

330. "Letterbook 2," p. 64.

331. "Elders' Journal, August 1838," p. 57, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-august-1838/9>.

332. "Note, 8 March 1832," p. 10, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/note-8-march-1832/1>. For more on Jesse Gause, see "Guase, Jesse," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/jesse-gause>.

333. "Revelation, 15 March 1832 [D&C 81]," p. 17, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-15-march-1832-dc-81/1>.

334. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 213.

335. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 210.

336. "Revelation Book 1," p. 145.

337. Max H Parkin, "Joseph Smith and the United Firm," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 5–6.

338. "Minute Book 2," p. 25.

339. Parkin, "Joseph Smith and the United Firm," 13.

340. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 213.

341. "Revelation, 30 April 1832 [D&C 83]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-30-april-1832-dc-83/1>.

342. Heather Whittle Wrigley, "President Uchtdorf Dedicates New Bishops' Central Storehouse," *Church News*, January 26, 2012, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist>

.org/church/news/president-uchtdorf-dedicates-new-bishops-central-storehouse?lang=eng.

343. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 229.

344. "Discourse, 27 August 1843, as Reported by James Burgess," p. [12], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-27-august-1843-as-reported-by-james-burgess/3>.

345. "Minute Book 1," p. 5; Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith to Edward Partridge and Others, January 14, 1833, in "Letterbook 1," pp. 20–25, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-1/32>. See also Doctrine and Covenants 82.

346. Newel K. Whitney, undated statement, Newel K. Whitney Collection, Perry Special Collections; Samuel H. Smith, Journal, November 26, 1832, Church History Library; Joseph to Emma Smith, July 13, 1832, Library and Archives, Community of Christ.

347. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 202–5.

348. "To the Saints," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 6 (November 1832): [6].

349. "Letter to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-27-november-1832/1>.

350. "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1832-1834/2>.

351. "The Book of the Law of the Lord," 26 [image 40], Church History Library, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/fcbfb1c8-1d4d-4f39-8f51-0063b704afec/0/39>.

352. William Clayton, "History of the Nauvoo Temple," Church History Library, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/81f4f09b-8564-479f-83c5-b7a1ca6d4695/0/4>.

353. "Book of the Law of the Lord," 164 [image 182], 179 [image 197].

354. "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 4.

355. Lorenzo Dow, *The Dealings of God, Man, and the Devil as Exemplified in the Life, Experience, and Travels of Lorenzo Dow* (New York, 1850), 10.

356. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 191.

357. "Signs of the Times," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): 62.

358. "Revelation, 25 December 1832 [D&C 87]," p. 32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-25-december-1832-dc-87/1>.

359. "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by Willard Richards," p. [39], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-willard-richards/3>.

360. "A Mormon Prophecy," *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, May 5, 1861, reprinted in Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 3 vols. (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 2:1110.

361. "Minutes, 27–28 December 1832," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-27-28-december-1832/1>.
362. "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 33, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/1>.
363. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 206.
364. Margaret Barker, *On Heaven as It Is in Earth: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 13.
365. "Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833," p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w- Phelps-11-january-1833/1>.
366. "Discourse, 12 November 1835," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-november-1835/6>.
367. *Saints Herald* 28, no. 11 (June 1, 1881): 163, 167.
368. *Western Farmer* (Palmyra, N.Y.), January 30, 1822.
369. W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1979).
370. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 42.
371. Quoted in Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 216.
372. Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., "Medical Practices," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (MacMillan, 1992), 2:875.
373. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:158.
374. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 204.
375. "Revelation, 27 February 1833 [D&C 89]," p. [113], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-february-1833-dc-89/1>.
376. Boyd K. Packer, "The Word of Wisdom: The Principle and the Promises," *Ensign* 26, no. 5 (May 1996): 18.
377. Joseph Smith, address to the Mormons at Nauvoo on Last Sunday of April 1841, Reverend Julius A. Reed Collection, box 2, folder 15, Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa.
378. Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Word of Wisdom in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective," *Dialogue* 14, no. 3 (1981): 53, 63.
379. "Revelation, 8 March 1833 [D&C 90]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-8-march-1833-dc-90/1>.
380. "Revelation for Frederick G. Williams," January 5, 1834 [1833], Frederick G. Williams Papers, 1834–1842, Church History Library, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/b44e2b5d-f284-44d5-a45e-595861d105e9/0/0?lang=eng>.
381. "Revelation, 15 March 1832 [D&C 81]," p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-15-march-1832-dc-81/2>.

382. William McLellin to relatives, August 4, 1832, typescript, Library and Archives, Community of Christ, published in Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 79–86.

383. “Minutes, 18 March 1833,” p. 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-18-march-1833/1>; “License for Frederick G. Williams, 20 March 1833,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/license-for-frederick-g-williams-20-march-1833/1>.

384. Historical Introduction to “Revelation, 9 March 1833 [D&C 91],” p. 55, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-9-march-1833-dc-91/1#historical-intro>.

385. Quoted in the Historical Introduction of “Revelation, 9 March 1833 [D&C 91],” p. 55.

386. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 279.

387. Historical Introduction to “Revelation, 15 March 1833 [D&C 92],” p. 55, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-15-march-1833-dc-92/1#historical-intro>.

388. Parkin, “Joseph Smith and the United Firm,” 13.

389. “Revelation, 5 January 1833,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-5-january-1833/1>.

390. “Revelation, 15 March 1833 [D&C 92],” p. 55.

391. “Minute Book 1,” p. 11.

392. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 380.

393. See Source Note and Historical Introduction for “Revelation, 6 May 1833 [D&C 93],” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-6-may-1833-dc-93/1>.

394. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 210.

395. Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Bookcraft, 1989).

396. “History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1,” p. 291.

397. “Revelation, 2 August 1833–B [D&C 94],” p. 64, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-2-august-1833-b-dc-94/1>.

398. “Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 6 August 1833,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-jackson-county-missouri-6-august-1833/1>.

399. “Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833,” p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-11-january-1833/1>.

400. “Minute Book 1,” p. 20.

401. “Revelation, 1 June 1833 [D&C 95],” p. 59, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-june-1833-dc-95/1>.

402. “Letterbook 1,” p. 37.

403. "Minute Book 1," p. 12; Truman Angell, Journal, typescript, Perry Special Collections; Truman Angell to John Taylor, March 11, 1885, Church History Library.

404. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 217–18.

405. Zebedee Coltrin, Journal, Church History Library.

406. "Minute Book 1," p. 13.

407. "Revelation, 4 June 1833 [D&C 96]," p. 6o, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-4-june-1833-dc-96/1>.

408. "Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 25 June 1833," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-jackson-county-missouri-25-june-1833/1>.

409. Proctor and Proctor, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 113–14. For the First Presidency's response, see "Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 6 August 1833," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-jackson-county-missouri-6-august-1833/1>.

410. "Revelation, 2 August 1833–A [D&C 97]," p. 61, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-2-august-1833-a-dc-97/1>.

411. Proctor and Proctor, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 115–16.

412. "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 48.

413. "Revelation, 6 August 1833 [D&C 98]," p. 66, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-6-august-1833-dc-98/1>.

414. "Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-jackson-county-missouri-18-august-1833/1>.

415. "Revelation, 29 August 1832 [D&C 99]," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-29-august-1832-dc-99/1>.

416. John Murdock, "An Abridged Record of the Life of John Murdock, Taken from His Journal by Himself," typescript, Perry Special Collections.

417. "Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833," p. [1].

418. "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 7.

419. "Revelation, 12 October 1833 [D&C 100]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-october-1833-dc-100/1>.

420. "Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833," p. [1].

421. "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 18.

422. "Letterbook 1," p. 70.

423. Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge, William W. Phelps, John Whitmer, Algon Sidney Gilbert, John Corroll, Isaac Morley, and all Saints, December 10, 1833, in "Letterbook 1," 70–75.

424. "Letterbook 1," 72.
425. "Minutes, 17–18 February 1834," pp. 29–31, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-17-february-1834/1>.
426. "Minutes, 19 February 1834," 38, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-19-february-1834/3>.
427. Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989).
428. William W. Phelps to Dear Brethren, December 15, 1833, in *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 16 (January 1834): 127.
429. Historical Introduction to "Revelation, 24 February 1834 [D&C 103]," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-24-february-1834-dc-103/1#historical-intro>.
430. "Extract from the Journal of Heber C. Kimball," *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 16 (June 15, 1841): 443.
431. "Mormonism," *Huron Reflector* (Norwalk, OH), May 20, 1834, [2], emphasis in original.
432. Steven C. Harper, "The Rich Man, Lazarus, and Doctrine & Covenants 104:18," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 4 (2008): 51–54.
433. "Revelation Book 1," p. 193.
434. "Letter to Orson Hyde, 7 April 1834," 82, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-orson-hyde-7-april-1834/1>.
435. Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Deseret Book, 1979), 2.
436. Frederick G. Williams Papers, Church History Library; Amt. of Balances due as of April 23, 1834, Newel K. Whitney Collection, Perry Special Collections. Max Parkin painstakingly documented these in "Joseph Smith and the United Firm," 5–66.
437. "Covenant, 29 November 1834," 88, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/covenant-29-november-1834/2>.
438. John Tanner, "Sketch of an Elder's Life," in *Scraps of Biography* (Salt Lake City, 1883), 12.
439. "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 92.
440. Tanner, "Sketch of an Elder's Life," 12.
441. Peter Crawley and Richard L. Anderson, "The Political and Social Realities of Zion's Camp," *BYU Studies* 14, no. 4 (1974): 406–20; History of George Albert Smith, Church History Library; Pratt, *Autobiography*, 115.
442. "Letter to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834," 56, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-4-june-1834/1>.
443. "Declaration, 21 June 1934," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 12, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/declaration-21-june-1834/1>.

444. Joseph Holbrook, Autobiography, typescript, Perry Special Collections; Harrison Burgess, Autobiography, in Kenneth Glyn Hales, ed. and comp., *Windows: A Mormon Family* (Skyline Printing, 1985).
445. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 639.
446. Warren Cowdery to Oliver Cowdery, September 1, 1834, in *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 24 (September 1834): 189.
447. Warren Cowdery to Oliver Cowdery, October 28, 1834, in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (November 1834): 22.
448. "Elders' Journal, August 1838," p. 59.
449. "Record of the Twelve, 14 February–28 August 1835," 4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/record-of-the-twelve-14-february-28-august-1835/10>.
450. "Minute Book 1," p. 198.
451. *Times and Seasons* 6 (April 15, 1845): 869.
452. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:1–58; 1835 and 1844 editions, 3:1–30. Before its 1835 publication, this revelation was redacted by Joseph, who added information about the priesthood offices of priest, bishop, elder, and seventy. Much of the new revelation draws on section 68:15–22. The redactions to section 107 include much or all of what is now verses 61, 69–71, 73, 76–77, 88, 90, and 93–98.
453. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. and comps., *Words of Joseph Smith* (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 59–60.
454. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 263.
455. "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 89.
456. Lyndon W. Cook, "Lyman Sherman: Man of God, Would-be Apostle," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 1 (1979): 121–24.
457. "History, 1838–1856, Volume B-1," p. 713.
458. Oliver Cowdery, Sketch Book, March 26, 1836, Church History Library.
459. Steven C. Harper, "'A Pentecost and Endowment Indeed': Six Eyewitness Accounts of the Kirtland Temple Experience," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 327–71.
460. Jesse, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:195.
461. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 317.
462. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:10, 23 for earlier usages in a different context.
463. Hugh Nibley, "A House of Glory," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Deseret Book; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 29–47.
464. "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 192.
465. "Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-11-january-1833/2>.
466. Stephen D. Ricks, "The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in The Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover," *BYU Studies* 23, no. 4 (1983): 484.
467. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 320–21.

468. "Letter to Emma Smith, 19 August 1836," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-19-august-1836/1>.

469. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 1:410–11.

470. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 328–29.

471. *Webster's Dictionary* (1828), s.v. "follies."

472. David R. Proper, "Joseph Smith and Salem," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 100 (April 1964): 93. On the day section 111 was revealed, the *Salem Observer* reprinted a *Long Island Star* article on rumors of treasure buried by Captain Kidd and unsuccessful efforts to find it. See also Steven C. Harper, "Was Joseph Smith a Money Digger?," *BYU Studies* 62, no. 4 (2023): 37–55.

473. *Salem Gazette*, December 7, 1841; *Salem Register*, June 2, 1842.

474. Ronald Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership, 1830–1841" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981; *BYU Studies*, 2006), 287–92.

475. Woodruff, "Journal (January 1, 1854–December 31, 1859)," June 25, 1857.

476. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, September 6, 1837, photocopy of original in private possession, Church History Library.

477. Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, November 12, 1837, Church History Library.

478. George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:283–84.

479. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Church History Library.

480. "Questions and Answers, between circa 16 and circa 29 March 1838–A [D&C 113:1–6]," 17, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/questions-and-answers-between-circa-16-and-circa-29-march-1838-a-dc-1131-6/1>.

481. "Blessing from Joseph Smith Sr., 9 December 1834," 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-from-joseph-smith-sr-9-december-1834/1>.

482. "Revelation, 11 April 1838 [D&C 114]," 32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-11-april-1838-dc-114/1>.

483. "Minutes, 6 November 1837," 81, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-6-november-1837/2>.

484. K. Shane Goodwin, "The History of the Name of the Savior's Church: A Collaborative and Revelatory Process," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2019): 5–41.

485. Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, April 30, 1838, Church History Library.

486. "Journal, March–September 1838," 46, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-march-september-1838/32>.

487. William A. Wood, "An Old Mormon City in Missouri," *American Magazine of History* 16 (1886): 98–99; as cited in Leland Homer Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1965; *BYU Studies*, 2000), 64n77.

488. Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” address given at the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, October 2018, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/the-correct-name-of-the-church?lang=eng>, emphasis in original.

489. “Journal, March–September 1838,” p. 42.

490. See Daniel 7.

491. Robert J. Matthews, “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” *BYU Studies* 13, no. 1 (1972): 27–35; Leland H. Gentry, “Adam-ondi-Ahman: A Brief Historical Survey,” *BYU Studies* 13, no. 4 (1973): 553–76.

492. “Revelation, 12 January 1838–C,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-january-1838-c/1>.

493. Mark L. Staker, “‘Thou Art the Man’: Newel K. Whitney in Ohio,” *BYU Studies* 42, no. 1 (2003): 75–138, especially page 113.

494. “Journal, 1835–1836,” p. 6.

495. Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1887), 439.

496. Horace Kingsbury to all persons that are or may be interested, Painesville, Ohio, October 26, 1838, in “Letterbook 2,” p. 40.

497. Boyd K. Packer, “The Least of These,” *Ensign* 34, no. 11 (November 2004): 86; Howard W. Hunter, “No Less Serviceable,” *Ensign* 22, no. 4 (April 1992): 64.

498. “Authorization for Oliver Granger, 13 May 1839,” 45, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/authorization-for-oliver-granger-13-may-1839/1>.

499. “Letter to William Marks and Newel K. Whitney, 8 July 1838,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-marks-and-newel-k-whitney-8-july-1838/1>.

500. “Revelation, 8 July 1838–A [D&C 118],” 105, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-8-july-1838-a-dc-118/1>.

501. Wilford Woodruff, “History of Brigham Young: History of Wilford Woodruff,” *Millennial Star* 27, no. 20 (May 20, 1865): 311; Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, July 14, 1838, Church History Library.

502. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:159.

503. Woodruff, “Journal (January 1, 1838–December 31, 1839),” April 21–26, 1839.

504. William W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, May 1, 1839, Church History Library, underlining in original.

505. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 639.

506. “Revelation, 8 July 1838–D [D&C 120],” 57, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-8-july-1838-d-dc-120/1>.

507. “Journal, March–September 1838,” p. 59.

508. David W. Smith, “The Development of the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2018): 131–55.

509. Robert Hales, “Tithing,” address given at the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, October 2002, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2002/10/tithing-a-test-of-faith-with-eternal-blessings?lang=eng>.

510. “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1,” p. 15.

511. “Letter to Emma Smith, 12 November 1838,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-12-november-1838/1>.

512. *Correspondence, Orders &c. in Relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons; and the Evidence* (Fayette, Mo., 1841), 2.

513. Hyrum Smith, Affidavit before Nauvoo Municipal Court, July 1, 1843, in *History of the Church*, 3:402–23; also in Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992), 619–39, quote drawn from pages 632–35; Gordon A. Madsen, “Joseph Smith and the Missouri Court of Inquiry: Austin A. King’s Quest for Hostages,” *BYU Studies* 43, no. 4 (2004): 93–136.

514. *History of the Church*, 3:215.

515. John Correll, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* (St. Louis, 1839), 48.

516. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 380.

517. “Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839,” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839/1>. The entire letter was published in Dean C. Jessee and John W. Welch, eds., “Revelations in Context: Joseph Smith’s Letter from Liberty Jail, March 20, 1839,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 125–45.

518. “Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, circa 22 March 1839,” p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 16, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-the-church-circa-22-march-1839/3>.

519. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 1:526.

520. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 380.

521. “Letter to Presendia Huntington Buell, 15 March 1839,” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-presendia-huntington-buell-15-march-1839/1>.

522. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, March 21, 1839, Liberty, Missouri, in Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Deseret; Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 448–49.

523. Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions*.

524. Joseph Fielding Smith, quoted in Roy W. Doxey, *Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants*, 4 vols. (Deseret Book, 1978), 4:265–66.

525. Packer, *Holy Temple*, 154–55.

526. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 69.

527. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign* 35, no. 11 (November 1995), 53.

528. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Signature, 1995), 86.

529. Alanson Ripley, in John Smith, Journal, March 6, 1841, Church History Library.

530. "Revelation, 9 July 1841 [D&C 126]," 26, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-9july-1841-dc-126/1>; Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Knopf, 1985), 98.

531. Arrington, *Brigham Young*, 99–100.

532. "Questions and Answers, 8 May 1838," 43, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/questions-and-answers-8-may-1838/2>.

533. "*Elders' Journal*, July 1838," 43, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-july-1838/11>.

534. Simon Baker, in Journal History of the Church, August 15, 1840, Church History Library.

535. John Smith, Journal, October 15, 1840, Church History Library.

536. Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, October 11, 1840, Church History Library.

537. Minutes of the general conference of the Church held at Nauvoo, Elias Smith and Gustavus Hills, Rough draft notes of History of the Church, 1841, p. 17, Church History Library; *History of the Church*, 4:423–29.

538. Joseph Smith, Discourse, August 31, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois, "A Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," 80–83, Church History Library, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 129–31.

539. Woodruff, "Journal (January 1, 1841–December 31, 1842)," September 19, 1842.

540. Packer, *Holy Temple*, 144–45.

541. John Sanders, ed., *What About Those Who Never Heard?: Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (InterVarsity Press, 1995).

542. Hugh Nibley, "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Deseret Book; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 148.

543. "Revelation, 12 January 1838–C," [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 4, 2019, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-january-1838-c/1>.

544. "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," p. 241.

545. Woodruff, "Journal (January 1, 1838–December 31, 1839)," June 27, 1839, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/R8z>.

546. "Discourse, 1 May 1842, as Reported by Willard Richards," 94, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-1-may-1842-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1>.

547. Heber Kimball to Parley Pratt, June 17, 1842, Pratt Papers, Church History Library.

548. "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843," [174], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www>

.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843/182.

549. "Discourse, circa 16 March 1841," [16], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 26, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-circa-16march-1841/1>.

550. "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by Willard Richards [D&C 130]," [37], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-willard-richards-dc-130/1>.

551. Neal A. Maxwell, *If Thou Endure It Well* (Bookcraft, 1996), 28.

552. "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton [D&C 130]," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-dc-130/1>.

553. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Zion's Printing and Publishing, [1947]), 96.

554. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. [15], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/3>.

555. "Discourse, 17 May 1843–A," p. [16], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-17-may-1843-a/1>.

556. "Discourse, 14 May 1843," p. [32], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-14-may-1843/3>.

557. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 202–4.

558. Joseph F. Smith, "Discourse," *Deseret News*, September 11, 1878, 498.

559. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 441.

560. Smith, *Intimate Chronicle*, July 12, 1843; William Clayton, Letterbooks, Special Collections, Marriott Library.

561. Scott H. Faulring, ed., *American Prophet's Record* (Signature, 1987), September 28, 1843; Smith, *Intimate Chronicle*, October 19, 1843.

562. According to Lucy M. Wright, "Emma Hale Smith," *Woman's Exponent* 30, no. 8 (Christmas 1901): 59.

563. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 490.

564. Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, September 28, 1843; Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 76–84; Smith, *Intimate Chronicle*, October 19, 1843.

565. Cited in Carol Cornwall Madsen, "The 'Elect Lady' Revelation: The Historical and Doctrinal Context of Doctrine and Covenants 25," in *The Heavens Are Open* (Deseret Book, 1993), 208.

566. "History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1," p. 166; "Revelations," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1, no. 12 (May 1833): 89–90.

567. "Revelations," 89.

568. Steven C. Harper, "'Dictated by Christ': Joseph Smith and the Politics of Revelation," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26 (Summer 2006): 275–304.

569. See William Phelps, “Free People of Color,” and his statement published later in the same issue, wherein he noted approvingly that much was being done “towards abolishing slavery,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 109, 111. The Church’s political *Northern Times* newspaper printed on October 9, 1835, that the Church was “opposed to abolition, and whatever is calculated to disturb the peace and harmony of our Constitution and Country.” See “Abolition,” *Northern Times* (Kirtland, Ohio), October 9, 1835. Joseph’s views on race and blacks changed during his lifetime. In 1836, Joseph Smith criticized the abolition movement and defended slavery as biblical. *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 7 (April 1836): 289–91; also see Warren Parrish, “For the Messenger and Advocate,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 7 (April 1836): 295–96; and “The Abolitionists,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 7 (April 1836): 299–301.

570. Historical Introduction to “Appendix 4: Declaration on Government and Law, circa August 1835 [D&C 134],” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-4-declaration-on-government-and-law-circa-august-1835-dc-134/1>.

571. *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, 2, no. 7 (April 1836): 289–91.

572. Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (University of Illinois Press, 1975), 6, 214.

573. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston, 1883), 337.

574. Quincy, *Figures of the Past*, 317.

575. “History, 1838–1856, Volume E-1,” p. 1969.

576. Declaration of the Apostles, circa September 1844 to March 1845, Brigham Young Office Files, 1832–1878, Church History Library.

577. Testimony written by Martha Tuttle Gardner, in possession of the author.

578. “At 4:30 PM the council adjourned. At seven, the Twelve met at Elder Benson’s. President Young continued to dictate the word and will of the Lord. Council adjourned at ten P.M., when President Young retired with Dr. Richards to the Octagon and finished writing the same.” *Journal History of the Church*, January 14, 1847.

579. Richard E. Bennett, *We’ll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus 1846–1848* (Deseret Book, 1997), 70.

580. Bennett, *We’ll Find the Place*, 69.

581. Heber C. Kimball, *Journal*, January 19, 1847, Church History Library.

582. As quoted by Willard Richards, *Journal*, January 15, 1847, Church History Library.

583. Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

584. David L. Paulsen, Roger D. Cook, and Kendel J. Christensen, “The Harrowing of Hell: Salvation for the Dead in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 56–77.

585. See also “Visions, 21 January 1836 [D&C 137],” p. 136–37, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-21-january-1836-dc-137/1>.

586. Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 3–9, 126–40.

587. K. M. Warren, “Harrowing of Hell,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (Robert Appleton, 1910).

588. George S. Tate, “The Great World of the Spirits of the Dead: Death, the Great War, and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic as Context for Doctrine and Covenants 138,” *BYU Studies* 46, no. 1 (2007): 27, 33.

589. Joseph F. Smith, “Status of Children in the Resurrection,” in *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, compiled by James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Bookcraft, 1965–75), 5:92.

590. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith* (Deseret News Press, 1938), 476.

591. Joseph F. Smith, in *Eighty-Ninth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1918), 2.

592. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 466.

593. Tate, “Great World of the Spirits of the Dead,” 21.

594. The insight belongs to George S. Tate. See Tate, “Great World of the Spirits of the Dead,” 34.

595. See Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. and comps., *Words of Joseph Smith* (Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1980), 370; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:285 (March 15, 1857); and Wilford Woodruff, “Journal (October 22, 1865–December 31, 1872),” January 24, 1868, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, accessed October 15, 2024, <https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/J6Q2>.

596. Tate, “Great World of the Spirits of the Dead,” 39–40.

597. James E. Talmage, *Journal*, October 31, 1918, Perry Special Collections; Anthon H. Lund, *Journal*, October 31, 1918, Church History Library.

598. “Plural Marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Gospel Topics Essays, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed October 16, 2024, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/plural-marriage-in-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints?lang=eng>.

599. Reported in “Elder Oaks Testifies Before U.S. Congressional Subcommittee,” *Ensign* 32, no. 7 (July 1992): 78–80.

600. Lorena Larsen, “Life Sketch,” 144–45.

601. Woodruff, “Journal (January 1886–December 1892),” September 25, 1890.

602. Larsen, “Life Sketch,” 239–41.

603. Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

604. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (University of Illinois Press, 2003), 214–16.

605. “Report from the Presidency,” *Times and Seasons* 1 (October 1840): 188.

606. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 212–30.

607. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 212; “Race and the Priesthood,” Gospel Topics Essays, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed October 16,

2024, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

608. Edward L. Kimball, ed., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Bookcraft, 1982), 448–49. President David O. McKay also called the priesthood ban a *policy* rather than a *doctrine*. See Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 200–201.

609. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 216–17.

610. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 218–19.

611. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 220–21.

612. Mark L. McConkie, ed., *Doctrines of the Restoration: Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie* (Bookcraft, 1989), 159.

613. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 222–24.

614. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 228; Gordon B. Hinckley, “Priesthood Restoration,” *Ensign* 18, no. 10 (October 1988): 69–72.

615. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 228–29.

616. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, 162–66.