

D&C 39-42

Lesson 8, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 7 Nov 2016

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General Introduction

These sections represent a time of major transition for the young Prophet and Church. Finishing up his business and affairs in New York, his final revelations relate to a Methodist minister named James Covell, who appeared with an apparently willing heart, but who left a mere day later, unable to follow his first feelings of willingness to submit to the will of the Lord. Less than a month after that, Joseph and Emma Smith left New York for good, taking up residence in Ohio where missionaries had converted as many as three hundred people. Arriving in the cold of winter, Joseph began to grapple with the challenges of helping hundreds of new converts, who had firm ideas about the way the church of Christ ought to function, understand the Lord's true plan for them in the context of the Restoration.¹

Meanwhile, Oliver Cowdery and his missionary companions in Missouri were meeting with challenges. Having contacted the Shawnee and Delaware Indians in the Kansas territory to the west of Missouri, their efforts were discovered and not appreciated by federal Indian agents and local ministers, and they were forced to stop talking to the Indians. They applied for permission, baptized a few people in Independence, and sought instruction from Joseph Smith through Parley Pratt, who left Missouri to head back to Ohio.²

Summary Chronology

- **Thu, 23 Dec 1830** – Joseph Smith turned twenty-five years old.
- **Jan 1831** – Oliver Cowdery and others preached to the native Americans in Missouri, but were ordered to leave and preached in Jackson County for a time.

- **Sun, 2 Jan 1831** – Third Church conference was held at the Whitmer home in Fayette, NY.
- **Wed, 5 Jan 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 39, a call to James Covell.
- **Thu, 6 Jan 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 40, regarding James Covell.
- **Jan 1831** – John Whitmer sent to Ohio to preside and support the many new converts.
- **About Sat, 15 Jan 1831** – Joseph Smith saw Newell Whitney of Kirtland in vision.
- **End of Jan 1831** – Joseph and Emma Smith left New York.
- **Tue, 1 Feb 1831** – Sidney Rigdon arrived back in Kirtland, Ohio.
- **Fri, 4 Feb 1831** – Joseph Smith, and Emma Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, riding in Joseph Knight Jr.'s sleigh. Joseph and Emma met and stayed with Newell and Elizabeth Whitney.
- **Fri, 4 Feb 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 41, a call to Edward Partridge as the first bishop.
- **Wed, 9 Feb 1831** – Joseph Smith received most of D&C 42 (vv. 1-73), "The Law," in the presence of twelve elders, explaining consecration and stewardship.
- **Between 9 and 22 Feb 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 43 and D&C 44, calling for a conference in Ohio, probably 6 Jun 1831.
- **Tue, 22 Feb 1831** – Joseph wrote to Martin Harris to come to Ohio with copies of the Book of Mormon.
- **Wed, 23 Feb 1831** – Joseph Smith received the remainder of D&C 42 (vv. 74-93).

D&C 39 – James Covell Commanded

Date and Location

Wednesday, 5 January 1831; Fayette, NY.

Setting

The third Church conference was held on 2 Jan 1831. Three days later, on 5 Jan 1831, a Methodist minister (not Baptist, as Joseph's much later history recalls³) for forty

¹ *JSP*, D1:239.

² *JSP*, D1:240.

³ Joseph's recorded history (*History*, 1838-1856, volume A-1, p. 91) states, "Not long after the conference closed, there was a man

years named James Covell, came to see the Prophet. He told Joseph that he believed and “covenanted with the Lord that he would obey any commandment that the Lord would give through his servant Joseph.”⁴ This revelation ensued.

The identify of James has been a mystery until recently. The original revelation just called him “James” and the first publication in 1833 only added the last initial “C.” In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, the last name was spelled “Covill,” and that spelling was accordingly retained in subsequent publications, until 2013. There was indeed a Baptist minister named James Covill in New York at this time, who was about the right age. But he was more than 150 miles from Fayette and the connection seemed tenuous.

With the opening of the First Presidency library and the ‘discovery’ of Revelation Book 1 (“A Book of Commandments and Revelations”), scholars found a table of contents in the back of the book that said this was “A Revelation to James a Methodist Priest,”⁵ not a Baptist. A search of Methodist records subsequently uncovered James Covell, a Methodist minister from Canadice, New York, only twenty miles from Canandaigua, where Joseph and Sidney Rigdon are believed to have preached in December 1830. Covell probably traveled to Fayette shortly after hearing them there, meeting Joseph Smith and soliciting this revelation.⁶

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is the “42nd Commandment” in Revelation Book 1.⁷ It was first published as Chapter 41 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 59 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. Receive Christ and his gospel (1-6)
2. Be baptized and receive the Spirit (7-12)
3. Called to serve (13-24)

Commentary

Receive Christ and his gospel (1-6)

1 ***the Great I Am***. This title of Christ is unique to the Doctrine and Covenants (though “I Am” is an Old Testament title for him; see Exodus 3:14). This is the final of three occurrences of the term, the others being 29:1 and 38:1.

came to me, by the name of James Covill, who had been a baptist minister for about forty years...” (“History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 91, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/97>).

2 ***light and the life of the world***. From 3 Nephi 9:18 and John 1:4-5.

3 ***the meridian of time***. This phrase is used only six times in scripture, five of which are in this short time period. The first usage is with D&C 20:26, but the others are in this verse and then four references in the Book of Moses (5:57; 6:57, 62; 7:46), all received just prior to the date of this revelation.

The “meridian” refers to the time of Christ’s mortal ministry, not that it is the mid-point of the earth’s history but because everything before and after it points there.⁸

4 ***power to become my sons***. Those who receive Jesus as Savior and Redeemer receive power to become his sons, to be adopted into his family and be eligible to inherit all that he has.

6 ***this is my gospel***. This verse emphasizes what had already been recorded in D&C 33:11-12 and alluded to in D&C 13:1. The “gospel” in this verse is a summary of what Nephi called “the doctrine of Christ” in 2 Nephi 31—repentance, baptism of water, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Be baptized and receive the Spirit (7-12)

7 ***I know thee***. Joseph Smith might have just met James Covell but the Lord knew him perfectly.

8 ***thine heart is now right before me at this time***. James was sincere in his request and apparently of good works, for the Lord assured him, “I know thee” (v. 7). But the Lord knew it would be short-lived, so carefully phrases it that he is right “at this time.”

9 ***thou hast seen great sorrow***. We don’t know what sorrows Covell had experienced in his life, but the Lord intimated that they were due to rejecting Jesus, a fascinating statement about a professional Christian minister.

9 ***pride and the cares of the world***. The Lord saw that in his past this had been a problem, and it was evidently the cause of his rejection of the call he received in this revelation.

10 ***text note***:

The original revelation in RB1 has “the days of thy deliverance ~~is~~ come arise & be baptized & wash away your sins.” This is also found in 1833, but in 1835, it is changed to “the days of thy deliverance are come, if thou wilt hearken to my voice, which

⁴ *JSP*, MRB:87.

⁵ *JSP*, MRB:387.

⁶ *JSP*, D1:234-235.

⁷ *JSP*, MRB:87-91.

⁸ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:135.

saith unto thee, Arise and be baptized.” The added phrase is retained through 2013.

10 **a blessing so great as you never have known.** The gift of the Holy Ghost was promised to Covell if he would be sincerely baptized. As a preacher and a man striving to do good, he had certainly experienced the Spirit in his life, but the gift promised would be amazing compared to that.

11 **a greater work.** Covell had labored all his life to serve God. But now the Lord called him to a greater work, with greater authority, power, and promises than he had ever known.

Called to serve (13-24)

13 **called to labor.** At least four times he is called to labor, “lay to” (v. 17), and “go forth” (vv. 19 and 20). Though he was an older man, he was still called to work and serve.

14 **not called to go into the eastern countries.** Covell had perhaps expressed a desire to serve a mission in the eastern part of New York. He had lived there and was comfortable with it. But the Lord instead calls him west, to Ohio, which would effectively gather him with the other New York Saints and leverage his experience with the growing body of members in the west.

15 **a blessing such as is not known among the children of men.** The gathering to Ohio was already something the Lord had promised would bless the lives of the members of the young Church. This language indicated to Covell and others that it would be something completely new and unique, not found anywhere else on earth.

15 **from thence men shall go forth into all nations.** From the gathering of the Saints in Ohio, the Lord would call his missionaries that would take the Restoration message to the whole world. It was from revelations like this that Joseph Smith “conceived the world as a vast funnel with the city [of Zion] at the vortex and the temple at the center of the city.... Missionaries flowed out of the city and converts poured back in. The exchange would redeem the world in the last days.”⁹

16 **the people in Ohio call upon me in much faith.** The hundreds of converts in Ohio were seeking the Lord in great faith and could use a seasoned leader like Covell.

18 **I will stay my hand.** In v. 16, the Lord said that the wicked nations would be destroyed, but he called Covell to preach and call people to repentance, then promised that if he did that, the judgments of God could indeed be stayed.

19 **Hosanna!** The Hebrew word means ‘save now’ or ‘save, I pray,’ but that is not likely the intent here. In modern English, the word had taken on the connotation of praise and celebration, based on New Testament usage (e.g., Matthew 21:9, 15; Mark 11:9-10; John 12:13). The Book of Mormon reinforced this usage (1 Nephi 11:6; 3 Nephi 4:32; 11:17). It is used in five sections in the Doctrine and Covenants, with the same meaning of praise (19:37; 36:3; 39:19; 109:79; 124:101).

20 **Go forth baptizing with water.** Covell was promised the priesthood (v. 12), and with that priesthood, he would be able to baptize and confirm with the gift of the Holy Ghost (v. 23). As a minister, he had perhaps baptized many in his life, but never was he able to give the gift of the Holy Ghost.

21 **the hour no man knoweth; but it surely shall come.** The date and time of the Second Coming was not being revealed, but the certainty of it is verified.

22 **in time and in eternity.** This is the introduction of this now common Latter-day Saint term. In all of scripture, it is only found here, in D&C 72:3, and slightly differently in 132:7, 18 (“for/in time, and for/through all eternity”), which is the version we hear most often.

23 **ye shall lay your hands.** Covell was promised that laying his hands on converts would result in the real presence of the Holy Ghost in their lives. As a minister, he likely practiced this activity but now he would see it truly work.

Results

Though James Covell had covenanted to obey any command, the call in D&C 39 to labor in Ohio and serve in the kingdom was apparently more than he could accept. He rejected it and returned to his former residence, working as a Methodist preacher, earning income in that position. It all happened very quickly—just one day after this revelation. His actions puzzled the brethren, and they sought the Lord’s guidance to understand.

D&C 40 – James Covell’s Actions Explained

Date and Location

Thursday, 6 January 1831; Fayette, New York.

Setting

The day after D&C 39 was received (thus on 6 Jan 1831), the Lord revealed this short explanation of why James

⁹ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 220-221.

Covel rejected the command the Lord had just given him. Both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were very puzzled by Covel's abrupt change of opinion, having judged him to be sincere. This must have been especially puzzling to Rigdon, who had essentially done the same thing Covel had been asked to do just weeks earlier.

This is the last revelation received in the New York area and the first jointly received by both Joseph and Sidney (though the mechanics of how that worked is not shared). The most prominent revelation they received together was D&C 76.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is "43rd Com[m]andment" in Revelation Book 1.¹⁰ It was first published as Chapter 42 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 60 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *the heart of my servant James Covel was right*. Joseph and Sidney were perplexed by Covel's determination to do good and make a covenant, and then his abrupt change of heart. Here the Lord confirmed that his heart was sincere when he asked for a revelation.

2 *straightway Satan tempted him*. Referring to the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:1-22), the Lord replies that "fear

of persecution and the cares of the world" led Covel to reject the commandments he had received and break his covenant.

3 *with me to do with him as seemeth me good*. When we violate the covenants the Lord has given us, we leave ourselves subject to his judgments. He will extend as much mercy as he can, but justice must also be served. When others do us wrong, the best decision is to leave it in the hands of the Lord to do "as seemeth [him] good."

Results

Covel was given a choice: follow the revelation and serve in the kingdom or follow Satan and remain in darkness. He chose the latter, not because he loved darkness but because he feared being a Mormon would subject him to persecution and judgment that he could not bear. He may also have been fearful of losing his livelihood as a preacher of some forty years.

Knowing all things, the Lord could have said, 'I'd like you to go on a mission, but I know you won't.' But God gave James Covel that choice and respected his agency, all while calling him to be the best he could be. When critics might use this to show that Joseph was not a true prophet because he was surprised by Covel's choice, they overlook the importance of choice in our mortal experience and the tremendous effort the Lord makes to honor that agency.¹¹

D&C 41 – First Bishop Called

Date and Location

Friday, 4 February, 1831; Kirtland, Ohio.

Setting

D&C 41 was the first Ohio revelation, given the day Joseph arrived in Kirtland. In early 1831, Kirtland was about twenty years old. Like many towns on the western frontier (as Ohio was then considered), it was a growing town, going from 481 residents in the 1820 census to 1,018 in 162 households in the 1830 census. By 1835, it had about 2,000 residents, 900 of which were Mormons, with 200 more in nearby towns like Hiram and Mentor.¹²

Long before the missionaries had arrived, many Kirtland residents had embraced the notion of trying to live a pure New Testament religion. A group of them joined together and created what they called 'The Family.' Isaac Morley generously donated his farm and others moved onto the

property, creating a communal pact that had them sharing all things, modeled after Acts 2 and 4.

In January 1831, before his own arrival, Joseph had sent John Whitmer to preside in Kirtland. Encountering this group and seeing the many problems they were dealing with, such as people taking each other's clothing (using the logic that all things should be common), he wrote to Joseph Smith for help. That triggered Joseph leaving for Kirtland perhaps sooner than he had planned, but only after the Lord confirmed to him that was what should happen.

Joseph Smith in Kirtland

Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland by horse-drawn sleigh on 4 Feb 1831. At first, he and Emma moved in with Sidney and Elizabeth Gilbert, but it did not go well, including the wagon turning over on the way and tossing Emma, six-months pregnant with twins, into the snow. They discovered the Gilberts had already taken in another family, and the crowded house was too much for Emma. So Joseph and

¹⁰ JSP, MRB:91.

¹¹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 134-135.

¹² Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 144.

Emma moved in instead with Newel and Elizabeth Ann Whitney in their small house next to their store, though they were not there long either, shifting to a one-room house on Isaac Morley's property by spring.¹³

The most immediate question behind this revelation came when a new convert, Leman Copley, invited Joseph and Sidney to live on his large farm in Thompson, Ohio, about twenty miles from Kirtland. He promised them "he would furnish them houses & provisions &c."¹⁴ Joseph Smith went to the Lord about it on 4 February 1831, the same day he arrived, resulting in D&C 41. This was the first revelation received in Ohio.¹⁵

Edward Partridge

A key person mentioned in D&C 41 was Edward Partridge, who had come to New York with Sidney Rigdon to meet Joseph Smith and had been given D&C 36 by the Prophet. Partridge was a prosperous hat maker in Painesville, Ohio, with his own factory. He and his wife, Lydia, were well-off but searching for more spiritually, when they encountered the missionaries in Ohio. Oliver Cowdery, a witness to so much of the restoration, had given him a Book of Mormon. Meeting and hearing Joseph Smith preach had sealed the question for Partridge, and he was soon baptized by the Prophet.

Edward immediately went to New England to teach his parents and family about the Restoration. When he came back to New York, Joseph was ready to go to Ohio, so Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge journeyed with him, Emma, and Joseph Knight, Jr., in the latter's sleigh.¹⁶ The journey would have taken a few days, giving Joseph a greater opportunity to know Partridge, who was then called as the Church's first bishop in this revelation.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is found in Revelation Book 1, the "44 Commandment."¹⁷ It was first published as Chapter 43 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 61 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- The Lord will reveal the Law (1-6)
- Houses for Joseph and Sidney (7-8)
- Edward Partridge called as bishop (9-12)

¹³ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 145-146.

¹⁴ *JSP*, MRB:93. This information was not included in earlier headings to this revelation. Instead, editors focused on the "strange notions" of their religious practices, which this section

Commentary

The Lord will reveal the Law (1-6)

1 *ye whom I delight to bless with the greatest of all blessings.* The Lord always stands ready to pour out his blessings on the faithful, both in this life and in the life to come. Likewise, those who ignore the Lord's commands will receive "the heaviest of all cursings."

2 *assemble yourselves together.* This they did just five days later, on 9 February 1831, which precipitated the reception of D&C 42. This was not a democratic meeting where opinions would be argued and debated, but would be for the purpose of receiving the law and "to agree upon my word."

3 *ye shall receive my law.* The promise was given that at the conference where they would assemble, the Lord would reveal his law. This was something the Ohio converts were anxious to learn about, and a strong motivator for the New York Saints to move there.

4 *I will be your ruler when I come.* The Lord often motivates by looking ahead. In this case, he taught them that the law he would give was to help them prepare for his Second Coming.

5 *He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple.* To be a disciple is not just to accept a certain belief structure. Instead, it involves accepting what has been taught and living it to the best of a person's ability. Compare Matthew 7:21-23.

5 *receiveth it and doeth it not...shall be cast out.* This is the first revelation to mention the possibility of forcing people out of the Church, or excommunication (though that word is not used here). Perhaps Joseph Smith even thought of James Covell when the Lord spoke this to him.

6 *to dogs, or the pearls to be cast before swine.* In a paraphrase of Matthew 7:6, the thought is continued from v. 5 that those who don't receive the law are like dogs and swine, animals which were wild or unclean to ancient Jews, and they are not worthy of the same blessings as the faithful.

Houses for Joseph and Sidney (7-8)

7 *a house built, in which to live and translate.* Joseph and Emma had abandoned their only house in Harmony, PA, even while still paying for it. Because of their financial situation and Joseph's full-time commitment to the Church,

does not actually address. Whitmer's heading explains the background better and it was adjusted in 2013; see *JSP*, D1:241.

¹⁵ *JSP*, D1:241.

¹⁶ *JSP*, D1:242.

¹⁷ *JSP*, MRB:93-95.

the Lord commanded the little Church to provide him a place to live. He also needed a place to continue his work on the new translation of the Bible, which had stopped at about Genesis 8 before leaving New York.

8 text note:

The copy in RB1 reads “it is meet that my Servent Sidney should have a comfortable room to live in.” This was edited by John Whitmer at an unknown date (probably later in 1831) to read “it is meet that my Servent Sidney should live as Seemeth him good.” It remained the same in 1833 but in 1835 was updated as follows: “it is meet that my servant Sidney Rigdon should live as seemeth him good, inasmuch as he keepeth my commandments.” By 1835, housing was settled for both Joseph and Sidney, making the commandment for “a comfortable room” for Sidney not relevant.

8 Sidney Rigdon should live as seemeth him good. Ironically, the Church was not under obligation to provide a home for Sidney, something he had been used to all his life as a minister. Instead, he was to find a place for himself and his family to live with the resources available to him.

Edward Partridge called as bishop (9-12)

9 I have called my servant Edward Partridge. The pattern for extending callings is established here. First, the person is called by the appropriate Church leader, by inspiration from the Lord. Second, he or she is “appointed by the voice of the Church,” according to the law of common consent (D&C 26). Then he or she is ordained or set apart, depending on the nature of the calling. Then the work begins.

9 a bishop. The office of Bishop had not been previously mentioned in other revelations. This appears to come out of the blue, but the timing was significant, because D&C 42, which was given five days later, could not have been received as easily if there were not a leader already in place to implement it.

9 to leave his merchandise and to spend all his time. Partridge was the first general authority that was called to leave his vocation completely and devote himself full-time to the work. This was a great testimony of Joseph Smith’s lack of self-interest. Had he been concerned only for his own condition, he could have written the revelation in a way that all his needs were to be cared for, but instead, he was thrilled that the Lord called Partridge to this full-time and significant leadership position in the Church.

It was a great sacrifice for the well-to-do Partridge and his wife, to leave his successful business and throw himself on the mercy of the Saints. But he did so faithfully and without hesitation.

10 as it shall be appointed unto him in my laws. Unlike today’s bishops or other Church leaders, Edward Partridge not only had no handbook of instructions or guidance of any kind, but he had to accept a calling where he was told up front that the details would later be revealed. What faith!

11 this because his heart is pure. What a marvelous statement from God, who knows the hearts of men. He is like Nathanael, whom the Lord said to be without guile (deceit or fraud) upon meeting him (John 1:47).

12 These words...are pure before me. God’s pure words from his prophets are a blessing to those who hear them, but also come with an obligation to obey, “for they are to be answered upon your souls in the day of judgment.”

Results

As mentioned, Joseph and Emma did not stay long with the Whitneys. After D&C 41, they moved in with the Isaac Morley family on their farm north of Kirtland, until a small house could be built for them on the Morley property. There they lived for six months, during which time Emma gave birth to twins, both of whom died. Young Lucy Morley, who had first brought the missionaries to the Laminites (Oliver Cowdery and others) to her father’s house, stayed with them and helped Emma through the physical and emotional recovery. In the fall of 1832, they moved back in with the Whitneys, though this time in the upper floor of the store instead of the small Whitney house.

The call of Edward Partridge as bishop was necessary to prepare the way for the Saints to receive D&C 42 and the laws of consecration and stewardship. With Partridge already in place, the implementation of the principles in D&C 42 could go more smoothly. Partridge proved to be exactly what the Lord had said—pure of heart and without guile. He dedicated his entire life to the work, left his business, and served the Church and the Lord for the rest of his days.

D&C 42 – The Laws of the Church of Christ

Date and Location

Wednesday, 9 February 1831; Kirtland, Ohio (vv. 1-72);
Wednesday, 23 February 1831; Kirtland, Ohio (vv. 73-93).

Setting

Joseph Smith had come to Ohio with the promise that the Lord’s law would be revealed there. The large number of converts were anxious to learn the Lord’s will about how

they should be living. In addition, they were anticipating the arrival of up to two hundred members from New York, and wondered what the plan was for meeting their needs and where everyone would go.

Joseph quickly began to see for himself what was happening among the new converts in Kirtland. He said in his history that some “strange notions and false spirits had crept in among them.”¹⁸ John Whitmer observed that the Kirtland members “were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things: for they considered from reading the scripture that what belonged to ~~one man~~, but a brother belonged to any of the brethren, therefore they would take each others clothes and other property and use it without leave: which brought on confusion and disappointments.”¹⁹ Joseph worked with them to overcome their disagreements and prepare them for the promised law (see D&C 38:32).

Five days after the reception of D&C 41, on 9 Feb 1831, a dozen elders of the Church in Kirtland, Ohio, gathered together with Joseph Smith to seek the Lord’s will relative to getting the Law promised earlier (D&C 38:32). They came with five specific questions, and D&C 42:1-72 answered all five directly, as it was first received. The questions were as follows²⁰ (with corresponding answers in the verses indicated):

- “First Shall the Church come to gether into one place or continue in separate establishments?” (1-10)
- “Question 2d the Law regulating the Church in her present situation till the time of her gathering” (11-69)
- “3rd How the Elders are to dispose of their families while they are proclaiming repentance or are otherwise engaged in the Service of the Church?” (70-72)
- “4th How far it is the will of the Lord what we Should have dealing with the wo[r]ld & how we Should conduct our dealings with them?” (answered in verses now deleted; see *JSP*, MRB:105)
- “5th What preparations we shall make for our Brethren from the East & when & how”? (answered in verses now deleted; see *JSP*, MRB:105)

There is indication that initially, each question with its answer was considered a separate revelation. Some of the early copies and publications only include one or two of

¹⁸ “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 93, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/99>.

¹⁹ *JSP*, H2:22-23.

²⁰ *JSP*, D1:246n42.

²¹ *JSP*, D1:246-247.

the sections, showing that they may have been distinct. Each one also ends with “even so Amen.”²¹

What is today verses 73-93 was received two weeks later, on 23 February 1831, during a gathering of seven elders, who came together to discuss how to implement the information received on 9 February.²² Even those verses were received in two sections:

Additionally, some of the content of the revelation that referred to Church structure and practices, such as counselors to a bishop, a high council, a bishop’s council, and high priests, were added later, along with several clarifications and expansions. Like other administrative documents in the early Church, the attitude around this one was clearly that it was a working document, subject to change over time. Some of the text was deleted, as noted in the fourth and fifth questions above. Altogether, 85% of the initial revelation remains in our version today, an amazingly high number considering how many changes the Church went through from early 1831 to 1835, when the revelation took its nearly final form.²³

Some may see this document as historical interesting but not relevant to us today, but the law of consecration remains in full effect on anyone who has been through the temple endowment. We may formally only give ten percent to the Church, per D&C 119, but we are still under the obligation to consecrate “all we possess or may possess” to the Church, including our money, property, time, and effort.²⁴ The concept of consecration has been implemented in various ways over the course of the history of the Church, but it starts here in D&C 42 with foundational principles that guide all implementations.²⁵

Documents and Publication

Oldest version and most complete is probably that featured in *JSP*, D1:249f, from the Symonds Rider collection, with the incomplete copy in Revelation Book 1 (*JSP*, MRB:95-105) near the same time. Remarkably, four other known early copies also exist.²⁶ It was first published in part in the *Painesville Telegraph*, September 1831, then in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, July 1832, then as Chapters 44

²² Chronologically, D&C 43 and 44 were received before the final verses of D&C 42.

²³ Grant Underwood, “‘The Laws of the Church of Christ’ (D&C 42): A Textual and Historical Analysis,” in Hedges, Fluhman, and Gaskill, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 108-141.

²⁴ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:21-22.

²⁵ Casey Paul Griffiths, “‘A Covenant and a Deed Which Cannot Be Broken’: The Continuing Saga of Consecration,” in Ostler, MacKay, and Gardner, *Foundations of the Restoration*, 121-138.

²⁶ *JSP*, D1:246n40.

(vv. 1-72) and 47 (vv. 73-93) in the 1833 Book of Commandments and Section 13 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Shall the church come together into one place? (1-10)
- What is the law regulating the church (11-69)
 - Teaching (11-17)
 - Modern-day ten commandments (18-29)
 - Consecration and stewardship (30-39)
 - Simplicity and healing the sick (40-52)
 - Clarifications (53-55)
 - Scripture and revelation (56-62)
 - Priesthood responsibilities and blessings (63-69)
- How the elders care for their families (70-72)
- Addendum: Clarifying previous statements (73-93)

Commentary

Shall the church come together into one place? (1-10)

The full question was, “First Shall the Church come together into one place or continue in separate establishments?” The gathering was already called for, bringing the New York Saints to Ohio, so the question was not about that but rather as the other members came to Ohio, where should they all go.

1 inasmuch as ye believe on my name and keep my commandments. The twelve elders that was gathered on this day had expressed both belief and commitment, through their own faith, repentance, and covenants. The Lord declared that they were prepared for this revelation.

2 hearken and hear and obey. The Hebrew word for ‘hearken’ means to hear and obey. Since that meaning was probably not known to these brethren, the Lord used all three together.

3 assembled yourselves together according to the commandment. The twelve elders gathered this day according to the instructions in D&C 41:2-3.

3 are agreed as touching this one thing. The elders had come together united in their agreement to obey the law of the Lord, as Joseph would reveal it to them.

4 go forth in my name. The elders were all called to missionary work, except Joseph and Sidney Rigdon, who were to only go out for “a little season” (v. 5), then return to Kirtland to work on the translation of the Bible, which is exactly what they did. Part of obeying the Lord’s Law is sharing the good news of Christ.

6 two by two. This comes from Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1, and is the first instance recording the pattern of missionaries going together in pairs in modern revelation. Prior to this revelation, missionaries often traveled alone (and even after this revelation in some circumstances). They also went in the name of Christ, boldly declaring the word like angels (meaning, messengers).

7 baptizing with water, saying: Repent ye. The core missionary message continues to focus on repentance and baptism, to enable justification and covenants.

8 go forth into the regions westward. The Lord pointed them toward Missouri, but they are not to head straight there. Rather, they are to take their time along the way, finding receptive listeners and building up the Church.

8 build up my church in every region. The beginning of the answer to the question: They were to call others to join the church (the call to missionary service above) in “every region,” not just in Ohio but all throughout the world.

9 Until the time shall come when it shall be revealed. The “it” that needed to be revealed was the location and timing of the New Jerusalem, the promised gathering place. Ohio was not that gathering place but it was a temporary stopping place for the Church to grow and prosper for a time. The language of v. 9 is important because it’s not just the location that matters, but the Lord’s timing. We still look forward to it today. This is the rest of the answer to the question that prompted this section.

9 when the city of the New Jerusalem shall be prepared. Preaching to the world and calling out the righteous to gather together continues until the Lord reveals the location and timing for the New Jerusalem (see Ether 13:2-11; Moses 7:62, both of which were received prior to this revelation). This is the first occurrence of the term ‘New Jerusalem’ in the Doctrine and Covenants.

9 ye may be my people and I will be your God. A near quotation from Jeremiah 11:4 and a common theme in his book (7:33; 24:7; 30:22; 31:33; 32:28). See also Leviticus 26:12; 1 Chronicles 17:22; Ezekiel 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zechariah 8:8; and Hosea’s use of the opposite to reflect Israel’s rejection of the Lord in Hoses 1:9. This is the first and only use of this common Old Testament phrase in the D&C.

10 Edward Partridge shall stand in the office where unto I have appointed him. In D&C 41, Partridge was called as bishop. This reaffirms that calling and the desire to have him remain in it indefinitely.

10 Even so. Amen. The first two sections answering a question both end this way (see v. 69) in the original revelation, adding to the idea that the sections were received individually and then combined.

What is the law regulating the church? (11-69)

The full question was, “Question 2d [What is] the Law regulating the Church in her present situation till the time of her gathering”? This was the main question that brought the elders together at this time. The answer can be divided into seven sections on various topics.

Teaching (11-17)

11 **he has authority and has been regularly ordained.** In the Lord’s Church, people don’t ‘self-select’ to be a pastor or a missionary, except to express a willingness to serve. The pattern is always observed that a priesthood leader in authority calls the person, then sustains them through the rule of common consent, then ordains or sets them apart, and sends them on their way to serve. Other churches of that time, denying the authority of the Catholic Church and thereby leaving themselves without authority, simply considered everyone empowered to teach the gospel, as moved by the Spirit. Today we say, ‘Every member a missionary,’ and that is true enough. But those with the authority to teach and baptize receive that authority with a formal mission call and ordination/setting apart.

12 text note:

The early copies and the 1833 Book of Commandments had “teach the scriptures which are in the Bible & the Book of Mormon.” In the 1835 D&C, the language we use today first appeared: “teach the principles of my gospel which are in the bible and the book of Mormon.”

12 **the Bible and the Book of Mormon.** This is the only time the word “Bible” appears in the Doctrine and Covenants in Joseph Smith’s revelations and writings.²⁷ Typically, the term used is ‘scriptures’ or ‘holy scriptures.’ The Bible and the Book of Mormon both contain “the fulness of the gospel” and are to be used by the elders in their teaching.

13 **the covenants and church articles.** The early members of the Church referred to Joseph’s revelations as ‘covenants,’ and the ‘church articles’ specifically is D&C 20. Thus the Lord is saying, in effect, ‘Listen to the living prophet and do what he says.’ They are also to use these revelations in their teaching, as the Spirit directs.

13-14 text note:

Early copies and 1833 read, “And they shall be directed by the Spirit, which shall be given them by the prayer of faith; and if they receive not the Spirit, they shall not teach.” The language we use today was edited into the 1835: “...as they shall be directed by the Spirit; and the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith, and if ye receive not the Spirit, ye shall not teach.” This change attached being directed by the Spirit to teaching the gospel, clarifies what is given by prayer, and puts

the command about teaching by the spirit in the second instead of third person.

14 **the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith.** Like Oliver Cowdery learned, we cannot just go out and teach and expect the Spirit to be there. It requires faith and a specific petition to the Lord to have that blessing.

14 **if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.** This appears to be an imperative—a command not to teach unless the Spirit is with the speaker. The Spirit only comes by living what is being taught, and by bearing righteous testimony of those principles and truths. ‘Talking is not teaching,’ and there are many so-called scholars in the world who can talk all day long about the scriptures but cannot teach because they have no Spirit with them. The humble petition and the steady application of the gospel of peace and salvation are required to reach the heart of the student.²⁸ Especially in a Church made of lay people—and in Joseph’s day, many uneducated and unsophisticated—a reliance on the Spirit is the only way to be successful.

William E. McLellin explained one related experience he had: “I arose and attempted to preach, but could not, I had no animation in it, no memory, and in truth I had lost the spirit of God. Hence I was confounded, I set down and told bro. H. to preach for I could not.”²⁹

15 **until the fulness of my scriptures is given.** A clear reference to the work on the JST, and a fascinating charge that they are to use the existing scriptures in their teaching until the Bible translation is complete, then they are to teach with that. The Church has just begun to use the JST in the last few decades, though in the context of missionary work, the JST still does not play a role.

16 **by the Comforter, ye shall speak and prophesy.** By the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the elders out preaching the gospel message would be able to speak and even prophesy, according to the Lord’s will.

17 **the Comforter knoweth all things and beareth record.** The job of the Spirit in this verse is to bring knowledge to us, to bear testimony to our souls of the Father and the Son, and to bring peace to our lives as we repent and live the commandments.

Modern-day ten commandments (18-29)

18 **I speak unto the church.** Starting at this point, the audience was expanded beyond the twelve elders in the room to the entire Church. The laws given may be familiar from Exodus in the Old Testament, but they are given anew here, emphasizing their eternal importance and not just their applicability to the Law of Moses.³⁰

²⁷ Joseph F. Smith mentions it in D&C 138:6.

²⁸ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:15.

²⁹ Underwood, “The Laws of the Church of Christ,” in Hedges, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 117.

³⁰ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:16.

18 ***Thou shalt not kill.*** This one is unique among the other commandments, in relation to the penalties involved. With murder, the sinner is not to “not have forgiveness” either now or “in the world to come” (perhaps referring to the immediate world after this one—the spirit world), and to die (v. 19). Joseph Smith later taught that murderers could repent, like David in the Old Testament, but the promise was only that their souls should not be left in hell.³¹

19 ***he that killeth shall die.*** According to the laws of the land and not something administered by the Church.

20 ***Thou shalt not steal.*** Unlike murder, a person could repent of theft and be forgiven. But the unrepentant thief would be “cast out” or excommunicated from the Church.

21 ***Thou shalt not lie.*** The penalty for an unrepentant liar is also to be cast out.

22 ***Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart.*** This is the only specific command in the Doctrine and Covenants like this, though the principle is clearly taught in several sections. It echoes the longer explanation of the love that should be between husband and wife in Ephesians 5:25-33.

23 ***looketh upon a woman to lust after her.*** Just lustful looking is equal to denying the faith, and drives away the Spirit. This is partly why pornography does such great damage, but this scripture does not limit itself to looking at pictures. It involves “the intent to commit adultery if given an opportunity.”³² The penalty for ‘looking’ or having the intent to commit adultery is the same as for doing—“he shall be cast out.”

24 ***Thou shalt not commit adultery.*** The act of betrayal that is adultery drives away the Spirit like no other, and the unrepentant person will be cast out.

25 ***repents...forsaketh...doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive.*** An adulterer who sincerely repents and forsakes the sin should be forgiven by the Church. It may take time to demonstrate a true forsaking, so forgiveness is certainly not immediate, but is promised.

26 ***if he doeth it again.*** Unlike the other sins, the Lord commands them to forgive an adulterer once, but a repeat offender is to be cast out, regardless of repentance. Note that the language does not permanently ban the person, because rebaptism is always a possibility, but it does dictate how Church leaders should handle a repeat offender, because doing it again signifies that the repentance the first time was not adequate, since true repentance involves forsaking the sin.

27 ***Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor.*** Gossip and evil-speaking of another merit inclusion in this list of serious sins, and it carries the same potential penalty of being “cast out” (v. 28) if the sinner does not repent.

29 ***If thou lovest me...keep all my commandments.*** Compare John 14:15. This is a marvelous summary of the principles already taught. It is the love of God that truly motivates us to righteous living and continual repentance. This is also a marvelous transition verse to the next section, which addresses the main question of the elders assembled this day—what is the Lord’s Law? Acceptance of that Law is wholly dependent on how much they love God.

Consecration and stewardship (30-39)

29-30 text note.

Early copies and 1833 have “keep all my commandments & Behold thou shalt consecrate all thy ~~property~~ properties that which thou hast.” In 1835, it was changed to the wording in our present scriptures, which offers one of the main reasons for the law of consecration: “...keep all my commandments. And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support, that which thou hast to impart unto them.”

30 ***remember the poor.*** The purpose of the Law was first and foremost to care for the poor. The Church’s system was not a forced redistribution of wealth such as Communism, or a governmental take-over of the means of production, as with Socialism. Neither of those systems have as their primary purpose the care for the poor, nor the voluntary surrendering of property and assets that this Law entails.

30 ***consecrate of thy properties.*** To consecrate property means to fully give it to the Church “with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.” It teaches us that all that we have comes from the Lord. He generously supplies our needs and wants, and requires us to consider the needs of others when we are so blessed. Not long after this, Church leaders made up a form that was used to consecrate property to the Church, signed by the person and the Bishop and witnesses, that not only deeded the property to the Church but committed the Church to using it for church purposes only, to avoid any notion of personal gain by the bishop or others.³³

31 ***ye will do it unto me.*** This verse and v. 38 serve as brackets to the Law and put it in the context of Matthew 25:40—what we do to each other we, in fact, do to Jesus himself.

31 ***laid before the bishop of my church.*** The part about counselors was added later as the office of bishop was more fully understood (originally, it just read “the Bishop of my church & two of the Elders” who would presumably

³¹ Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 331.

³² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:20.

³³ *JSP*, D1:252n74.

serve as witnesses of what the bishop did). When this was first given in 1831, this meant Edward Partridge, who had committed his whole life and consecrated himself to this work, thus being the first example of a consecrated member.

32 text note:

This verse is substantially changed from the original, reflecting how the system of consecration evolved as it was implemented. Because later some members consecrated property but didn't deed it to the Church and then withdrew, leaving the Church unable to meet commitments it had made based on having that property, a more stringent legal requirement of deeding the property came into play. The verse in the original read, "& it shall come to pass that the Bishop of my church after that he has received the properties of my church that it cannot be taken from ~~him~~ you he shall appoint every man a Steward over his own property or that which he hath received in as much as shall be sufficient for him self and family."³⁴ The change to our current reading was made in 1835.

32 a steward over his own property. Giving up all property meant giving the Church title to the land, but then the bishop, under direction of the Spirit, gave back some or all of a person's property "sufficient for himself and family." Stewardship goes hand-in-hand with this implementation of the law of consecration; one cannot exist without the other in the Lord's method.

33 text note:

Like v. 32, this verse was quite different in the first version. It read, "& the residue shall be kept to administer to him that hath not that every man may receive according as he stands in need."³⁵ Again, our current version first appeared in 1835.

33 after this first consecration. Consecration was not a one-time application of the Law. As a person worked the given stewardship, and returned more than the family needed to meet their needs and wants, the surplus was to be turned over to the bishop for use by the Church to continue to help the needy. More on this with D&C 51:4-6 later.

35 that every man who has need may be amply supplied. This is not a law of poverty, but one where all were raised to a higher level to have their needs amply supplied.

33 amply supplied and receive according to his wants. Joseph Smith did not use the term "wants" as we do today. We think of "needs" and "wants" as different things, but "wants" being optional items that we merely desire. But Joseph Smith used the terms interchangeably, referring to the necessities of life, a deficiency of things that made one poor or indigent.³⁶

³⁴ JSP, D1:252.

³⁵ JSP, D1:252.

34 text note:

The early version read, "appointed by the Elders of the church & the Bishop."³⁷ The "high council" referred to in our current edition didn't exist in 1831, and that change was made in 1835.

34 kept in my storehouse. A physical place was to be established to warehouse and distribute the "residue" of the offerings coming from the surplus of personal productivity. This in turn was to be used to care for the poor and for purchasing lands, building churches, and eventually building the New Jerusalem (v. 35). Newel K. Whitney's store served as the first storehouse.

35 text note:

The phrase in our current version, "and building houses of worship," was not in the original but was added in 1835. Even in 1835, however, they would interpret that differently than we do today—we think of chapels for Sunday worship, while 1835 Latter-day Saints thought of the Kirtland and Missouri temples.

35 the New Jerusalem which is hereafter to be revealed.

The location of the New Jerusalem was still unknown, except that it was near the Lamanite border (D&C 28:9). It was not revealed until July 1831 in D&C 57.

36 I shall come to my temple. Harkening back to Malachi 3:1, a promise Joseph Smith had heard and read several times, as well as a promise made in the revelation to Edward Partridge when he first met Joseph Smith (D&C 36:8), the association of consecration, Zion, New Jerusalem, and the temple was strong among the early Saints, as it is among current Saints.

37 text note:

There are two changes of note in this verse. First is the phrase "cast out of the church." The original just reads "cast out" with no reference to the Church. Though several verses before talked about sinners being cast out, this makes it clear that violators of the covenant of consecration would face excommunication but not expulsion from the community or something similar. The phrase "of the church" was added in 1835.

The second change expanded on the purpose of consecration or, more correctly, referred back to its original purpose. The original read, "that which he hath consecrated unto me." Starting in 1835, the insertion of "the poor and the needy of my church, or in other words" in the middle of that phrase reminded everyone why consecration was implemented in the first place.

37 shall not receive again. Because the property was permanently deeded to the Church, even if the person left the Church, the land no longer belonged to them. Thus, living the Law took not only faith but faithfulness.

38 text note:

This whole verse was not in the original but was added in 1835.

³⁶ American Dictionary of the English Language – 1844, "Want," noun; see also Harper, *Making Sense*, 141.

³⁷ JSP, D1:252.

39 *text note*:

The initial revelation read somewhat differently: “I will consecrate the riches of the Gentiles unto my People which are of the House of Israel.”³⁸ This tied it to Isaiah 61:6 where Israel eats the riches of the Gentiles, probably the “prophets” referenced at the beginning of the verse. In the 1835 edition, Joseph Smith clarified it because some had misunderstood this to be a prophecy of the Mormons taking Gentile property. With the addition of “those who embrace my gospel among the Gentiles,” the related scripture is closer to Isaiah 49:22-23, which tells how poor Israel will be cared for by Gentile kings and queens.

Simplicity and healing the sick (40-52)

40 ***the work of thine own hands***. To avoid pride, the Lord counseled that even their clothing should be simple but made beautiful by their own labors.

42 ***he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer***. A consecrated person would not be idle but would be striving to magnify his or her stewardship and returning as much to the Lord as possible. This is a phrase unique in all of scripture in this verse, though the concepts of working to supply the basic needs of food and clothing are common.

43 ***nourished with all tenderness***. The sick were to be cared for, regardless of their faith. The Saints were to use medicines and knowledge available to them. Nothing was ever said about avoiding doctors or medical treatment, just not to be forced to receive care from enemies, or as it reads in the original, “not of the world.”³⁹

44 ***pray for and lay their hands upon them***. When called, priesthood bearers come prepared to bless the person who is sick, leaving the outcome to the Lord.

45 ***live together in love***. A consecrated individual makes the choice to love others out of a love of God.

45 ***weep for the loss of them that die***. Because we love others, we are saddened when they die, and we weep especially with close family and friends who are most impacted by the death. But the Lord also counseled us to remember hope and the blessings of the righteous, and weep “especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection.”

46 ***those that die in me***. When a faithful person dies, we view that as them moving into the next stage of their existence, something that will be “sweet unto them,” while those who are not ready for a happy passing will find that “death is bitter” (v. 47).

48 ***shall be healed***. Reiterating v. 44 but emphasizing the element of faith in the outcome, the Lord promised in this and the next three verses that the sick will be healed, the

blind made to see, the deaf made to hear, and the lame made to leap.

52 ***power to become my sons***. Anticipating a larger discussion of spiritual gifts to come in a month (D&C 46), the Lord speaks of those who don’t have the faith to be healed but nevertheless keep the laws of the Lord and thus have power to inherit all that Jesus has by becoming his sons and daughters. In that case, the church members are to support such people in their infirmities.

Clarifications (53-55)

53 ***stand in the place of thy stewardship***. There were no absentee landlords allowed in the Law, but instead a person was to work hard at the stewardship assigned, whether a farm or a place of business.

54 ***Thou shalt not take thy brother’s garment***. John Whitmer explained that members of ‘The Family’ associated with the Morleys had begun taking each other’s clothing without permission, resulting in bad feelings. The Law does not eliminate personal possessions or the ability to buy and sell—indeed, that is an essential part of the stewardship system, allowing for increase and thus contributions to help the poor and grow the Church. Respecting personal property was a critical component of the Law.

55 ***give it unto my storehouse***. Reiterating what was said in v. 34, the Lord emphasized the fact that labor should produce profits, which are then used for God’s purposes, namely, caring for the poor and building up the kingdom.

Scripture and revelation (56-62)

56 ***Thou shalt ask***. This section is bracketed by this command—ask and revelation will be given. It shows up three times: here and in vv. 61 and 62.

56 ***my scriptures shall be given as I have appointed***. This is another specific and powerful statement on the nature of the work of the Bible translation, the result of which was a Bible written as the Lord intended it to be written.

56-57 *text note*:

The phrase in our modern editions, “they shall be preserved in safety,” underwent three edits. The original read: “my scriptures shall be given as I have appointed & for thy Salvation thou shalt hold thy peace concerning them, untill ye had received them.”⁴⁰ Because the “salvation” statement was perhaps ambiguous, punctuation and clarifying text was added by Sidney Rigdon, making it read: “...as I have appointed; for thy ~~salvation~~ <safety> <it is expedient that> thou shalt hold thy peace concerning them.”⁴¹ This is how it was printed in 1833. For the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, it was changed to its current reading, which has the scriptures preserved in safety.

57 ***not teach them until ye have received them in full***. The brethren were very excited about the things they were

³⁸ JSP, D1:252.

³⁹ JSP, D1:252.

⁴⁰ JSP, D1:254.

⁴¹ JSP, MRB:103.

learning from the early chapters of Genesis about Moses, the creation, the Fall, and the ministry of Enoch. It was the revealed mission and teachings of Enoch that was instigating much of the discussion about the laws of consecration and stewardship. But the work was not even past the first half of Genesis by this time, and Joseph and the Church had much more to learn from the work. The Lord counseled patience in using them for missionary efforts.

58 *ye shall teach them unto all men.* The time would come to use these teachings from the Bible translation in missionary work, but not yet. See also v. 15.

59 *text note:*

This verse originally read, “thou Shalt take the things which thou hast received which thou knowest to have been my Law to be my Law to govern my church.”⁴² The wording was somewhat awkward and so was updated in 1835 with a clarification that the thing they had already received was “my scriptures,” which included the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Moses, and which were the repository for the “law to govern my church.”

59 *in my scriptures for a law.* The details about Enoch and other revelations were not just interesting historical points, but helped the Church understand how to implement what the Lord was asking them to do here in D&C 42.

60 *he that doeth according to these things shall be saved.* With the Law revealed to the Saints, as requested, they were now obligated to live it, according to their covenants. Not living according to their covenants would result in them being “damned.”

61 *revelation upon revelation.* The second promise that comes with asking is a great promise of revelation, knowledge, and mysteries, all of which bring joy and eternal life.

62 *where the New Jerusalem shall be built.* The third promise that comes with asking is the location of the New Jerusalem, something the Saints were very anxious to learn.

Priesthood responsibilities and blessings (63-69)

63 *to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south.* Missionary work would go forth out of Zion in all directions to the whole world. It is truly stunning what the early Saints were able to accomplish with their small numbers and in their poverty, sending missionaries all around the world in a very few years.

64 *teach them that shall be converted to flee to the west.* The “east” refers to New York and the “west” refers to Ohio, in this case, where converts had been called to gather.

⁴² JSP, D1:254.

⁴³ JSP, D1:254-255.

64 *secret combinations.* D&C 38:13, 28 both referred to secret plots to do damage the early Church in New York. That is what they need to flee.

65 *text note:*

The original read, “great Shall be thy reward thou shalt observe to keep the mysteries of the Kingdom unto thy Self for it is not given unto the world to know the mysteries.”⁴³ The injunction to keep the mysteries from the world became a blessing to know the mysteries that is not given to the world to enjoy in 1835.

66-67 *text note:*

Originally, these verses were much shorter: “& these Laws which ye have received are sufficient for <you> both here & in the New Jerusalem.”⁴⁴ A later Sidney Rigdon edit, which became the 1833 Book of Commandments text, expanded it somewhat: “& These laws which ye have received, <& shall hereafter receive,> are <shall be> sufficient for you, both here & in the New Jerusalem.”⁴⁵ In 1835, it was expanded to today’s form, pointing back to laws already received (but new when this revelation was first written) and covenants yet to come (in the temple), which combined would establish the Saints in their two locations: Ohio and Missouri.

66 *observe the laws which ye have received.* Meaning, what the Lord has just revealed in this revelation. Later, looking back, this had reference to all the revelations about consecration.

67 *ye shall hereafter receive church covenants.* More revelations were promised to continue to teach the Church about implementing the Law just received, as well as establishing the New Jerusalem. These pointed to covenants and experiences had in the Kirtland and later Nauvoo temples.

68 *he that lacketh wisdom, let him ask of me.* See James 1:5. The initial revelation had “knowledge” instead of wisdom, which was corrected to match James 1:5 in 1835.

69 *text note:*

The original read, “Lift up your hears & rejoice for unto you the Kingdom is given.” The later clarification that not just the kingdom but the “keys of the church” had been given was added in 1835.

69 *the kingdom, or in other words, the keys of the church.* Priesthood and keys are a significant distinguishing factor in the true Church. Notably, this language was added even before more keys were restored in the Kirtland temple in 1836 (D&C 110). But Joseph and others with him held the “keys of the church” sufficient to oversee the Lord’s kingdom on earth from the organization of the Church.

How the elders care for their families? (70-72)

The full question was, “3rd How the Elders are to dispose of their families while they are proclaiming repentance or are otherwise engaged in the Service of the Church?”

⁴⁴ JSP, D1:255.

⁴⁵ JSP, MRB:103.

70 *priests and teachers shall have their stewardships.* They can rely on the surplus from their stewardships to help support their families when they are called to serve.

71 *text note:*

Mention of “high priests” and “counselors” in this verse was added in 1835. Prior to that, it only mentioned elders assisting the bishop as those receiving out of consecrated property to support their families.

71 *appointed to assist the bishop as counselors.* This reference to counselors was added later as the office of the bishopric was further revealed and understood.

71-72 *text note:*

Original manuscripts provide different details than our modern scriptures, which match changes made in 1835. The Rider documents reads, “which is consecrated to the Lord either a stewardship or otherwise as may be thought best by the Elders & Bishop.”⁴⁶ The lengthier version, added in 1835, reads like our current version, mentioning high priests and counselors, changing the consecration to be to the bishop instead of the Lord, and adding in the purpose of it all—to care for the poor “and for other purposes,” and adding the idea that they are to receive a “just remuneration.”

Text note:

At this point in the original revelation, the other two questions were included with short answers, both of which were cut before the revelation was printed in 1833 and so have not been printed. They are as follows:⁴⁷

4th 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?

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——

5th what preparations we shall make for our Brethren from the East & when and how?

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 & every family Shall have places that they may live by themselves & every Church Shall be organized in as close bodies as they can be in consequence of the enemy!——

Martin Harris was designated to help with finding places for the New York Saints to settle, and Joseph wrote to him shortly with that request.⁴⁸

Addendum: Clarifying previous statements (73-93)

All but one of these verses were added two weeks later, on 23 February 1831, to clarify and enlarge on some of the

⁴⁶ *JSP*, D1:255.

⁴⁷ *JSP*, D1:255-256.

⁴⁸ See *JSP*, D1:262-264 for the text of the letter.

⁴⁹ *JSP*, D1:258; compare D&C 43:8-9.

statements in the 9 February revelation (above). This meeting appears to be in response to a command given by the Lord sometime after 9 February and before 23 February: “& now Behold I give unto you a commandment that when ye are assembled yourselves together ye shall note with a Pen how to act, & for my Church to act upon the points of my law & commandments which I have given & thus it shall become a law unto you.”⁴⁹

Like the revelation on the Law on 9 February, this revelation was divided into three parts based on questions the brethren had. In this case, there were gathered Joseph and seven other elders, with the general question of how they were to act upon the Law received two weeks previous (D&C 42:1-72).

The order of the sections in the Rider document is different from that in today’s publications, and even the 1833 Book of Commandments. Additionally, other manuscript copies have some but not all three sections, nor do they present them in the same order; the three sections appear to have been considered distinct documents, at least to some.⁵⁰

Our present order and contents for this section first appear in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, including the addition of v. 73, which wasn’t in any of the initial revelations in 1831. Like the fourth and fifth questions in the 9 February revelation, the first section in the Rider document in *JSP*, D1 was not included in any publication.

2013	Rider	1833	1835
Not included	1 st reiterates in abbreviated format D&C 42:1-10	Not included	Not included
v. 73	Not included	Not included	Section 13:19b
vv. 74-77	3 rd dealing with cases of adultery	Chapter 47:21-24	Section 13:20
vv. 78-93	2 nd when to go to civil law versus Church councils	Chapter 47:1-20	Section 13:21-23

There are some textual changes in this section from the originals and 1833 that are addressed in 1835 and remain to our current version. The first is the addition of the female pronoun for almost all potential sinners (“he or she”), demonstrating that the rules apply to both sexes. Second,

⁵⁰ For example, the first manuscript revelation book only includes vv. 74-77 in a note pinned to the 9 February revelation, with the 23 February 1831 date on the note.

the original makes no clear distinction between when a person is to be judged by the civil authorities and Church leaders, calling both “the Law.” That was clarified in 1835 by adding the phrase “law of the land” when it refers to civil authorities.

73 *the bishop, also, shall receive his support.* This revelation makes clear the justification for certain people in the Church to receive a salary—those who have as their full-time job to help run the Church and administer its programs. This verse was not part of the original revelations but was added in 1835 for clarification, since the supporting elders or counselors to the bishop were included but the support expected for the office of bishop was not.

74-75 *fornication...adultery.* A clarification is made about the fate of a spouse who is the victim of fornication (meaning any sexual sin, v. 74), who should not be cast out, and one who leaves a spouse claiming the spouse has committed adultery but who is actually the one committing sin (v. 75), should be cast out.

76 *be watchful and careful, with all inquiry.* The members are enjoined to carefully consider those requesting to join the Church or bringing such cases before the leaders, that they make every effort not to be deceived and mistakenly let a sinner into the ranks of active members.

77 *not married.* Unmarried people who commit sexual sins can repent and join the Church, but if they do not repent, they cannot be received into the Church.

78 *observe to keep all the commandments.* An important reminder that not just sinners need to strive to repent and be faithful, but “every person” should keep God’s commandments and their covenants.

79 *according to the laws of the land.* Murderers are to be turned over to civil authorities for trial.

80 *tried before two elders of the church, or more.* Two or more elders were to hear the case of someone charged with adultery. Today the practice is either with a bishopric (three) or a stake presidency and high council (fifteen).

81 *the elders shall lay the case before the church.* Disciplinary councils are generally not public affairs today, though participants are free to publicize their own cases, if they so desire. But there are some cases where the sin is broadly known where the case will be presented to some or all adult members in a ward or stake, so the decision of the council can be made known. See also vv. 90-92.

82 *the bishop be present also.* While in 1831, this was only “if it can be,” today this is a requirement for a ward disciplinary council.

84-85 *shall rob...shall steal.* Thieves should be turned over to civil authorities.

86 *shall lie.* Liars and those who commit perjury should be handled through civil authorities as well.

87 *the law, even that of God.* Other offenses and sins were to be handled by the Church itself, per the instructions received from the Lord.

88 *take him or her between him or her and thee alone.* The correct way to handle personal offenses is privately.

89 *text note:*

The original and 1833 include a second step to attempting reconciliation with someone who has offended, which is to “take another with thee” as a witness after the first attempt does not work and before the third step which is to turn the person over to Church discipline. That second step was deleted in 1835.

89 *it shall be done in a meeting.* If a private conversation does not resolve the issue, bring it to the Church in a meeting. In no case should such issues between members be aired publicly “before the world.”

90-92 *offend openly...rebuked openly.* The nature of the correction should match the nature of the offense—public if many are involved, privately if only one or few.

Results

D&C 42 was expected, anticipated, and welcomed, and the Saints acted on it. Missionary work immediately increased as did conversions. One elder, John Corel, reported that they baptized thirty-six in three weeks in New London, Ohio, and that other elders likewise baptized more so that “the work increased very fast.”⁵¹

But some misunderstood and even bristled against it. Sin did not cease completely, nor did offenses between members. In other words, agency was still in effect. Still, Joseph Smith recorded in his history that the Ohio Saints’ previous practice “was readily abandoned for the more perfect law of the Lord.”⁵² In a February 1831 letter to Martin Harris, still in New York, he wrote, “We have received the laws of the Kingdom since we came here and the Disciples in these parts have received them gladly.”⁵³

Bishop Partridge did fill his role, but sometimes he was overly enthusiastic about enforcing it. In 1833, Joseph

⁵¹ Quoted in Underwood, “The Laws of the Church of Christ,” in Hedges, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 116.

⁵² “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 93, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November

5, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/99>.

⁵³ *JSP*, D1:263.

taught him to serve without infringing on the agency of other members:

First, it is not right to condescend to verry great paticulars in taking inventories. the fact is this, that a man is bound by the law of the church to consecrate to the Bishop before he can be considered a legal heir to the Kingdom of Zion, and this too, without constraint, and unless he does this, he cannot be acknowledged before the Lord on the Church Book. Therefore, to condescend to particulars, I will tell you that every man must be his own judge how much he should receive, and how much he should suffer to remain in the hands of the Bishop....The matter of consecration must be done by the mutual consent of both parties—For, to give the Bishop power to say ow much every man shall have and he be obliged to comply with the Bishops judgment, is giveing to the Bishop more power than a King has and upon the other hand, to let every man say how much he needs and the Bishop obliged to comply with his judgment, is to throw Zion into confusion and make a Slave

of the Bishop. The fact is, there must be a balance or equilibrium of power between the bishop and the people, and thus harmony and good will may be preserved among you.⁵⁴

“The divine law set forth in section 42 is not hard to understand. It is hard to do.”⁵⁵ But the Lord invites us to share in the bounty of the earth and show our ability to be stewards over a little, thereby preparing us to be stewards over more later.⁵⁶ As it turned out, the Law as described in the initial versions of D&C 42 were only lived by a portion of the Church from 1831-1833.⁵⁷ Other attempts to live with variations on this implementation were attempted in subsequent Church periods, but none worked on a large scale or for very long.⁵⁸

President Gordon B. Hinckley said that “the law of sacrifice and the law of consecration were not done away with and are still in effect.”⁵⁹ We still can exercise our agency and choose how consecrated we will be.

Works Consulted

For text notes:

RB1 – Revelation Book 1, from *JSP*, MRB:8-405.

RB2 – Revelation Book 1, from *JSP*, MRB:407-665.

Dx – Various early manuscripts of revelations in the *JSP* Documents series books.

EMS – The Evening and the Morning Star, June 1832-May 1833, from *JSP*, R2:202-299.

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⁵⁴ *JSP*, D3:153; Harper, *Making Sense*, 145.

⁵⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 145.

⁵⁶ See Matthew 25:14-30.

⁵⁷ Underwood, “The Laws of the Church of Christ,” in Hedges, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 118.

⁵⁸ Casey Paul Griffiths, “A Covenant and a Deed Which Cannot Be Broken’: The Continuing Saga of Consecration,” in Ostler, MacKay, and Gardner, *Foundations of the Restoration*, 121-137.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Harper, *Making Sense*, 146.

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