

D&C 69-75

Lesson 14, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 19 Dec 2016

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General Introduction

The revelations in this lesson, spanning November 1831 to January 1832, are mostly short but provide some important doctrinal teachings and historical progression of Church organization and practice. Here are commands to handle the printing of the revelations, including the creation of the stewardship group called the Literary Firm; how to carry money from Ohio to Missouri in pairs, not singly; and that it is time to call presidents of each priesthood quorum, including a new president of the high priesthood (which becomes president of the Church very quickly).

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were focused on the Bible translation effort after setting it aside for several months to go to Missouri and then get their families settled in Hiram, Ohio. But they were not far into it again when the Lord needed to have them go preach the gospel to counteract the criticisms of two apostates Ezra Booth and Symonds Ryder. After completing this, they again turned their attention to the Bible work.

A second Church bishop was called to serve the Ohio Saints—Newel K. Whitney. And at a general conference in Amherst, Ohio, a dozen missionary companionships were called to preach in various areas in the United States. They were promised great success if they were faithful, which is just what many of them experienced, though some of them struggled with their calls, showing a lack of conversion that later led them out of the Church.

Summary Chronology

- **1830** (date uncertain but before Joseph Smith left for Ohio in Jan 1831) - Joseph Smith received D&C 74, explaining some concepts taught in 1 Corinthians 7:14
- **Wed, 9 Nov 1831** – Joseph Smith spent much time reviewing revelations so that Oliver Cowdery could take them to Missouri for printing as the Book of Commandments. Short conference held to ordain two.
- **Fri, 11 Nov 1831** – After a short conference, Joseph Smith received D&C 69, calling John Whitmer to travel to Missouri with John Whitmer, and D&C 107:59-100, expanding on priesthood duties.
- **Sat, 12 Nov 1831** – A conference was held to discuss the publication of the revelations. Joseph Smith received D&C 70, creating the Literary Firm to manage the printing affairs of the Church.
- **Tue, 15 Nov 1831** – Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon returned to the work of translating the Bible.
- **Sun, 20 Nov 1831** – Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer left Kirtland on their journey to Missouri, carrying the revelations for publication and money for the bishop.
- **Thu, 1 Dec 1831** – Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received D&C 71, calling them to start a mission to deal with challenges to the Church in Ohio.
- **Sat, 3 Dec 1831** – Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon traveled to Kirtland to begin their five-week preaching mission to counteract Ezra Booth's and Symonds Ryder's activities.
- **Sun, 4 Dec 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 72 in the presence of several Kirtland elders, resulting in the calling of the Church's second bishop, Newel K. Whitney.
- **Tue, 6 Dec 1831** – Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer held a conference with a group of Saints in Randolph County, Indiana, including Thomas B. Marsh, dealing with issues and problems with those Saints. The conference concluded the following day.
- **Mon, 19 Dec 1831** – Bishop Edward Partridge purchased for the Church sixty-three acres and forty-three square yards in Independence, Missouri, for \$130.
- **Thu, 5 Jan 1832** – Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer arrived in Independence, Missouri.
- **Tue, 10 Jan 1832** – Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received D&C 73, causing them to recommence the translation of the Bible after their five-week preaching mission.
- **Fri, 13 Jan 1832** – Joseph Smith spent much time in conversation with Mr. Bennett, a Campbellite priest.
- **Wed, 25 Jan 1832** – A conference was held at Amherst, Ohio, where Joseph Smith was sustained as President of the High Priesthood. During the conference, Joseph Smith received D&C 75, calling many on missions.

D&C 69 – John Whitmer to Missouri

Date and Location

Friday, 11 November 1831, at Hiram, Ohio (Johnson home).

Setting

The November conference decided to print 10,000 copies of the modern revelations. Joseph Smith spent the first few days of November editing and preparing them. Oliver Cowdery had been tasked with carrying the revelations to Missouri for the printing of the Book of Commandments (D&C 68:32), along with funds to help pay for the printing and other expenses in Zion. After a brief conference held on 11 November 1831 to determine whether Reynolds Cahoon should go to Zion or not,¹ D&C 69 was received, saying that to provide company and protection, John Whitmer was asked to journey with Oliver Cowdery to Missouri.²

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is found in Revelation Book 1 (between 11-20 Nov 1831). It was first published as Section 28 in the 1835 and then the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 entrusted with the commandments and the moneys. The “commandments” means the revelations that were to be published as the Book of Commandments. The “moneys” means the funds raised both to publish the book and to help purchase lands in Missouri for future settlement.

1 except one go with him. This began the practice of two priesthood holders always working and traveling together when handling money, still followed each Sunday in all wards and stakes.

2 John Whitmer. John Whitmer was someone Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and the Lord could count on—someone who was “true and faithful” (v. 1).

3 continue in writing and making a history. Whitmer had been designated as Church historian in an earlier revelation (D&C 47:1-3). This command reinforces the previous call, even though he is also called to travel to Missouri.

4 counsel and assistance from my servant Oliver. Whitmer was to be supported in his calling as historian by Oliver Cowdery “and others,” to allow him to “observe and know concerning my church” (v. 3). Today, the practice of

Church historians to travel to various places around the world, documenting history and events, continues.

5 send forth the accounts of their stewardships. This pattern is also still followed in the Church today. Each year wards and stakes compile their histories and send them to Salt Lake City to be added to the Church archives, thus documenting a complete history from throughout the world of the workings of the Lord in the latter days.

6 Zion shall be a seat and a place. Not just Kirtland but Missouri also would be a place where Church history would happen, so it was good for Whitmer to be there and witness it firsthand.

7 travel many times from place to place. John Whitmer’s call as Church historian required him to personally meet, interview, and record many events and testimonies from all over the Church.

8 Preaching and expounding, writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things. Whitmer was not only historian, but played a key role in copying many early Church documents. He also had the responsibility to preach in his travels, which he frequently did.

Results

Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer left Ohio on 20 November 1831. They stopped briefly in Winchester, Indiana, to deal with some difficulties in the church there, finally arriving in Independence, Missouri, on 5 January 1832.³

John Whitmer did keep a history of the Church, which he called “The Book of John Whitmer.” Though not as thorough as we might like, it is an important primary source for Church history until 1838, when Whitmer left the Church. As commanded, he also served as a scribe for the Prophet, writing and copying the translation of the Bible manuscripts as well as other documents and revelations.

Harper makes the insightful comment that history to Latter-day Saints is like theology to other churches. Our history records events that teach us key doctrines, like the First Vision teaching us about the nature of God and Christ, and learning about priesthood and keys because angels returned to bring them back. This makes the command to keep a history more important than it might appear on the surface.⁴

The other revelation received on this same date will be discussed in detail later, in the order it appears in the Doctrine and Covenants. But because some of the concepts learned

¹ JSP, D2:126-129.

² JSP, D2:129-130.

³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 253.

⁴ Harper, *Making Sense*, 242.

in it apply to this time period, here is a summary of D&C 107:59-100.⁵

- The Lord instructed them to call presidents of the various quorums—elders, priests, teachers, and deacons.
- One was to be called as “President of the high Priesthood of the Church or in other words, the Presiding high Priest.”
- Bishops were to administer in all temporal things, even though he needs to be a high priest. He is to judge transgressors and others, and should call Elders to assist him.
- Difficult cases should be handed up to the president of the high priesthood, who will call twelve other high priests to assist in judging.
- If the president of the high priesthood sins, he is judged by twelve others, so all are checked in their positions.
- Duties of quorum presidents are described, including going into members’ homes and teaching others.
- The president of the high priesthood would be “like unto Moses,” meaning he is “a Seer a revelator a translator & a prophet having all the gifts of God which he bestoweth upon the head of the church.”
- All should learn their duties and act in their appointed offices with diligence. Not learning the required duties or doing them means they are “not approved” and “shall not be counted worthy to stand.”

D&C 70 – The Literary Firm

Date and Location

Saturday, 12 November 1831, at Hiram, Ohio (Johnson home).

Setting

The revelations were ready, and Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had been called to take them and supporting funds to Zion (D&C 69) where William Phelps would soon bring his printing press from Cincinnati (arriving December 1831) and build a printing house to begin the work. At a special conference held in the John home on 12 November, a discussion was held about the printing activities, led by Joseph Smith, who said (in the abbreviated meeting notes):

Br. Oliver [Cowdery] has labored with me from the beginning in writing &c. Br. Martin [Harris] has labored with me from the beginning, & brs. John [Whitmer] and Sidney [Rigdon] also for a considerable time, & as these sacred writings are now going to the Church for recompense, if this conference think these things worth prizing to be had on record to show hereafter I feel that it will be according to the mind of the Spirit for by it these things were put into my heart which I know to be the Spirit of truth &c.

Voted that Joseph Smith jr. be appointed to dedicate & consecrate these brethren & the sacred writings & all they have entrusted to their care, to the Lord; done accordingly.

After deliberate consideration in consequence of the book of Revelation [The Book of Commandments] now

to be printed being the foundation of the Church & the salvation of the world & the Keyes of mysteries of the Kingdom & the riches of Eternity to the church. Voted that they be prized by this Conference to be worth to the Church the riches of the whole Earth. Speaking temporally.

Voted that in consequence of the diligence of our brethren, Joseph Smith jr. Oliver Cowdery John Whitmer & Sidney Rigdon in bringing to light by the grace of God these sacred things, be appointed to manage them according to the Laws of the Church & the commandments of the Lord.⁶

In other words, with the printing of the Book of Commandments, the Prophet was proposing that those who had helped bring forth Church scripture—Joseph and his principal scribes, including Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, and Sidney Rigdon—be stewards over those revelations and be at least partially supported by the revenues from selling the books. This was an implementation of the Law of Consecration, giving them a stewardship that should be managed to support their families, with any surplus going to the storehouse.⁷ After the vote on this topic, Joseph Smith received D&C 70.

D&C 70 was thus received on 12 November 1831 to confirm and expand the organization voted upon by the conference that would facilitate this and future printing projects for the benefit of the Church. It was the beginning of what was shortly called the Literary Firm, meaning the group of brethren who would oversee the publication of Church materials—specifically the Book of Commandments, a

⁵ See Revelation, 11 November 1831-B [D&C 107 (partial)], in *JSP*, D2:132-136.

⁶ *JSP*, D2:137-138.

⁷ *JSP*, D2:139.

Church hymnal, the Bible translation, and a Church newspaper, among other things.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (12-20 Nov 1831). It was first published as Section 26 in the 1835 and then the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Publish the revelations (1-5)
- Worthy of his hire (6-13)
- Equal in temporal things (14-18)

Commentary

Publish the revelations (1-5)

1 *hear the word of the Lord.* The six brethren named—Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, and William W. Phelps—are commanded to take on the tasks in D&C 70.

Note that Phelps, the printer for the Church, was apparently not in the original revelation but his name was added by Oliver Cowdery with the same ink flow, indicating it was added in the same session as the original revelation, but above the line showing it was after the original was written.⁸ Indeed, at the end of the copy in Revelation Book 1, an ‘addendum’ of sorts was added, a new paragraph but in the same session (based on ink flow), saying, “and again verily I say unto you that my servant William [Phelps] shall be included in this commandment with you in this same stewardship even so Amen”.⁹

3 *stewards over the revelations and commandments.*

These brethren were responsible to write, copy, and print the revelations already received, as well as those that would yet be received by the Prophet. This was a serious responsibility, with an accounting even on the day of judgment (v. 4).

5 *this is their business in the church.* This was not a temporary task or a one-time pursuit, but was their ongoing stewardship, just as other members received stewardships of farms or stores or other responsibilities.

Worthy of his hire (6-13)

6 *not give these things unto the Church.* The “things” referred to are both their responsibilities for the revelations and the subsequent funds that would result from printing

and selling them. In other words, these brethren were to derive their support at least partly from the publication efforts.

7 *more than is needful...given into my storehouse.* Whatever money was made beyond the needs of this group should be given to the bishop’s storehouse for the building up of Zion (v. 8), like other stewardships (v. 9).

10 *none are exempt from this law.* Meaning, the Law of Consecration and Stewardship, including the bishop or the agents who have temporal stewardships (like stores and print shops, v. 11).

12 *the same is worthy of his hire.* From Luke 10:7, this scripture is used by the Lord to affirm that those engaged in the spiritual leadership of the Church were worthy of the benefits of their stewardships.

13 *multiplied unto them through the manifestations of the Spirit.* Not only were there temporal blessings from keeping a proper stewardship but there were great spiritual blessings that were manifest through the Holy Spirit.

Equal in temporal things (14-18)

14 *in your temporal things you shall be equal.* The Law of Consecration required an equality based on need and situation. That is, each family who consecrated should have their needs equally met (not that their needs were identical). When they lived like this, they would be blessed with an abundance of the Spirit.

14 *and this not grudgingly.* Our attitude towards our consecration and stewardship makes all the difference. If we participate without faith or withholding our full commitment, then those spiritual blessings manifest through the Spirit 9v. 13) are withheld.

15 *my blessings upon their heads.* The brethren named in this revelation would receive “a reward of their diligence and for their security,” meaning if they faithful executed on this stewardship, they would earn spiritual and temporal blessings from the Lord that would help with their food, clothing, and housing (verse 16), as well as entering “into the joy” of the Lord’s blessings.

16 *in whatsoever circumstances I, the Lord, shall place them.* The blessings the Lord would give them as they were faithful in their stewardships would include food, clothing, and a place to live, but would be according to the Lord’s will, when and where he sent them.

⁸ *JSP*, MRB:221n229; *JSP*, RT1:171n300.

⁹ *JSP*, D2:173. In *JSP*, MRB:222-223 the addition can be viewed. It was later crossed out by an unknown hand and was

never printed with the revelation. Since verse 1 was edited to include Phelps, it was likely deemed unnecessary.

17 *have done well inasmuch as they have not sinned.*

Their faithfulness is commended where they have obediently obeyed, but with the reality that none of them were perfect and have sinned in their stewardships as well.

18 *they shall enter into the joy of these things.* Referring to the many promised blessings, the Lord promised joy as a result of faithful stewardship fulfillment.

Results

D&C 70 brought about the formation of the Literary Firm, which oversaw the printing efforts of the Church for the next seven years. The members of the Firm at first included Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, John Whitmer, Martin Harris, and William W. Phelps. Later, Jesse Gause was added for a time, soon replaced by Frederick G. Williams (both counselors in the First Presidency and scribes for Joseph Smith). The task of the Firm was to print the New Translation of the Bible, the hymnal, a Church almanac, children’s literature, Church newspapers, and the Book of Commandments/Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁰

Each of these brethren had a role in the firm: Joseph received the revelations and was to “correct those errors or mistakes which he may discover by the holy Spirit”¹¹; Oliver Cowdery prepared them for publication, as he had done with the Book of Mormon; Sidney Rigdon was a scribe; John Whitmer was a scribe and copyist; Martin Harris was a scribe and perhaps helped fund the Firm, as he had the printing of the Book of Mormon; and William Phelps was the printer.

The brethren never made much money as part of the Literary Firm; the Firm typically spent more on printing presses, type, paper, and other supplies and activities than it made. It was a labor of love. When they printed the Book of Commandments after two years of work, a mob attacked and destroyed the press and Phelps’s house, leaving the work unfinished. The few people that picked up printed pages in the streets and later bound them for personal use created only a handful of copies that today would ironically sell for more than a million dollars each. But they labored at great personal cost to print the revelations to the Church and the world, determining them “to be worth to the Church the riches of the whole Earth.”¹²

D&C 71 – Cease Translating and Preach

Date and Location

Thursday, 1 December 1831, at Hiram, Ohio.

Setting

After the early November 1831 conferences, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon settled into a daily routine at the Johnson farm translating the Bible. The Johnsons created for Joseph a room upstairs in their home which came to be known as the ‘translating room.’ The Bible translation was a major focus of the Prophet’s life between this time and July 1833, when the translation was completed. But it was not without its interruptions, and D&C 71 represents one of those.

Two former Church members, Ezra Booth and Symonds Ryder, had determined to publish anti-Mormon articles in a local newspaper, the *Ohio Star*, published between 13 October and 8 December 1831, in Ravenna, Ohio. Though not the first to leave the Church, they were the first to come out publicly against it. Booth wrote nine letters that were published in the *Star*, mostly describing his interactions with Joseph Smith and other Church members during their recent trip to Missouri, which Booth considered both a great

failure and a testimony of the falsity of Mormonism. These letters were later published by E. D. Howe in his book, *Mormonism Unveiled*.

The letters in the *Star* caused quite a public controversy in Ohio, and Ryder’s efforts, brought about mainly because of his support of Booth, who had been his minister before they both joined the Church, also stirred up people against Joseph and the Church. Ryder was angered by things he perceived as errors on Joseph’s part, including consecration as a means to steal his land and enrich Joseph (as he saw it)¹³ and the incorrect spelling of Ryder’s name in a revelation—if it was inspired, God would know how to spell it. In this atmosphere, D&C 71 was received on 1 December 1831.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is from Newel K. Whitney’s papers (about 4 December 1831), with copies also in Revelation Book 2 (Mar-Apr 1832) and 1 (Apr-Aug 1832). It was first published as Section 90 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, then as Section 91 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

¹⁰ For a detailed history, see Cook, *Revelations*, 112-117.

¹¹ *JSP*, D2:123, from minutes of the 8 November 1831 conference.

¹² *JSP*, D2:138; see Harper, *Making Sense*, 245-246.

¹³ *JSP*, D2:145.

Commentary

1 *text note:*

The original read, “Behold ~~this~~ thus saith the Lord unto you my Servents that the time has come...”¹⁴ Early copies identified this with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in the headings but kept the reference to “servents.” In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, the names were added.

1 **Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon.** The recipients of this revelation were busily engaged in translating the Bible, having picked it up at Matthew 26 when they returned from Missouri. By the time of this revelation, they were at least into Mark and possibly into Luke’s gospel.

1 **expounding the mysteries thereof out of the scriptures.** The “mysteries” are not usually something missionaries are called on to teach in our day, but in this case, the Lord’s meaning seems to tie into the work of the Bible translation, because Joseph and Sidney were learning mysteries—things that can only be learned by revelation—that gave them greater understanding of God’s plan and actions. These things they were to share on their mission.

2 **the regions round about.** Meaning specifically the areas of Ohio where Booth and Ryder were stirring up controversy—Ravenna (where the *Ohio Star* was publishing Booth’s letters criticizing Joseph and the Church and the *Western Courier* was publishing Church documents supplied by Ryder), Shalersville, and other nearby towns.

2 **in the church also.** Not only were those outside the Church being misled, but certainly some in the Church had questions and concerns as a result of Booth’s accusations. These needed to be addressed as well, to keep more from falling away.

3 **a mission for a season.** It’s not a long-term call but something they should just do for a short time—which turned out to be about six weeks.

4 **prepare the way for the commandments and revelations which are to come.** This has a dual meaning—both the publication and eventual sale of the Book of Commandments, as well as future revelations. The heavens still stood open and revelation flowed (vv. 5-6).

7 **confound your enemies.** In this case, the Lord counseled Joseph and Sidney to confront Booth and Ryder, in either public or private. While confrontation is often a bad idea, the Lord knew that these two would not be up to it and it would help the cause of the Church.

8 **let them bring forth their strong reasons.** Booth and Ryder were to bring forward their “strong reasons” against the

Church and Joseph Smith, which became “against the Lord” as well as he stood with the Church.

9 **no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.** This was a very specific promise to these two men so they could move forward with faith that they could go up against Booth and Ryder and prevail. However, the universal aspect cannot be overlooked. In the end, the Church will prosper, even as those who work against it won’t. It doesn’t mean that in any specific incident there won’t be weapons that prosper for a time; it does mean that in the end, the Lord’s truth will prevail.

10 **he shall be confounded.** The Lord promised they would prevail over their enemies who would be confounded, but still couched it with “in mine own due time.”

11 **keep my commandments; they are true and faithful.** This is a testimony of the revelations Joseph had received and which were about to be published. Once again, the Lord put his stamp of approval on them, showing that Booth and Ryder’s criticisms did not have merit.

Results

Joseph and Sidney began preaching in Kirtland and the area round about in just two days, and for just over five weeks, until about 10 January 1832. They put their message in front of the people and shored up the church members at the same time. They invited Booth in December and Ryder in January to public debates in Ravenna through the *Ohio Star*, the same paper that published Booth’s letters. Neither Booth nor Ryder accepted the challenge. But the controversy helped more than it hurt. They declared the gospel, set the record straight, and put an end to the public confrontations.

This is the pattern the Lord encourages today with critics. Let them “bring forth their strong reasons” and see how they stand up to the light of the gospel message. We should not be afraid of any such challenge. Nothing Ezra Booth nor anyone else since that time has said or written has held back the progress of the restored gospel. In fact, the attention they draw to the Church often works against their goals, bringing the curious and the searching to learn more from a better source than the critics.

At the beginning of January, Joseph and Sidney returned to Hiram and the work of translation. However, Ezra Booth and Symonds Ryder were not done with Joseph and Sidney. But next time, it would not be articles in a paper; instead, their attacks would be much more physically damaging.

¹⁴ JSP, D2:145.

D&C 72 – Bishop Newel K. Whitney

Date and Location

Sunday, 4 December 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

Setting

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had left Hiram for their brief preaching mission on 3 December 1831. Their first stop was Kirtland. As they met with the Saints there the next day, Sunday, there were several questions about their duties and the state of the Church in Kirtland.

Bishop Edward Partridge, formerly of Kirtland, Ohio, had been called to Missouri. The Lord had promised other bishops would at some point be called (D&C 68:14). On 4 December 1831, that point had arrived, as the Lord called a second bishop for Kirtland. In essence, it was time to ‘split the ward’ and create two major Church headquarters.

The revelation came in three stages on the same day. First, verses 1-8 designated who the new bishop should be. Then after he had been ordained and set apart to his calling, verses 9-23 outlined his duties. Finally, as a question arose about migrating to Zion, verses 24-26 were appended. As early copies were made, they were treated as separate revelations. But when they were published, they were combined into one section in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy of all three sections of D&C 72 are in the Newel K. Whitney papers (4 December 1831). Other copies are in Revelation Book 2 (Mar-Apr 1832), Revelation Book 1 (Apr-Aug 1832), and the Hyde and Smith notebook (Jan-Feb 1832). Section 72 was first published in *The Evening and the Morning Star* (December 1832) then as Section 89 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Part 1: Newel K. Whitney called as bishop (1-8)
- Part 2: The bishop’s responsibilities (9-19)
- The Literary Firm supported by the bishop (20-23)
- Part 3: Going up to Zion (24-26)

Commentary

Part 1: Newel K. Whitney called as bishop (1-8)

1 *the high priests of my church*. There were others present, but a council of the high priests was the ruling body of the Church at this time. That role would diminish as the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve were created. But for now, the Lord was revealing his will to the decision-making body of the Church.

2 *a bishop to be appointed unto you*. Edward Partridge was the first bishop, originally appointed in Kirtland (D&C 41:9). With him now called to live and procure lands for the Church in Missouri, Ohio was without a leader. The pattern already revealed was more bishops, which the Lord now declared he would implement.

3 *in this thing ye have done wisely*. The gathered high priests had likely taken action to discuss replacing Bishop Partridge in Kirtland, with his relocation to Missouri.¹⁵ Having raised the issue, this revelation commends them and calls the person who should do it. This was according to the instructions previously received (D&C 68:14-15, though see the commentary for those verses showing it was high priests and not the First Presidency at this time, according to the revelation as it was first given).

3 *render an account of his stewardship*. Stewardship and accounting are key components of the law of consecration. If you are given a stewardship from the Lord, then you are accountable before him for how well you exercise and fulfill your stewardship. In the Church then, as is often the case now, the bishop is one to whom many account (D&C 42:31-35). So this verse says that the Kirtland Saints were wise to ask about it and v. 5 says that there needs to be a bishop in Kirtland so members can account to him.

3 *both in time and in eternity*. In time, the bishop is called as the one to whom they render their accountability. In eternity, of course, it is the Lord, but that judgment also uses the records kept in this life (D&C 128:7-8).

4 *he who is faithful and wise in time*. Tying back to v. 3, those who are good stewards in time (in this life) can receive “mansions prepared” in the next life.

6 *to be handed over unto the bishop in Zion*. On the surface, it might appear that this means that the bishop in Kirtland reports to the bishop in Missouri, but that is not the case. Rather, the Lord is establishing the pattern for moving membership records. Since members were to move

¹⁵ JSP, D2:149.

from Ohio to Missouri (and rarely the other way), the language puts the transfer of records in that context. However, in a broad sense, the bishop in Zion was also called to receive accounts from the Saints at large (D&C 69:5), so the Lord was likely making clear that that responsibility had not changed for Edward Partridge.

8 ***Newel K. Whitney is the man.*** When Joseph Smith first met Whitney upon his arrival in Kirtland, he greeted him by saying, ‘Newel K. Whitney, thou art the man.’ The Lord chose to use similar language for this call.

Whitney’s first reaction was that he could not do the calling: “I can’t see a Bishop in myself,” he told Joseph Smith, “but if you say it’s the Lord’s will, I’ll try.” Joseph did what he so often did: he told Newel to ask God about it. He did, and heard a voice from heaven saying, “Thy strength is in me.”¹⁶ With that reassurance, he accepted the call in which he faithfully served for eighteen years—the remainder of his life.¹⁷ He confided to his wife, Ann, “that it would require a vast amount of patience, of perseverance and of wisdom to magnify his calling.”¹⁸

Part 2: The bishop’s responsibilities (9-19)

9 ***the duty of the bishop...in this part of the vineyard.*** Edward Partridge’s duty in Missouri was specific to that circumstance, and the duty of Bishop Whitney was also specific to the Kirtland situation. In these next verses, the Lord called out four specific duties of this Kirtland bishop.

10 ***keep the Lord’s storehouse.*** First, the storehouse was the repository for consecrated goods and monies, as well as the means of taking care of the poor. He was to take care of it and watch over the funds and items in it.

11 ***To take an account of the elders.*** Second, the bishop was to receive an accounting of the stewardships of the members of the Church in his area (also v. 16). This account included their financial situation or temporal situation and efforts (v. 13) and their labors in spiritual things (v. 14).

12 ***to the poor and needy.*** Third, the bishop was responsible to care for the poor and see to their needs, using the consecrated goods and funds.

13 ***account shall be taken and handed over to the bishop of Zion.*** Those who were in need were cared for by Bishop Whitney in Kirtland, but because of the commandment to send surpluses Church-wide to Bishop Partridge for use in purchasing lands in Missouri, if the needs in Ohio exceeded the local funds, they were to be paid by the larger collection of funds in Missouri.

14 ***the faithful who labor in spiritual things.*** Those who were leading the Church or serving missions would also look to Bishop Partridge in Zion for their support.

15 ***according to the law...lay all things before the bishop in Zion.*** The law of consecration stated that those coming up to Zion should consecrate all things to the bishop in Zion and receive a stewardship from him. Bishop Whitney would not be doing that in Ohio, since the ultimate goal was to move people from Ohio to Missouri.

17 ***the judge or bishop.*** Fourth, the bishop was the judge, acting in the Lord’s and the Church’s behalf. This duty was explained even more in a revelation received on 11 November 1831, that was later joined to another revelation to create a complete revelation on priesthood (see D&C 107:68-74).

17 ***rendereth every man acceptable.*** It was the Bishop Whitney’s role as judge and acceptor of accountabilities to give a certificate to a person wanting to go to Zion, so that Bishop Partridge might know of the person’s worthiness as “a wise steward and as a faithful laborer” before giving them “an inheritance,” meaning land.

18 ***Otherwise he shall not be accepted.*** Going to Missouri without a certificate from Bishop Whitney meant that Bishop Partridge had no responsibility to help them, get them set up with a stewardship, etc.

19 ***be recommended by the church or churches, in which he labors.*** There were many members living away from Kirtland and it would be impossible for Bishop Whitney to know them all well as the Church grew. In their cases, they were to bring a recommendation from their own church (other members in their area) to substantiate their own worthiness to him.

The Literary Firm supported by the bishop (20-23)

20 ***stewards over the literary concerns.*** This was outlined in D&C 70, and echoes what was taught there, with the clarification that now their surplus was to be handed over to the Kirtland bishop (who had not been called yet in D&C 70), who would also provide them what they needed to accomplish their stewardships.

21 ***That the revelations may be published.*** The immediate need was to publish the Book of Commandments, but they would also need funds for other projects to “benefit the church in all things.”

22 ***be accounted as wise stewards.*** The bishop was a key to helping the Literary Firm be wise stewards, because he

¹⁶ Harper, *Making Sense*, 252.

¹⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:266.

¹⁸ Harper, *Making Sense*, 252.

could effectively use their excess for the benefit of the Church and, like the other elders, give an account to him.

23 an ensample for all the extensive branches of my church. This is the first usage of the word ‘branch’ for groups of Saints outside of the larger churches. The pattern set up here of letters of recommendation and accounting for stewardship applied to them as well.

Part 3: Going up to Zion (24-26)

24 A few words in addition. The last three verses were added to the other two revelations later that day, in response to questions about how the going up to Zion should be handled by the new bishops.

24 appointed by the Holy Spirit...privileged to go up. No one was supposed to go to Zion without it being the will of the Lord, as determined by a conference of elders (D&C 58:56; 63:41). Those so selected were considered “privileged” to be called to settle Zion.

25 a certificate. The certificate, signed by the elders who sent them, or the bishop in Ohio and presented to the bishop in Missouri, was the means of communicating one’s standing in a new location—and in this case, to represent the appropriateness of their being in Zion. Today we use a similar certificate, only it is conveyed electronically from one ward to another, though a bishop generally calls the previous bishop to receive more details about the new member.

26 not be accounted as a wise steward. Reiterating what was said above, those who go to Zion without a recommend from the elders or the bishop were not to receive the support of the bishop in Zion, because they have circumvented the process established by the Lord.

Results

Newel K. Whitney was ordained the second bishop of the Church on 4 December 1831. Two months later, on 10 February 1832, Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon were called and ordained as his counselors.

Newel K. Whitney recorded another revelation given in March 1832 about the duties of bishops that was not included in the Doctrine and Covenants (original spelling preserved):

Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Sidney and Joseph I reveal unto you for your own prophet

[profit] and instruction concerning the Bishops of my church what is their duty in the church behold it is their duty to stand in the office of their Bishoprick and to fill the judgement seat which I have appointed unto them ~~to~~ ~~and~~ to administer the benefits of the church or the overpluss of all who are in their stewardships according to the Commandments as they are severly [severally] appointed and the property or that which they receive of the church is not their own but belongeth to the church wherefore it is the property of the Lord and it is for the poor of the church to be administered according to the law for it is the will of the Lord that the church should be made equal in all things wherefore the bishops are accountable before the Lord for their stewardships to administer of their stewardship in the which they are appointed by commandment jointly with you my servants ~~under~~ <unto> the Lord as well as you my servants or the rest of the church that the benefits of all may be dedicated unto the Lord that the Lords storehouse may be filled always that ye may all grow in temporal as well as spiritual things and now verily I say unto you the bishops must needs be seperated unto their bishopricks and judgement seats from care of business but not from claim neither from council wherefore I have given unto you commandment that you should be joined together by covenant and bond wherefore see that ye do even as I have Commanded and unto the office of the presidency of the high Priesthood I have given authority to preside with the assistence of his councillors over all the Concerns of the church wherefore stand ye fast claim your Priesthood in authority yet in meekness and I am able to make you abound and be fruitfull and you shall never fall for unto you I have given the keys of the kingdom and if you transgress not they shall never be taken from you, wherefore feed my sheep even so amen.¹⁹

This pattern of getting recommends was not always followed by members going to Missouri. William Phelps wrote in the Church’s newspaper, reminding them to come to Zion with a recommend from Bishop Whitney but some ignored the command. Speaking of one such group, Joseph Smith said, “they left here under the displeasure of heaven” because they were “making a mock of the progression of faith in the commandments by proceeding contrary thereto in not complying...with the requirements of them in not obtaining recommends.” Slowly they obeyed but not before too many had gone to be supported by the available consecrated funds and lands.²⁰

D&C 73 – Preaching and Translating

¹⁹ Revelation, between circa 8 and circa 24 March 1832, in *JSP*, D2:220-222.

²⁰ Harper, *Making Sense*, 253.

Date and Location

Tuesday, 10 January 1832, at Hiram, Ohio.

Setting

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had been called by the Lord to lay aside their work on the Bible translation for a time and fulfill a mission to combat the critical activities of Booth and Ryder (D&C 71). On 8 January 1832, they returned to Hiram, Ohio. Two days after their return, the Lord gave this revelation, addressed partly to local elders and partly to Joseph and Sidney about what they should all do next.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in the Newel K. Whitney papers (10 Jan 1832). Also in Revelation Book 1 (Apr-Aug 1832). It was first published as Section 29 in the 1835 and then 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *they should continue preaching the gospel.* “They” here refers to the elders who were asking about their immediate duties.

1 *until conference.* The next Church general conference had already been scheduled for 25 January 1832.²¹ So for the next two weeks or so, the elders at Kirtland were told to continue preaching to potential members and strengthening current members “in the regions round about,” as Joseph and Sidney had just concluded doing.

2 *it shall be made known...their several missions.* At the conference, they would receive new mission assignments

from the presiding elders and high priests at the conference. See D&C 75 for these assignments.

3 *it is expedient to translate again.* Joseph and Sidney resumed the work of the Bible translation immediately upon their return from their Ezra Booth/Symonds Ryder mission.

4 *preach in the regions around about.* If it was “practicable,” Joseph and Sidney were also to preach in the immediate area.

4 *continue the work of translation until it be finished.* The Lord wanted these two brethren to make the Bible translation a priority—he had yet much more to teach and reveal to them. It would be another year and a half before they finished it, with several more interruptions.

5 *let this be a pattern unto the elders.* We might say, ‘When you don’t have other pressing needs, go preach the gospel!’ Or it may mean, ‘Continue doing what you have been told until I tell you otherwise, probably at the next conference.’

6 *I give no more unto you at this time.* Sometimes I am struck how the Lord tolerated the constant requests for guidance. It’s hard not to compare it to the classic question from children, ‘Are we there yet?’ This patient reply is a good pattern for such situations.

Results

Joseph and Sidney did resume the work on the Bible translation and worked on it until the conference at Amherst, Ohio, on 25 January 1832 (see D&C 75). During this time, they were probably working through the book of Luke.

D&C 74 – Interpreting 1 Corinthians 7:14

Date and Location

Between January 1830 and mid-January 1831, Wayne Co., New York.

Setting

The old printed heading stated that D&C 74 was received in conjunction with the translation of the Bible in January 1832. This was based on a later comment Joseph Smith made in his history which was dated to this time and with

which he identified D&C 74. However, the date on the revelation in the original Revelation Book 1 is 1830. Interestingly, the date was crossed out by a later hand. When it was copied to Revelation Book 2, the date was dropped, as was the first paragraph. Thus the date cannot be determined with more specificity with available information, though clues indicate it might be April 1830.²²

Though the exact circumstances of the revelation are unknown, the document is noted in the first paragraph as being “An explanation of the first Epistle to the first Corinthians 7 Chapter & 14th verse,” an explanation likely added by

²¹ Minutes, 25-26 Oct. 1831, in *JSP*, D2:87.

²² See argument for this in *JSP*, D1:228n177.

John Whitmer.²³ The revelation not only pre-dates the translation and dictation of 1 Corinthians but could even pre-date the beginning of the work on the JST overall.²⁴ Like D&C 7 that came as a result of questions that arose during the Book of Mormon translation, D&C 74 is an example of personal revelation received as Joseph pondered 1 Corinthians 7:14.

The Prophet recorded that he learned that the verse was pertaining to Christian wives married to Jewish men. The husbands wanted their children to “become subject to the law of Moses which law was Fulfilled.”²⁵ This caused some of the children to disbelieve the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of this detriment to fledgling faith, Paul’s personal counsel was that it is better for believers and unbelievers not to be united in marriage. The revelation also emphasized that “little children are holy being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ.” It concludes simply but with certainty, “& this is wat these scriptures mean.”²⁶

The actual Bible translation work on 1 Corinthians took place in about March 1832, perhaps as much as two years after D&C 74, so Joseph Smith was clearly drawn to this scripture in 1830 as a personal interest. It is also interesting to note that 1 Corinthians 7:14 itself remained unchanged in the translation work when he later got to it, though many other verses in that chapter received close attention.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (Mar 1831) and Revelation Book 2 (Aug 1834 and a second copy after 25 Nov 1834). It was first published as Section 73 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and as Section 74 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife.* Verse 1 quotes 1 Corinthians 7:14, to give us the context for what follows.

2 *the law of circumcision.* Circumcision was practiced anciently among many cultures in the Near East, but to the Jews, it became a token of their covenant with God after Abraham (see Genesis 17). This verse explained that it was practiced by Jews who did not accept the gospel of Christ.

3 *a great contention.* In the early New Testament church, the question of circumcision was a difficult one that took

²³ *JSP*, D1:229n181.

²⁴ The revelation can only be dated to the year 1830 and thus could have been received prior to the first Bible translation revelation in June 1830.

²⁵ Explanation of Scripture, 1830 [D&C 74], in *JSP*, D1:229; see also D&C 74:3.

many years to work out.²⁷ When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, it was certainly not yet resolved.

3 *the unbelieving husband.* A Jewish man married to a converted Christian woman would desire that his sons were circumcised, since it was an important part of Jewish law. But the Christian wife knew the law was fulfilled, and so the circumcision no longer had any covenantal significance, plus she would have wanted to raise the sons as Christians, not Jews.

4 *believed not the gospel of Christ.* This is the heart of issue—not just circumcision. The unbelieving father would bring up the children in his Jewish faith, and by virtue of his influence over the children, would pull them away from the Christian faith of the mother.

5 *a commandment, not of the Lord, but of himself.* This is one of the challenging aspects of Paul’s writings, knowing when he was speaking by revelation and when he was speaking his own mind. Sometimes he called it out but often he did not; in this case, it was called out earlier in the chapter (1 Corinthians 7:6) but it is still difficult to know if that extended all the way to this verse. Joseph Smith learned that this was another example where it is his opinion being expressed and not an inspired decision.

5 *a believer should not be united to an unbeliever.* Paul’s opinion was that such mixed marriages were detrimental (as the Church also advocates today, in general) and put the children at greater risk spiritually. He counseled people in such marriages to remain only if the unbelieving spouse agreed not to drive the children away from Christianity.

6 *the tradition...children are unholy.* Jews in the New Testament time believed that children were born unholy and needed circumcision to become clean before God.²⁸ Other religious traditions developed similar beliefs in many cultures. The Book of Mormon had taught Joseph Smith that children did not need baptism (Moroni 8:6-9) and were clean through the mercy of the atonement of Christ (Moroni 8:23). Ironically, the Jews had fallen away from the Abrahamic knowledge originally that circumcision was given as a sign that children were not accountable (and thus not unholy) until they were eight years old (JST Genesis 17).

7 *little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement.* Children do not choose to be born in a fallen state, and do not have the understanding of their world and

²⁶ Explanation of Scripture, 1830 [D&C 74], in *JSP*, D1:229; see also D&C 74:7.

²⁷ See Acts 15; Galatians 2 and 5.

²⁸ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:278.

situation to comprehend this for many years. So the atonement of Christ mercifully covers them and makes them holy and sanctified without any effort on their part until they are old enough to be accountable. This is not a statement that children are perfect, for we all know that is not true. But they are made holy by Christ until they are old enough to begin to understand the eternal consequences of their own choices.

7 *this is what the scriptures mean.* The definitive nature of this statement is fascinating; the discussion and debate are

now over for this verse. Such an inspired commentary on every verse of scripture would be marvelous!

Results

Joseph Smith learned much about the scriptures and about the Lord's doctrines through his study of the scriptures. Indeed, his scripture study program—personal and 'official' through his various translation projects—were the means of restoring most of the plain and precious truths lost and rejected over the years.

D&C 75 – Calls to Serve

Date and Location

Wednesday, 25 January 1832, Amherst Township, Ohio.

Setting

As planned at the last quarterly conference,²⁹ and to receive the promised information in D&C 73, Church members gathered in Amherst, Ohio, about fifty-six miles west of Kirtland, on 25 January 1832, for another general conference. It was held at the residence of Church members Gideon Carter and Sylvester Smith, who are mentioned in the revelation. It was at this conference that Joseph Smith was first sustained and ordained as the President of the High Priesthood (per the instructions in D&C 107:65, received on 11 November 1831).

Though no minutes have survived of the conference, we know that the brethren there were very anxious to know the will of the Lord, and were blessed with two revelations that day, which were written down by Sidney Rigdon and were later combined into one for publication—now called D&C 75. The first revelation was verses 1-22, given to ten elders; the second was verses 23-36, which gave instructions for how missionary families were to be cared for and extended mission calls to fourteen more elders.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in the Newel K. Whitney papers (25 Jan 1832). Also in Hyde and Smith notebook (Jan-Feb 1832) and Revelation Book 1 (Apr-Aug 1832). It was first published as Section 87 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and as Section 88 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- Part 1: Proclaiming truth (1-5)
- William McLellin (6-12)

- Joy and gladness in serving (13-22)
- Part 2: Caring for families (23-29)
- Missionary companionships (30-36)

Commentary

Part 1: Proclaiming truth (1-5)

1 *I who speak even by the voice of my Spirit.* Though the words were coming from Joseph Smith's mouth, the Lord affirmed that they were nevertheless his words, spoken by the power of the Spirit to Joseph Smith and all those who would exercise faith in him.

2 *who have given your names to go forth.* The brethren had already volunteered or agreed to serve—they were just waiting for their specific assignments, much like missionaries today who complete the pre-work and then wait for that letter from Salt Lake with their call.

3 *go forth and not tarry, neither be idle.* This may not be a reprimand but the references to "tarry" and "idle" give the impression that the brethren were willing and able to serve but did not do so, awaiting an assignment. Though many of these Ohio brethren had likely not read a revelation Joseph Smith received in Missouri the previous summer, the teaching is similar: "men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness" (D&C 58:27).

4 *proclaiming the truth according to the revelations.* There were no missionary discussions in those days, no missionary training center, and no mission presidents. Brethren went out on their own, now mostly two-by-two, armed with the Book of Mormon, the revelations of Joseph Smith, and the Spirit to guide them.

5 *crowned with honor, and glory.* Serving diligently when called has great blessings. The labor is its own reward, being "laden with many sheaves" through those that hear and

²⁹ Minutes, 25-26 Oct. 1831, in *JSP*, D2:87.

accept the message. But eternal blessings are also promised, such as honor, glory, immortality, and eternal life.

William McLellin (6-12)

6 I revoke the commission which I gave. McLellin was called to serve at the end of October 1831 (D&C 66), but quit his mission after only four weeks. The Lord rebuked him by revoking his call, but showed mercy by extending another (v. 7).

7 chasten him for the murmurings of his heart. McLellin had complained that his mission was too hard, that he needed to earn money, and more. See commentary on D&C 66 for details.

8 I forgive him. The Lord was very patient with McLellin, here giving him another chance that started with full forgiveness.

8 the south countries. Not the “South” as we think of it (as in Georgia, Mississippi, etc.), but south of Kirtland, such as southern Ohio and Kentucky. McLellin never made it out of Ohio, though.

9 Luke Johnson go with him. About two years younger than Joseph Smith, Luke Johnson was the son of John and Elsa Johnson, with whom Joseph and Emma were staying at this time.

10 the Comforter, which shall teach them all things. The missionaries were counseled to pray for the guidance and instruction of the Spirit, which was able to teach them everything they needed to know in the Lord’s service. That doesn’t mean they went out unprepared but it does mean that after their preparations, they were to seek to have the Holy Ghost as their guide to know how to apply their preparations—their knowledge of the scriptures and modern revelations.

11 Praying always that they faint not. Relevant counsel to McLellin, who ‘fainted’ early in his first mission and only three weeks into this one.

12 the will of the Lord your God concerning you. To be crystal clear that this is not just an opportunity to consider or an optional request, the revelation is clear that this is the will of the Lord himself. Now it’s up to McLellin to obey.

Joy and gladness in serving (13-22)

13 Orson Hyde...Samuel H. Smith. The second companionship in the revelation includes two familiar names. Orson Hyde was an orphan at 12 and finally ended up living with Sidney Rigdon in his early twenties, during which he was a part-time preacher. Now in the Church, Rigdon baptized Hyde less than four months before this revelation. This was his first mission call.

He was paired with the very experienced Samuel Smith and was replacing the wavering William McLellin as Samuel’s companion (D&C 66). Joseph’s brother was less than three years younger than the Prophet, but had already been on three missions. During this mission, the two brethren traveled over 2,000 miles on foot for eleven months, from Ohio to Maine and back, baptizing sixty converts.

14 Lyman Johnson...Orson Pratt. The third companionship were also experienced and trusted. Lyman Johnson was another son of John and Elsa, just younger than Luke; he was only twenty years old at the time of this call. He left penniless and with only one change of clothing. His companion, Orson Pratt, was a brother to Parley and also just twenty, but this was his fifth mission! The two traveled on foot for a year through Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, baptizing more than one hundred.

15 Asa Dodds...Calves Wilson. Asa Dodds was a stonemason by occupation and a recent convert. This was his second mission. He was ordained a high priest just a few days after this revelation, but then just disappeared from Church history. Calves Wilson was also a recent convert of only three months. It is not known if he and Asa fulfilled this mission, though in the spring of 1832, Calves served with Lyman Wight in Cincinnati, baptizing scores of people.

16 who is faithful shall overcome all things. Turning to imagery from Revelation chapters 2-3 and 21:7, the Lord pauses between missionary assignments to offer the great promise that those who show faith in their calls and efforts will overcome whatever comes their way and have the blessings of overcoming the world—to sit on the throne of God, to inherit all things, to be clothed in white, eat the hidden manna and the tree of life, and not be hurt by the second death.

17 Major N. Ashley...Burr Riggs. Major (his name, not a title) was baptized in the summer of 1831 and ordained a high priest that October. He served this mission, then went to Missouri, leaving the Church in 1838. Burr Riggs was also baptized in the summer of 1831 and it is not known if he served this mission. He was excommunicated in early 1833, but rebaptized the following year, and ended up a member of Zion’s camp. He stayed with the Church through the Missouri persecutions, but then was excommunicated again in 1839.

18 house to house, and from village to village. These brethren were not to hurry to a specific destination, but to carefully go along, preaching and teaching at every opportunity.

19 leave your blessing upon that house. As missionaries, home teachers, and priesthood leaders are counseled today, leaving a blessing on a home before departing is a great service and a task given of the Lord.

20 *receive you not, ye shall depart speedily*. Today's practice among missionaries is similar. While they don't "shake off the dust" of their feet, they do not spend time with people who are not progressing, but "depart speedily" to more fruitful fields of labor.

21 *filled with joy and gladness*. Whether a missionary has many baptisms and teaches every day, or struggles to teach or baptize anyone, the promise is the same—"joy and gladness." It is the labor that brings the blessing, not just the result.

21 *you shall be judges of that house*. Those who are rejected by the missionaries face the possibility that those missionaries will stand up one day before the judgment bar of Christ and testify against them, that they were given the opportunity to accept sacred covenants and testimony but rejected the message and blessings offered them.

22 *more tolerable for the heathen*. Those who hear, understand, and reject the Lord's messages are worse off than those who never heard the message at all, for they are accountable for what they have rejected.

22 *ye shall overcome all things*. Returning to the thought of v. 16, overcoming all things in the world is again an invitation for these missionaries, with the promised blessing of being "lifted up at the last day."

Part 2: Caring for families (23-29)

23 *given your names*. The men named in the revelation had come forward and specifically requested to serve missions.

24 *support the families of those who are called*. The Church had the obligation to watch over and help the families left behind by these mission calls. These were not rich men, nor did they have time to save and prepare for departure—in some cases, they left quickly with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. The Lord appealed to the members left behind to help sustain their families during this time of great sacrifice. The men would do all they could to see to their families' needs before they left (vv. 25-26), but they still relied on fellow members to "open their hearts" toward their families.

25 *obtain places for your families*. That might mean to secure them a place to live on their own, but it just as easily could mean to find them other members to live with, where they could be cared for but also provide assistance and labor, as needed and possible.

27 *made known from on high...whither they shall go*. The brethren receiving calls in the next few verses were counseled to seek the Spirit to tell them where to go. The revelation specified no more than a compass direction (east, west, north, or south), so they had to rely on that greater power to guide them to those prepared to hear their

message. It is no different today, even if the scope of our missions isn't hundreds or thousands of miles of walking. We still need the Spirit to direct our efforts that we might effectively serve.

28 *let him provide*. If a man was willing to serve on a mission but could not find a way to provide for his family, either through his own efforts or with the help of friends and fellow members, he should instead turn his attention to serving locally and "labor in the church." Caring for his family was his top priority.

29 *the idler shall not have place in the church*. We might consider idlers to be those who will not accept callings or assignments, even though they have adequate time and are physically capable of serving.

Missionary companionships (30-36)

In these verses, seven more companionships were named, though specific assignments were not given. All of the brethren served with the possible exception of Ruggles Eames and Stephen Burnett, about whom nothing is known during this time.

30 *Simeon Carter*. He had already traveled to Missouri and back and had helped collect funds to support Joseph Smith in doing his translation of the Bible. During this mission, besides Emer Harris, he also took his brother Jared as a companion, and they had great success, including healing a dying woman. Simeon remained true to the Church all his life, suffering through Missouri persecutions and the trek out to Utah. He helped found Brigham City, Utah.

30 *Emer Harris*. Emer was older than most—fifty years old at this time—and was Martin Harris' older brother. He also helped obtain funds to support Joseph in the Bible translation effort. He served this mission (also taking his brother, Martin, just as his companion Simeon Carter took his brother, Jared) and many more, staying faithful all his life as he moved to Missouri, Illinois, and Utah.

31 *Ezra Thayre*. Previously mentioned in other revelations, Ezra was a bridge builder who had hired Joseph Smith and his brothers before being converted by their story and Parley Pratt's teaching. He struggled with a previous mission call (D&C 52) but served this one. He stayed faithful to the Church during Joseph Smith's lifetime, but did not support the Twelve after his death, finally joining the RLDS Church.

31 *Thomas B. Marsh*. Thomas and Ezra Thayer were once assigned to be companions (D&C 52) but Thayre did not go. Now they were given a second chance by the Lord to work together, which they did. Thomas was an early settler

in Jackson county and was one of the original twelve apostles. Sadly, he left the Church in 1838 following a dispute his wife had with another woman over milk strippings. When she died, he rejoined the Church and settled in Utah, where he lived until his death in 1866.

32 **Hyrum Smith**. Hyrum faithfully served this and many other missions and callings. When he returned home, he immediately went back to work supporting his family, as the revelation commanded.

32 **Reynolds Cahoon**. Reynolds traveled to Jackson county with Samuel Smith in 1831, then helped raise money for the translation of the Bible. He was counselor to Bishop Newel K. Whitney and worked on the Kirtland temple. He was a counselor in the stake presidency in Missouri in 1838, and again in Iowa in 1839. He migrated to Utah with the Saints, where he died in Salt Lake City in 1861.

33 **Daniel Stanton**. Daniel was baptized by Parley Pratt, and he was later a branch president in Jackson county. He served this mission with Seymour Brunson. He lived in Adam-Ondi-Ahman, moved with the Saints to Illinois and Utah, and died in the faith in 1872.

33 **Seymour Brunson**. Seymour served this mission and others (he was Luke Johnson's companion when William McLellin again decided to stop prematurely³⁰), baptizing fifty-three during this time.³¹ He stayed faithful in the Church through Missouri and Illinois. He died in 1840 in Nauvoo. At his funeral, Joseph Smith first publicly taught the doctrine of baptism for the dead.

34 **Sylvester Smith**. Sylvester and his companion, Gideon Carter, traveled all the way to Vermont on this mission. He served in many important capacities in the early Church, including president of the First Quorum of Seventy and scribe for Joseph Smith, but left the Church in 1838.

34 **Gideon Carter**. Baptized by Joseph Smith himself in 1831, Gideon traveled to Vermont with Sylvester Smith. He moved to Missouri in 1837, where he was killed at the Battle of Crooked River, 25 October 1838.

35 **Ruggles Eames**. Missionaries used Ruggles' home as a base for preaching in 1831. After this mission, little is known of him, except that he was in Iowa in 1840.

35 **Stephen Burnett**. A fairly early convert (November 1830), Stephen hosted the 25 October 1831 Church conference. After serving this and at least one other mission, he left the Church in 1837.

36 **Micah B. Welton**. Micah served faithfully on this mission and stayed true through the Nauvoo period, after which nothing is known about him. He was part of the Third Quorum of Seventy and was endowed in the Nauvoo temple in January 1846.

36 **Eden Smith**. Eden served faithfully at this time, though preaching fairly close to home and returning on the weekends to continue to support his family.³² He was true for several years, but finally drifted out of the Church in the 1840s.

Results

Many of the brethren called in this served faithfully, as noted above, but not all. William McLellin and Luke Johnson left on their mission to the south, but after three weeks, McLellin claimed to be ill and quit preaching. When he felt better, though, he did not resume the work, but took a job at a store. Luke Johnson, his companion, gave up and went home, seeking a new companion, which ended up being Seymour Brunson. McLellin ended up staying in Middlebury, Ohio, and marrying Emiline Miller in April 1832.³³ After his marriage, he returned to the Church and was eventually ordained one of the twelve apostles, but his on-again, off-again pattern led to him finally leaving the Church in 1838.

Per the instructions in D&C 72:11-16, many of these brethren wrote letters about their missions to Bishop Newel K. Whitney; some of their stories were published in the Church newspaper. Their stories give us many details about their service (many noted above by each name) and insight into this period of Church history.

³⁰ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 509-510.

³¹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 261.

³² *JSP*, D2:162n121.

³³ Harper, *Making Sense*, 260.

Images



Image #1: Home of John and Elsa (Alice) Johnson, Hiram, Ohio. Engraving by N. Friend, 1874. Image from Combination Atlas Map of Portage County, 1874. (Courtesy David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com.); from josephsmithpapers.org.



Image #2: Johnson home today, Hiram, Ohio (from lds.org).



Image #3: “Translation room” in the Johnson home, Hiram, Ohio, built by splitting the Johnson bedroom with a new wall, where Joseph Smith worked on the Bible translation and held several Church conferences in 1831-1832.



Image #4: Johnson farm, cabins, and Ryder properties, Hiram, Ohio. Johnson property boundaries in yellow. Note the LDS church on the west edge and the cabins (not there today) where Sidney Rigdon lived.



Image #5: Church history sites in the area around Kirtland, Ohio, 1831-1838.

Works Consulted

For text notes:

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

RB2 – Revelation Book 2, 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.

1833 – Book of Commandments, printed in 1833, from *JSP*, R2:13-193.

1835 – Doctrine and Covenants, printed in 1835, from *JSP*, R2:311-635.

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