

D&C 64-68

Lesson 13, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 12 Dec 2016

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General Introduction

In September 1831, Joseph, Emma, and their two adopted Murdock twins moved about thirty-two miles southeast from Kirtland to Hiram, Ohio, to live with John and Elsa (Alice was her legal name but Elsa her nickname) Johnson. The Johnson had a comfortable home on a large lot. Their business was mostly making cheese and butter and it was a good business for them, selling their products south and east along the canal system. They quickly got Joseph and Emma and the twins settled in to a room downstairs (probably the work kitchen) and began to remodel their own bedroom upstairs with a new wall to create a “Translation room” for Joseph to use.

The Johnson home became Church headquarters for nearly a year. Many revelations were received here and many conference and meetings held. The Johnsons, with their sons Luke and Lyman, were active in missionary work and converted dozens in their area as well as in their own missionary travels. One of their converts was John’s former schoolmaster, Zerubbabel Snow, whose brother, Erastus, later became an apostle.

Next to the Johnsons were their friends, the Ryders, who were apple farmers, mostly making cider and apple butter. These two families were so prominent in the region that the ridge on which their farms sat was called Ryder Hill on the east and Stevens Hill on the west (Stevens purchased the Johnson farm in 1834). Symonds Ryder married a Johnson relative, Mehetable Loomis, and his brother, Jason, married the Johnson’s second daughter.

Another local was Ezra Booth, a Methodist preacher turned farmer, who was well-educated, including a reading knowledge of Greek. Another was James Garfield, who later became president of the United States. Alexander Campbell and Sidney Rigdon were regular visitors in the late 1820s, teaching their Baptist/Campbellite doctrines. Many of the early converts to the Church in this area came from Rigdon’s congregations. Altogether, there may have been more than one hundred converts in the Hiram area.¹

As Joseph settled into the Johnson home, this looked like a wonderful, quiet place to get much accomplished. Except for the departure and beginnings of opposition from Symonds Ryder and Ezra Booth (in the form of newspaper articles), the work moved forward. He focused on his Bible

translation, which had stopped when he left for Missouri that summer, picking back up in Matthew and working his way through the four gospels through the fall and winter of 1831/1832. Little did he know that in the early spring of 1832, the peace he so enjoyed there would come to a brutal and sudden end. In the meantime, though, it was time for another general conference, which was planned for early November 1831, and which proved to be a fruitful time.

Summary Chronology

- **Sun, 11 Sep 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 64.
- **Mon, 12 Sep 1831** – Joseph and Emma moved to the John and Alice (Elsa) Johnson farm in Hiram, Ohio.
- **Sun, 2 Oct 1831** – Orson Hyde, a clerk at Newel K. Whitney’s store and a former Methodist and Campbellite, baptized by Sidney Rigdon and confirmed and ordained an elder by Joseph Smith.
- **Tue, 11 Oct 1831** – A conference was held at the Johnson farm where Joseph Smith taught about the “ancient manner of instructing meetings as they were led by the Holy Ghost.”²
- **Fri, 21 Oct 1831** – At a conference held in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon dealt with two brethren who were abusing one of Newel K. Whitney’s children.
- **Tue, 24 – Wed, 25 October 1831** – At a conference in Orange, Ohio, Joseph Smith stated that he had no worldly goods to consecrate but he would consecrate himself and his family. Fifteen elders were ordained to the high priesthood.
- **Wed, 26 Oct 1831** – Returning to Hiram from Orange, Ohio, Joseph Smith healed William McLellan’s injured ankle.
- **Sat, 29 Oct 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 66.
- **Sun, 30 Oct 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 65.
- **Tue-Wed, 1-2 Nov 1831** – A two-day conference was held at the John Johnson farm, with one of the key topics being the desire to publish Joseph Smith’s revelations. Resolved to publish 10,000 copies (later reduced to 3,000). Several revelations were received in

¹ Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 259-292.

² *JSP*, D2:75.

conjunction with this conference (D&C 1, 67, 68, and 133).

- **Tue, 1 Nov 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 68 and 1 and the Testimony of the Witnesses of the Book of Commandments.
- **Wed, 2 Nov 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 67. William McLellin tried to write a revelation but was not able to do so.
- **Thu, 3 Nov 1831** – Joseph Smith received D&C 133.

- **Tue, 8 Nov, Wed, 9 Nov, and Fri, 11 Nov 1831** – Other conferences (meetings) held in Hiram, Ohio to discuss various topics, including preparing the revelations for printing, preaching licenses, and going to Zion.
- **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.

D&C 64 – Forgiveness, Discipline, and Judgment

Date and Location

Sunday, 11 September 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio.

Setting

In early September, Joseph Smith was preparing to move to Hiram, Ohio, per the commandment in D&C 63:65. He did this on Monday, 12 September 1831. This revelation was received the day before that move, on 11 September 1831. The move to Hiram was enabled by John and Elsa Johnson who invited Joseph and Emma and their four-month-old adopted (Murdock) twins to live with them and continue Joseph's work on the translation of the Bible, as well as leading the Church (Elsa Johnson was the woman whose arm was healed by Joseph Smith in 1830, converting both the Johnsons and their minister, Ezra Booth). Sidney Rigdon, his wife Phoebe, and their six children moved into a small, log home on the Johnson property, just across the street from the main home. Hiram, Ohio thus became Church headquarters for just over a year, until Joseph and Emma moved into the Newel K. Whitney store in October 1832.

Ezra Booth had become more disgruntled with Joseph Smith after their return from Missouri, claiming that some of his acts were unbecoming a Christian, much less a prophet. Isaac Morley and Edward Partridge had also had some heated moments with Joseph and been impacted by Booth's negativity. Booth had lost his license to preach on 6 September and was continuing to criticize Joseph.³

The question also arose that if Jackson County was the center place of Zion, what was the role of Kirtland, and for how long? This revelation speaks to these issues, and more.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (probably 11 Sep 1831), with a copy in Newel K. Whitney's papers of the

same date (11 Sep) and on in Sidney Gilbert's notebook from Oct 1831. D&C 64 was first published as Chapter 65 in the 1833 Book of Commandments (minus the last seven verses of today's version), and as Section 21 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Note: D&C 64 was the last section printed in the unfinished 1833 Book of Commandments, cut off before the end of the section because that is as far as the typesetting progressed before the attack by the mob that destroyed the press (at the phrase "blood of Ephraim" in today's verse 36). Those who later picked up the printed pages and had them bound for personal use thus only had a partial printing. Some of them, including Edward Partridge and Wilford Woodruff, handwrote the final verses into their personally bound copies.

Outline

- Forgiveness (1-11)
- Church discipline (12-22)
- Tithing and debt (23-32)
- Judgment and Zion (33-43)

Commentary

Forgiveness (1-11)

1 *ye elders of my church*. The audience for the revelation is just the general "elders" (no specific group of people is mentioned) but it applies to all members.

2 *ye should overcome the world*. John's vision of what happens to the Saints who overcome the world is relevant; see Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; and 21:7. In each case, Saints who overcome the world are promised great eternal blessings, ultimately inheriting all things as a child of God. Overcoming the world is something that is only done through "the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11), which is the same sense here in D&C 64—the next

³ JSP, D2:61-62.

verses show how the Lord expects the Saints to overcome the world—through his compassion (v. 2), forgiveness (v. 3), and mercy (v. 4).

3 *those among you who have sinned.* While the context and subsequent verses would point to Ezra Booth, Isaac Morley, and Edward Partridge in particular, others were surely guilty as well, including Joseph Smith (v. 7).

3 *I have forgiven you your sins.* God showed compassion and mercy by freely forgiving their sins, which set up the important teaching later about forgiving each other.

4 *I will be merciful to you.* Being merciful is showing grace, a gift that God freely gives without any expectation of compensation or return. He gives us “the kingdom” because he loves us and extends mercy in our weakness.

5 *not be taken from my servant Joseph Smith.* The Prophet was promised “the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom” during his life, as long as he was obedient to covenants. This echoes earlier revelations and promises (D&C 28:6-7; 35:18).

6 *sought occasion against him without cause.* Much of this probably came out of the trip to Missouri, where some of the brethren became critical of the Prophet’s leadership style and other actions. The Lord let them know here that those things were not sins on Joseph’s part. Sidney Rigdon’s account concurred, where he faulted Booth and Partridge for not respecting the prophetic office.⁴

6 text note:

Some of the early copies have “accusation” instead of “occasion” in this verse and in v. 8, making the words of those critical of the Prophet more directed at his specific actions.⁵

7 *Nevertheless, he has sinned.* In the same breath, the Lord acknowledged that Joseph Smith was not perfect but had indeed sinned and was also in need of repentance. The Prophet never hid his sins nor did he hold back when the Lord chastened him, but rather he wrote it down and shared it with the Church, that they might appreciate him as the Prophet and as a man with weaknesses and struggles.

8 *forgave not one another.* Examples where earlier disciples had not forgiven each other include: Mark 9:33-34; 10:41-42; Luke 9:46; 22:24; Acts 15:39; Galatians 2:11; 3 John 1:9-10.

9 *there remaineth in him the greater sin.* Man does not have the perspective or the right to deny forgiveness to others—that is reserved for the Lord. So by not forgiving someone else, we are, in essence, unrighteously taking on the role of God, which is a greater sin, regardless of the other’s acts. Being unforgiving also keeps us from receiving God’s forgiveness in our own lives (see Matthew 6:15).

10 *it is required to forgive all men.* We must not only forgive those who apologize or who are repentant, but “all men.” Yet our forgiveness doesn’t absolve others of the consequences of their actions. Our task is to forgive fully but still deal with the sin appropriately. Sometimes that involves legal action, sometimes Church discipline, sometimes a loss of trust until the person proves to be trustworthy again.

The other aspect of this truth lies in forgiving ourselves for our own sins. We must offer that forgiveness, too, because we all are part of “all men.”

11 *let God judge between me and thee.* From Genesis 16:5, Sarai told Abraham to let the Lord and not Abraham judge her for how she felt and what she did to Hagar (see also 1 Samuel 24:12, 15). Here the principle lets people at odds lay those aside and let God be the righteous judge who will reward or punish appropriately.

Church discipline (12-22)

12 *bring before the church.* This is the beginning of formal Church discipline (though D&C 42 did offer some guidelines), which starts here by bringing unrepentant members before the elders, but shortly progresses to other Church councils such as those we use today (bishopric or stake presidency and high council). One of the keys to Church discipline is that it is handled at a local level by those who know the person best. They seek the spirit that they might deal fairly, “either by commandment or by revelation.”

13 *not because ye forgive not.* Church discipline is used not out of a desire to punish someone, or because of a lack of compassion, but out of a desire to help people give up their sins and save their souls, as well as “not offend him who is your lawgiver.”

13 text note:

Some early copies have “faithful” in the place of “justified” in this verse. To be “justified” means to stand without sin or forgiven of sin; to be faithful implies a greater action toward obedience, not just a state of being.

15 *angry with him who was my servant Ezra Booth.*

Booth had come back angry and frustrated from Missouri. He was critical of Joseph Smith and other Church leaders. Just prior to this revelation (6 September), he had lost his license to preach. The day after this revelation (12 September), he formally left the Church, never to return.

16 *I have forgiven my servant Isaac Morley.* Morley had been Booth’s companion on the mission on the way to Missouri and had been impacted by the latter’s complaining, but he seems to have repented and the Lord now offered him full forgiveness.

⁴ JSP, D2:62.

⁵ JSP, D2:63n358.

17 **Edward Partridge, behold, he hath sinned.** Edward Partridge and Isaac Morley were still in Missouri when this revelation was received. This follows another call to repentance back in D&C 58:15. Note that the Lord, who knew their hearts, promised, “when these things are made known unto them (Partridge and Morley), and they repent of the evil, they shall be forgiven.”

18 **Sidney Gilbert...shall return.** Both Morley and Partridge (vv. 16-17) read these revelations for the first time when Sidney Gilbert brought copies to Missouri a few weeks later, as indicated in v. 19.

20 **his farm should be sold.** Isaac Morley had been commanded to sell his farm under the law of consecration (D&C 63:38-39). Part of it had been sold at this time but the rest was to be sold now as well.

21 **Frederick G. Williams should not sell his farm.** Conversely, the Lord commanded Williams not to sell his “for the space of five years.” That turned out to be the right amount of time to build and dedicate the temple and receive the priesthood keys that came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery there in 1836. By 1838, all faithful Latter-day Saints had moved on to Missouri. Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Smith were living on this property at this time.

21 **I will not overthrow the wicked.** The Saints could be assured that the Second Coming would not happen for at least five years, thereby giving focus to the saving efforts of missionary labors.

22 **after that day, I, the Lord, will not hold any guilty that shall go.** After the end of the five-year period (v. 21), anyone in Ohio was free to go up to Zion in Missouri. Before that time, they were only supposed to go if they had direction from Joseph Smith to do so. Unfortunately, some disregarded this council and went anyway between 1831 and 1836.

Tithing and debt (23-32)

23 **it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man.** In the Lord’s language, it is “today” in this period of time before the Second Coming (cf. D&C 45:6), and “tomorrow” (or, “after today,” v. 24) is the time after that coming, called “the burning” (v. 24).

23 **a day for the tithing of my people.** This first mention of tithing in the Doctrine and Covenants is not tithing in the way we think about it today, but ties back to the Law of Consecration at this point in Church history, and should be understood as a surplus or residue of the people. It’s not until 1838 that “tithing” takes on the meaning of 10% that we follow today.

23 **he that is tithed shall not be burned.** It’s not inappropriate to apply this idea to today’s tithing practice, based on other scriptures, but that was not the intent here in D&C 64. The Lord meant that those who ‘tithed’ their surplus to the Lord under the Law of Consecration would withstand the burning of the Second Coming. See also v. 24 and Revelation 18:8.

24 **not spare any that remain in Babylon.** Babylon represents the evils of the world. Prophets have said to “Flee out of the midst of Babylon” (Jeremiah 51:6, where he meant it quite literally) and “Go ye forth of Babylon” (Isaiah 48:20; 1 Nephi 20:20). Revelation depicts the contrast between Babylon and those who are with the Lord (e.g., chapter 14).

26 **not meet...should sell their store.** The Whitney and Gilbert store was not sold for several years, providing a revenue stream for the Church, as well as a location for the bishop’s storehouse.

27 **said in my laws, or forbidden, to get in debt to thine enemies.** In the original version of D&C 42, it included the command from the Lord, “Thou Shalt contract no debts with [the world].”⁶

28 **take when he please, and pay as seemeth him good.** The Lord generally forbids the Saints from getting into debt to their enemies individually (v. 27), but allows for the Church to contract debt under divine direction. Some individuals were upset by this difference, such as Ezra Booth, but the Lord was clear that it was appropriate.

29 **ye are agents.** As those called and ordained to lead the Church, they were the Lord’s agents, to use a common legal term of the day. This meant that what they did which was the Lord’s will was also “the Lord’s business.”

30 **he hath set you to provide for his saints.** The Lord’s agents had a responsibility to fulfill the command they had received to obtain lands in Zion for the inheritance of the Saints.

31 **they shall obtain it.** The Lord promised that his word would be fulfilled that they would obtain their inheritance in Zion, but “all things must come to pass in their time” (v. 32).

Judgment and Zion (33-43)

33 **ye are laying the foundation of a great work.** Again, looking back, we see that God was preparing the Church for a long fulfillment of these promises, though he teaches that the fulfillment is sure (v. 31). To lay a foundation is not to build the whole building.

33 **out of small things proceedeth that which is great.** This unique phrase in the Doctrine and Covenants teaches that the daily, small, and simple things are those that lead to

⁶ JSP, MRB:105.

great accomplishments. It is a small thing to pray and study scriptures each day; it is a small thing to regularly attend the temple; it is a small thing to serve in our callings in the Church—but all of these small things bring about the Lord’s work and keep the kingdom rolling forward to its destiny. See 1 Nephi 16:29 and Alma 37:6.

34 *the heart and a willing mind*. Compare 1 Chronicles 28:9, where Solomon is commanded to serve God with a “perfect heart” and a “willing mind.” These are the only two scriptures with these terms.

34 *the willing and obedient shall eat*. Compare Isaiah 1:19, the only other scripture to have similar phraseology.

35 *the rebellious shall be cut off*. The opposite of the willing and obedient, the rebellious are promised to lose their inheritance in Zion, demonstrating that they are not of the blood of Ephraim (v. 36), meaning inheritors of the covenants and promises made to that tribe.

37 *like unto a judge*. The Church has a responsibility to judge its own members (v. 38) as well as “the nations.” The point of this responsibility is to bring purity to Zion.

39 *not apostles and prophets*. By virtue of its responsibility to judge, the Church will know the difference between true and false apostles and prophets, with the “liars and hypocrites” exposed.

40 *even the bishop*. After discussing liars and hypocrites, false prophets and apostles, the Lord reminds the Saints that even the bishop is subject to judgment and replacement if he is not faithful.

41 *Zion shall flourish*. The Lord’s goal in doing all this is to have the Saints and Zion itself prosper that it might manifest “the glory of the Lord.”

42 *an ensign unto the people*. An ensign is a banner, a flag, a call to action. It identifies a group of people and helps them stay together when traveling or attacking. Zion is the ensign in the last days that calls to the world to join the Saints and live according to God’s laws. The nations of the earth will either join or will tremble and fear (v. 43).

Results

Isaac Morley repented and sold his farm on 12 October 1831. Frederick G. Williams did not sell his 144-acre farm until the time was right, but did consecrate it to the Lord and the Church in 1834.⁷ Bishop Partridge repented also, and he and Sidney Gilbert established the storehouse in Missouri, as commanded. Those who are faithful and consecrated still have the Lord’s promise that they shall see Zion.

D&C 65 – A Revelation on Prayer

Date and Location

Sunday, 30 October 1831, at Hiram, Ohio (John Johnson home). Note: this is the day after D&C 66, so these two are out of order. It may have been in conjunction with a service held at the Johnson home that day that included John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, William McLellin, and the Smiths.⁸

Setting

Joseph Smith called D&C 54 a “revelation on prayer,”⁹ an elaboration of the Lord’s prayer, especially in verses 5-6 (compare Matthew 6:10). It may have been something received in conjunction with the work on the Bible, though that chapter of Matthew had been translated several months earlier. The date is known more precisely than before the 2013 edition: 30 October 1831, the day after Section 66. But otherwise, nothing else is known about the circumstances that brought this on.

One commentary points out the poetry and structure of this short section, with two exhortations to prepared, two exhortations to prayer, and two destinies of the Church.¹⁰

Documents and Publication

The oldest version is probably from Revelation Book 1 (Nov 1831), but William McLellin made a copy that might be as old (between 30 Oct and 15 Nov). It was first published in *The Evening and the Morning Star* (September 1832) and as Section 24 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. Compare Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; and Luke 3:4—and originally Isaiah 40:3. It also showed up in 1 Nephi 10:8 and Alma 7:9. The ancient call was what a forerunner did as they king traveled, calling to all to be ready for the king’s arrival and to prepare the

⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:216.

⁸ *JSP*, D2:92-93.

⁹ *JSP*, D2:92, quoting JS History, vol. A-1, 155.

¹⁰ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2: 222.

path—smooth out the rough places, fill in the holes, build bridges where needed, etc. It was a call to go to work.

2 keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man. Without the keys, meaning the authority directly from God, there is no way to make this all work. Other churches have tried to make changes, reform doctrines and practices, and otherwise follow the pattern in the Bible for hundreds of years, but none of them had the authority from God to do so. Only using the priesthood keys given by the Lord will the work roll forth to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel (see Daniel 2:34-45). See also Matthew 16:19.

2 the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands. Joseph Smith taught in 1830 that the stone, referred to in Daniel 2:35 and 44, is not a rock rolling down a mountain, but is actually a divine millstone, put on an axle and turning to grind the kingdoms of the world, just as a millstone crushes grapes or olives to extract juice or oil, or wheat to make flour. Unlike a normal millstone, this one grows as it does its work, getting larger and larger until it fills the earth, consuming all worldly kingdoms and powers.¹¹

3 prepare ye the supper of the Lamb. From Revelation 19:9. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a reward to the righteous, given after the arrival of Jesus the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13), while the contrasting “supper of the great God” is a day of judgment for the wicked (see Revelation 19:17-21).

4 Pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name. Prayer is a commandment at all times, not just when we have needs or when it might be convenient.

5 that his kingdom may go forth. One thing we are counseled to pray for is for God’s kingdom to grow and spread all through the earth.

5 that the inhabitants thereof may receive it. Secondly, we should pray that the world’s people will receive the kingdom, thus enlarging it and keeping them from judgment at Christ’s coming “in the brightness of his glory.”

6 may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come. The kingdom of God is on the earth already; the kingdom of heaven is what comes with Christ’s glorious advent. Men set up the former under God’s direction; the latter is only established by God personally.

6 for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. The word “honor” is not found in the Matthew version of this; instead it says “for thine is the kingdom.” But in Revelation 4:11, 5:13, and 19:1, the three characteristics (among others) of honor, power, and glory are attributed to the Lord. Likewise, “forever and ever” is not a phrase found in the Bible but is in the Book of Mormon 9 times and in the Doctrine and Covenants thirty-four, this being the third.

Results

In just a few short verses, the Prophet demonstrated how his life was thoroughly based in scripture. In six short verses, he referenced Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation, paraphrasing and combining them in a new and unique way to come up with a doxology and prayer that teaches and praises at the same time. It provides an image of the Church that is bold and vast, taking the few hundred members in 1831 and extending that to an institution that fills the whole earth. Such doctrine of the kingdom of God rolling forth and filling the earth got him arrested for treason and finally murdered in Carthage.¹² But it created an institution that runs by revelation and manifests the hand of God, and is preparing itself and the earth for the coming kingdom of heaven.

D&C 66 – To William E. McLellin

Date and Location

Saturday, 29 October 1831, at Hiram, Ohio, at the John Johnson home. Note that this is the day before D&C 65.

Setting

Recent research, especially William McLellin’s journals, has illuminated much about this section. His journal gives us a different date (29 October 1831) and location (Hiram, Ohio) than previously supposed—and it was recorded in his journal that day, validating the timing. That means D&C 66 was actually received the day before D&C 65.

McLellin, a new convert, had met Joseph for the first time at a conference at Orange, Ohio, held at the house of Sirenes Burnett. On the way back to Hiram, McLellin had sprained his ankle, then been healed by Joseph Smith.

When they arrived at the Johnson home where Joseph was living, McLellin asked for a revelation. He had secretly formulated and prayed about five specific questions, and determined to test Joseph Smith by this means, to see if the revelation would address his concerns. When he wrote about this, much later in his life and long after he had turned antagonistic toward the Church and the Prophet, he still acknowledged that his five questions were completely

¹¹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 227.

¹² Harper, *Making Sense*, 227.

answered. Wrote he, “I now testify in the fear of God, that every question which I had thus lodged in the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth, were answered to my full and entire satisfaction. I desired it for a testimony of Joseph’s inspiration. And I to this day consider it to me an evidence which I cannot refute.”¹³

McLellin never revealed his questions, but the revelation itself and his other journal entries (where he appears to take account of the answers he received) make it possible to make some educated guesses, noted in the commentary section below.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy was made possibly the same day as the revelation, found in William McLellin’s journal. He made two other copies in October and November (one of which, in his notebook, shows evidence of being closer to the original than the older, journal copy),¹⁴ and it was copied into Revelation Book 1 by John Whitmer (Oct 1831). It was first published as Section 74 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants and as Section 75 in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 turned away from your iniquities, and have received my truths. McLellin was a school teacher who left his vocation to investigate the Church after hearing Harvey Whitlock and David Whitmer. He was baptized in August 1831 by Hyrum Smith, and soon when to Ohio to meet Joseph Smith, which led to this revelation.¹⁵ Which specific iniquities the Lord is referring to is not known (though see the mention of adultery in v. 10), but he had truly just embraced the truths of the restored gospel.

2 mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel. McLellin had been baptized and received the priesthood, both of which were covenants and part of the fulness.

2 written by the prophets and apostles. The first question might be determined from this verse, something like: *Is this the church testified of by the prophets and is it the fulness of the gospel in the last days?* The Lord answered clearly that McLellin was blessed to have been baptized in the fulness of the gospel which was recorded by ancient prophets.

3 you are clean, but not all. The second question may have been one that is one most minds who seek Christ: *Have I been forgiven of my sins?* Jesus gave a similar answer to the disciples at the last supper (John 13:10-11). It was also used in D&C 38:10. In both cases, the Lord was referring to a group of people and the “not all” referred to a subset of

them. Here the same language is applied to an individual, teaching us that we can repent and be mostly forgiven but not fully forgiven, or can be forgiven and subsequently sin, making us “clean, but not all.”

4 what is my will concerning you. McLellin was indeed anxious to learn the Lord’s will specifically for him, which is why he went with Joseph and then sought this revelation.

5 proclaim my gospel from land to land. This was a common request of most brethren in the early days, as missionary work was everyone’s labor (as it should be today). McLellin was tasked with proclaiming the message in many lands and cities, but especially the eastern lands (v. 7) where it had not been taught before. He was perhaps the first convert from Tennessee, so going there might provide family contacts and opportunities.¹⁶

6 go not up unto the land of Zion as yet. The third question may well have been: *Should I gather to Missouri, to Zion?* This was a question that many in Ohio were asking. The Lord instructed McLellin to stay in Ohio for “not many days,” not to go to Zion yet (perhaps in light of his preaching assignment), and to share his surplus funds so that they might be used to buy lands in Missouri.

7 reasoning with the people. Only McLellin and Orson Hyde (D&C 68:1 below) get a charge from the Lord to ‘reason’ with people, which perhaps had to do with their specific gifts and talents in how they presented the gospel to others. They were both logical thinkers and good speakers, and interestingly both companions with Samuel Smith, Joseph’s younger brother, during their lives (see v. 8 where McLellin was commanded to go on a mission with Samuel).

9 Lay your hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. The fourth question might have been: *What are my spiritual gifts?* McLellin had been blessed by healing through Joseph Smith, and in his journal, he used the language of v. 9 to document how he healed other people during his mission.

9 Be patient in affliction. Though hard for most of us, patience was a challenge for McLellin. Ultimately he left the Church because he was impatient with Church leadership and how things were progressing.

10 Seek not to be cumbered. The fifth question was perhaps the most personal: *Should I get married?* McLellin was recently widowed, his wife of two years, Cynthia Ann, having died (it appears) in childbirth, along with the child. He was struggling with adulterous thoughts, the verse notes, but still should not yet be “cumbered” in order to

¹³ Harper, *Making Sense*, 229; also *JSP*, D2:89-90.

¹⁴ *JSP*, D2:90.

¹⁵ Black, *Who’s Who*, 190-191.

¹⁶ Black, *Who’s Who*, 190.

serve his mission. As evidence of this interpretation, Joseph Smith June 1832 wrote to Emma saying that McLellin had forsaken the Lord and this revelation by getting married.¹⁷

10 Commit not adultery—a temptation with which thou hast been troubled. While this may not mean that McLellin has committed adultery, he was “troubled” with it and thus was an intimate challenge that the Lord knew all about. This probably related with his query about getting married.

11 push many people to Zion. Compare Deuteronomy 33:17, where it is Ephraim’s role to push people together. McLellin was called to help with the pushing.

12 even unto the end. The Lord knew this man and challenged him to continue to stay faithful all the way to the end. Only then would he have the greatest blessings.

12 a crown of eternal life. McLellin is promised the ultimate blessing, even “at the right hand of my Father,” if he continued in the things he had been taught.

Results

D&C 66 gave William McLellin a choice: obey and receive eternal life, or disobey and lose his blessings. It’s

clear from Church history and his own journals that he tried to obey, even wanted to obey, but each time allowed his own desires and lack of faith to take him in a different direction. He served a mission as commanded with Samuel Smith, but left the mission early and was rebuked for it (D&C 75:6-7). He healed the sick but struggled being patient in afflictions. He served another mission but left it early also to work and build up his personal savings, then married Emiline Miller instead of completing his mission. He moved to Jackson County, contrary to what the Lord had told him, and chose not to be part of the law of consecration, buying land on his own.

Even though he testified in 1832 that Joseph was a true prophet, he disobeyed the Prophet’s instructions, and was chastised. Though he was called as a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve, finally, in 1838, he stopped praying and keeping the commandments, “indulged himself in his lustful desires” (his own words), and was excommunicated from the Church, never to return. He spent the rest of his life bouncing between various Church break-offs, never satisfied and continuing to look for the true Church of Christ, still knowing the Book of Mormon was true and Joseph Smith was, at least in 1831, a true prophet.¹⁸

D&C 67 – Book of Commandments Testimony

Date and Location

Wednesday, 2 November 1831, at the John Johnson home at Hiram, Ohio.

Setting

On 1-2 November, 1831, in the newly-created translation room at the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, with ten elders, a conference was convened for the purpose of considering, among other things, publishing the revelations that Joseph Smith had thus far received. During the first session of the conference on 1 November, the brethren discussed and determined to print 10,000 copies of the revelations (later reduced to a more modest but still ambitious 3,000 copies).¹⁹ Following that decision, the Lord first revealed D&C 68,²⁰ followed by the revealed preface to the work (D&C 1).²¹

Joseph Smith asked the brethren, “what testimony they were willing to attach to these commandments.”²² Several

arose and agreed to sign the testimony. Later history says that they were promised a witness like the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon had received back in 1829.²³ However, the men had several concerns about the revelations. Was the language good enough, with spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors? Was a twenty-six-year-old prophet with little education a good spokesman? Would it hurt missionary efforts to call their neighbors idolaters and enemies, and foretell great disasters if they did not repent? Would it cause problems to reveal to the world their intentions for settling Zion in Missouri? Troubled by these questions, these men nevertheless prayed for the promised manifestation, but it did not come. D&C 67 was given to explain why. This revelation was received on 2 November 1831, according to John Whitmer, but could have been 1 November; the conference minutes are vague on this point.²⁴

They were given a written testimony to sign that was also revealed by the Lord.

¹⁷ Jesse, *Personal Writings*, 265.

¹⁸ Harper, *Making Sense*, 232.

¹⁹ *JSP*, D2:94-98.

²⁰ *JSP*, D2:98-103.

²¹ *JSP*, D2:103-107.

²² *JSP*, D2:97.

²³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:232; Harper, *Making Sense*, 233-234.

²⁴ *JSP*, D2:108-109.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (Nov 1831). It was first published as Section 25 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Commentary

1 *whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up before me.* The Lord understands what we feel and want, not only as we express in prayer, but what is hidden in our hearts. In this case, he acknowledged that he knew the elders' desires to have a divine witness of the commandments to be published and had heard their prayers about it. Now he will explain why they didn't receive their request.

2 *the riches of eternity are mine to give.* The Lord reminded the brethren that all gifts come from God and are his to give, just as he holds all things in his hands.

3 *the blessing which was offered unto you.* The brethren were promised a divine manifestation of the truth of the collection of revelations they were about to print, and sought for it in prayer.

3 *there were fears in your hearts.* The first reason they failed was fear. Their fears were probably centered on how the world might receive the revelations and thus judge them and the Church. Fear and faith cannot co-exist, and their fears drove out their faith and thus an opportunity to experience a mighty visitation.

4 *a testimony of the truth of these commandments.* Having failed to achieve the promised blessing because of fears, the potential witnesses are offered another opportunity, that they might still bear testimony. But now they were going to have to accept the witness coming through the mouthpiece of the Prophet.

5 *his imperfections you have known.* No one knew the faults of Joseph Smith more than these men. Most had just traveled to Missouri with him and seen him daily in action. Many had received revelations from him directed to them. They knew of his lack of education and his youth (he was not quite twenty-six at this time).

5 *express beyond his language.* The Lord revealed another reason they were not able to achieve their desired and promised revelatory experience—they considered themselves better than Joseph Smith and thought they should correct his language in the dictated revelations.

6 *even the least that is among them.* Not necessarily the shortest revelation but the one that they might consider having the least spiritual value or benefit.

6 *the most wise among you.* William McLellin was the one chosen, as a school teacher and perhaps the most educated of the group. Later, in Joseph's recorded history, after McLellin had left the Church, the tone about this attempt was a bit judgmental (it said McLellin had "more learning than sense"²⁵). But at the time, this seemed to be a sincere effort following the Lord's invitation.

The Lord offered them an experiment of sorts—try and write a revelation like even the least of those in the Book of Commandments. If you can, he declared, you don't need to bear testimony of it (v. 7). If you cannot, then sign the revealed written testimony (v. 8). McLellin took on the challenge and acknowledged that he couldn't do it, even though he worked hard at it. Note that this was a one-time challenge and not an open-ended invitation to the world. The Lord gave this opportunity to these men at that time so they might sign the printed testimony.

9 *there is no unrighteousness in them.* The revelation received by Joseph Smith were not from his ego or selfish desires; they were the words of God, "the Father of lights," to our day.

10 *the veil shall be rent and you shall see me.* If the brethren stripped themselves of pride, jealousies, and fears, the Lord gave a promise to them even greater than the witness he had promised the day before—they would see the face of the Lord himself.

11 *no man has seen God...except quickened by the Spirit.* Joseph Smith had learned this truth already from several sources, including his own personal experiences in seeing God. He learned it as part of the translation of the Bible: "I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him" (Moses 1:14). Other major changes in the JST that teach this doctrine clearly are yet in the future for the Prophet at the time of this revelation, including Exodus 33, John 1:18, and 1 John 4:12.

12 *Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God.* In the presence of Satan, Moses realized, "I can look upon thee in the natural man," even though he had to be completely changed and "transfigured" to be in God's presence (Moses 1:13-14).

13 *continue in patience until ye are perfected.* To be "perfected" does not mean unable to improve. Rather, in the New Testament sense, to be perfect means to be complete

²⁵ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 162, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed Decem-

ber 11, 2016, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/168>.

and whole. The brethren needed to continue to strip themselves of their sinful natures, and when they were wholly humble and repentant, they could receive the promised blessings.

14 **Let not your minds turn back.** The previous opportunity was gone, and dwelling on what might have been would do no good. Look forward with faith and patience, and work toward the next step in your progression, the Lord counseled, and then they would “see and know that which was conferred upon you by the hands of my servant Joseph.”

Results

The elder tried but “could not duplicate the divine element they sensed in the revelations” given through Joseph Smith.²⁶ The brethren were given a revealed testimony to go with the Book of Commandments and most did sign their names to the testimony that day.²⁷ The Lord did not give them a spiritual manifestation like some expected or hoped for, but he gave them one that was suited to their situation, their humility, and their fears, then invited them to continue to draw close to him with great promises for the future. The testimony they signed was also signed by twelve more men at a later date and prepared for printing, but it was not printed with the Book of Commandments as we have it; it was probably going to be at the end of the book, like the Book of Mormon testimonies, but the printing did not get that far before it was interrupted by the mob.²⁸ The testimony was subsequently printed in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, though the names were changed to the Twelve Apostles. The original testimony read as follows:²⁹

The Testimony of the witnesses to the Book of the Lord’s commandments which he gave to his church through Joseph Smith Jr who was appointed by the vos [voice] of the Church for this purpose

We the undersigners feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind to every creature upon all the face of all the Earth upon the Islands of the Sea that god hath born record to our souls through the Holy Ghost shed forth upon us that these commandments are given by inspiration of God, & are profitable for all men & are verily true we give this testimony unto the world the Lord being my helper & it is through the grace of God the father & his Son Jesus Christ that we are permitted to have this privelege of bearing this testimony unto the world in the which we rejoice exceedingly by praying the Lord always that the children of men may be profited thereby Amen

Initially it was signed by Sidney Rigdon, Orson Hyde, William McLellin, Luke Johnson, and Lyman Johnson. Later, other signatures were added from Reynolds Cahoon, John Corrill, Parley Pratt, Harvey Whitlock, Lyman Wight, John Murdock, Calvin Beebe, Zebedee Coltrin, Joshua Fairchild, Peter Dustin, Newel Knight, Levi Hancock, and Thomas B. Marsh.

The Lord showed that he was more concerned with the substance of the revelations than the literary ability of his Prophet. Spiritual things are best known by the Spirit, and while the language of some revelations might be poetic and beautiful, and in others plain and pedantic, in all cases the reader can be lifted and enlightened by the Spirit that comes from the effort of knowing them.

D&C 68 – Commandments to the Elders

Date and Location

Tuesday, 1 November 1831, at the John Johnson home, Hiram, Ohio.

Setting

See the setting for D&C 67 above. This revelation was given on the first day of the conference (thus chronologically ahead of D&C 67). D&C 68 was perhaps given in two parts: the first twelve verses were revealed first, in response to the request of four of the brethren to know the Lord’s will concerning them (see the “Amen” at the end of v. 12). The second part, verses 13-35, was then received,

perhaps almost immediately (all copies include both parts together, so the division may have been very short). It was heavily edited by Joseph Smith first for the reprint of this revelation in the *Evening and Morning Star* (June 1835) and then for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, after the organization of the Church had been more fully revealed.

The heading in Revelation Book 1 for this revelation says, “The mind & will of the Lord as made known by the voice of the spirit ~~made~~ <known to> a conference held November first 1831 concerning certain Elders who requested of the Lord to kno[w] his will concerning them & also certain

²⁶ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 2:233.

²⁷ *JSP*, D2:110-114.

²⁸ *JSP*, D2:113.

²⁹ From *JSP*, D2:113-114.

items as made known in addition to the Laws & commandments which have been given to the church, firstly.”³⁰

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1 (Nov 1831). It was first published in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, October 1832, then again (in edited form) in the June 1835 *Evening and Morning Star*. It was published as Section 22 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

- That is scripture (1-5)
- Preach and baptize (6-12)
- The sons of Aaron (13-24)
- Parents’ responsibilities (25-28)
- Commandments to the saints (29-35)

Commentary

What is Scripture (1-5)

1 **Orson Hyde**. Hyde was orphaned at a young age and began supporting himself in various kinds of jobs. He was just about a year older than Joseph Smith. He worked as a clerk at the Gilbert and Whitney store in Kirtland as well as being a part-time Campbellite preacher under Sidney Rigdon. He was converted to the Church after reading the Book of Mormon, and Sidney Rigdon baptized him on 30 October 1831, just two days before this revelation.³¹ He was one of the original Twelve Apostles and served many missions, including one to the Holy Land. He left the Church for a time but returned and repented. He helped complete the Nauvoo temple and went to Utah, where he had judicial and legislative roles, as well as Church leadership positions. He died as a member of the Twelve in 1878.³²

1 **reasoning with**. Like McLellin (D&C 66:7), Orson Hyde was charged with reasoning with people outside the Church. They are the only two in the Doctrine & Covenants to be so charged.

1 **expounding all scriptures unto them**. Orson Hyde knew his scriptures well, having been very active in several churches and most recently serving as a pastor in the Campbellite group.

2 **ordained unto this priesthood**. These instructions were given to Orson Hyde and others recently ordained as high priests and sent on missions. In other words, the verses following were to the highest Church leaders of that day.

³⁰ JSP, D2:99.

³¹ Black, *Who’s Who*, 141.

³² Blank, *Who’s Who*, 141-144.

3 **speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost**. Orson and all the elders were to teach the gospel as directed by the Spirit. Theirs was a very egalitarian priesthood; they took direction from the Prophet but all were expected to be inspired and directed by God.

4 **whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture**. Words inspired by the Holy Ghost to his ordained leaders are scripture, meaning they are the mind, word, and voice of the Lord—and most importantly, the power of God to bring others to salvation.

Preach and Baptize (6-12)

6 **bear record of me, even Jesus Christ**. Lest there be any confusion about the message of missionaries then and now, the Lord taught that if they did not fear, the Lord would be with them as they taught the world about him.

7 **Luke Johnson**. Luke was one of the sons of John and Elsa Johnson, the owners of the home where Joseph was living and the location of the conference. He had been baptized in May 1831 and was a strong protector of Joseph Smith throughout his life. He was one of the original Twelve Apostles. He left the Church during the Kirtland financial crisis and did not go to Missouri or Illinois. But as the Saints were heading west, he joined them and was re-baptized. Traveling to Utah, he helped settle a new community but died in 1861 at the home of his friend, Orson Hyde.³³

7 **Lyman Johnson**. Younger brother to Luke Johnson, Lyman was baptized in February 1831. He was part of Zion’s camp and called as one of the original Twelve Apostles at the age of twenty-three. He left the Church in 1837 over finances. He was soon reinstated but not fully committed, and was excommunicated in 1838, though he stayed friendly with Church members. He died in a sleighing accident in 1856.³⁴

7 **William E. McLellin**. The fourth specific elder mentioned was McLellin, previously introduced in D&C 66.

7 **unto all the faithful elders of my church**. Though directed specifically at these four, the message was to all.

8 **preach the gospel to every creature**. The charge to the elders and high priests listed and “unto all the faithful elders of my church” (v. 7) is to share the gospel message with everyone, and using the authority of the priesthood they have been given, to baptize all who would be saved.

10 **blest with signs following**. As previously discussed (D&C 63:7-12), signs given after conversion strengthen testimonies and bless the lives of the Saints. This is also the

³³ Black, *Who’s Who*, 154-157.

³⁴ Black, *Who’s Who*, 158-159.

promise in Mark 16:15-18; Mormon 9:24; and Ether 4:18, “even as it is written.”

11 *given to know the signs of the times*. Though commonly used today in and out of the Church, this phrase is only found here and in Matthew 16:3. The signs prophesied before the Second Coming are many, in various books of scripture, and in some cases vague enough to be subject to many interpretations. The promise here is that the faithful elders—the leaders of Christ’s Church—shall be able to discern the signs from other world and local events, and know which ones are the fulfillment of scripture.

12 *seal them up unto eternal life*. The concept of “calling and election made sure” was not yet part of Church doctrine. This, instead, is sealing them conditionally up to eternal life, depending on their obedience and the application of the Atonement in their lives. Joseph Smith had taught the brethren just a week earlier that “the order of the High priesthood is that they have power given them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life.”³⁵

The Sons of Aaron (13-24)

13 *in addition to the covenants and commandments*. In other words, this is an addition to what is called D&C 20 today, more information about Church government, some of which was added in 1831 and some of which was later in 1835.

14 *other bishops*. Edward Partridge was the only bishop at the start of the November 1831 conference. In December 1831, Newel K. Whitney was called as the Church’s second bishop, each over a (large) geographical area of the Church. Other bishops were called over the years as the Church grew and the needs evolved.

15 *they shall be high priests*. Edward Partridge was not ordained a high priest before he was called as bishop, but was ordained about two months later, and all subsequent bishops have been high priests.

15 text note:

RB1 he shall be appointed by a confrenc of high priests
1835 they shall be appointed by the first presidency of the Melchizedek priesthood

With no First Presidency in 1831, this language was changed in 1835 to match new revelation and now is current practice.

15 *appointed by the First Presidency*. The “First Presidency” portion was added in 1834 or 1835, after that office was created, and is still the pattern today—stake presidencies nominate a bishop and extend callings and releases,

but the authority to do all that comes from the First Presidency. In 1831, the presiding body of the Church—a conference of high priests—handled such calls.

15b-21 text note:

These verses were wholly added for the first time in 1835, starting in v. 15 with “if they are the firstborn among the sons of Aaron.”

16 *legal right to the bishopric*. Literal descendants of Aaron who are also the firstborn son in their families have a “legal right” (v. 18) to be a bishop. However, they still have to go through the whole process like anyone else (see v. 20), including being found worthy and called and ordained by proper authority.

19 *authority to officiate in all the lesser offices*. A high priest can officiate in any other office in the Church below him, including bishop. This is how men who are not literal sons of Aaron have authority to act in that office today. They still must be “called and set apart and ordained unto this power” by proper authority—the First Presidency with stake presidents acting on their behalf.

21 *ascertain it by revelation*. To act in the office of bishop by virtue of lineage, the man either has to prove it with genealogy or the First Presidency can receive revelation to that effect.

22 text note:

RB1 no bishop or judge
1835 no bishop or high priest

Bishops were called to be judges in Israel. With the expansion in 1835, the priesthood office was the issue under discussion, not the role of the bishop, so the change to “high priest” brought this in line with the other verses.

22 text note:

RB1 save it be before a confrenc of high priests
1835 save it be before the first presidency of the church

See v. 15 text note. The same change is in v. 23.

22 *save it be before the First Presidency*. Today this only applies to the Presiding Bishop. All other discipline of bishops falls under the jurisdiction of the stake presidency, though it must be approved by the First Presidency.

24 text note:

RB1 he shall be condemned or forgiven according to the Laws of the church
1835 he shall be condemned, and if he repents he shall be forgiven, according to the covenants and commandments of the church.

Unrepentant bishops were to be replaced, according to the Law (D&C 52:10, 80-83, 88-93). Further information about

³⁵ Minutes of conference at Orange, Ohio, 25-26 Oct 1831, in *JSP*, D2:82.

Church discipline after 1831 led to a broadening of the language in 1835.

Parents Responsibilities (25-28)

25 text note:

“or in any of her stakes” was added in 1835; there were, of course, no stakes in 1831.

25 that teach them not to understand. Parents are to teach their children the important basic gospel principles of repentance, faith, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Not fulfilling this responsibility will result in the sin being upon the parents.

25 When eight years old. Though this is the scripture (with v. 27) cited to explain baptism at age eight in the Church, this is not where Joseph Smith learned the doctrine. In translating Genesis 17 in about February 1831 (about nine months before this), the Prophet learned that eight was the age of accountability and how that related to the covenant of circumcision:

And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with three, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations; that thou mayest know forever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old. And thou shalt observe to keep all my covenants wherein I covenanted with thy fathers; and thou shalt keep the commandments which I have given thee with mine own mouth, and I will for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (Genesis 17:7).

Thus the mention of “eight years old” in this revelation is a reminder of what the prophet had already learned about nine months earlier.

26 text note:

“or in any of her stakes which are organized” was added in 1835; see v. 25.

27 receive the laying on of the hands. To confirm them members of the Church and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

28 to pray, and to walk uprightly. The command to teach the first principles of the gospel is not the end of a parent’s responsibility. They must help their children understand the importance of prayer and obedience to all of heavenly Father’s commandments.

Commandments to the Saints (29-35)

29 observe the Sabbath day. The Church was again reminded of the importance of Sabbath worship and observance. See D&C 59:9-13.

30 remember their labors. Zion could not and will not be built by the idle. Only those who are fully consecrated in terms of their efforts will be able to work together in Zion.

31 I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion. Some of the current Church members in Missouri—which consisted mostly those of the Colesville branch but also some converts—apparently had a problem with idleness, teaching their children wickedness, and greediness, which is probably a reflection of Missouri as a whole at this time. But the Lord challenged them to live better than those around them, to come out of the world and live as a Zion society, to do away with these things (v. 32).

32 carry these sayings unto the land of Zion. Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer (D&C 69:2) were tasked with taking the commandments to Missouri to be printed in the print shop soon to be set up by William Phelps. But in the case of this particular revelation, Oliver was to show it to the members in Missouri as soon as he arrived to correct their errors and sins.

33 observeth not his prayers. Prayer is so important to the Lord’s plan, that at this stage in their progression, the Lord commanded that those in Missouri should come before the bishop (“the judge of my people”) for correction if they were not praying.

34 transgress them not, neither take therefrom. These “true and faithful” teaching were to be obeyed with exactness and should not be ignored or edited to suit their desires. As they are written, that is the Lord’s will.

35 I am Alpha and Omega, and I come quickly. This language is often used in Joseph’s revelations to confirm the true speaker of the words that were coming out of Joseph’s mouth and being recorded by his scribes.

Results

Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer did carry the revelations to Missouri for printing, sharing them with the Saints there. Orson Hyde, William McLellan, and the Johnson brothers (Luke and Lyman) acted on their assignments and were very involved in missionary work, all being later called to the Quorum of the Twelve, though later all of them came out against the Church, for at least a time.

The Lord showed great care for children and puts great responsibility on parents to teach and care for them. Knowledge of right and wrong is essential to choosing the right—to fulfilling our agency. Teaching them the truth allows them to act within their agency and grow and progress.³⁶

³⁶ Harper, *Making Sense*, 239-240.

Images

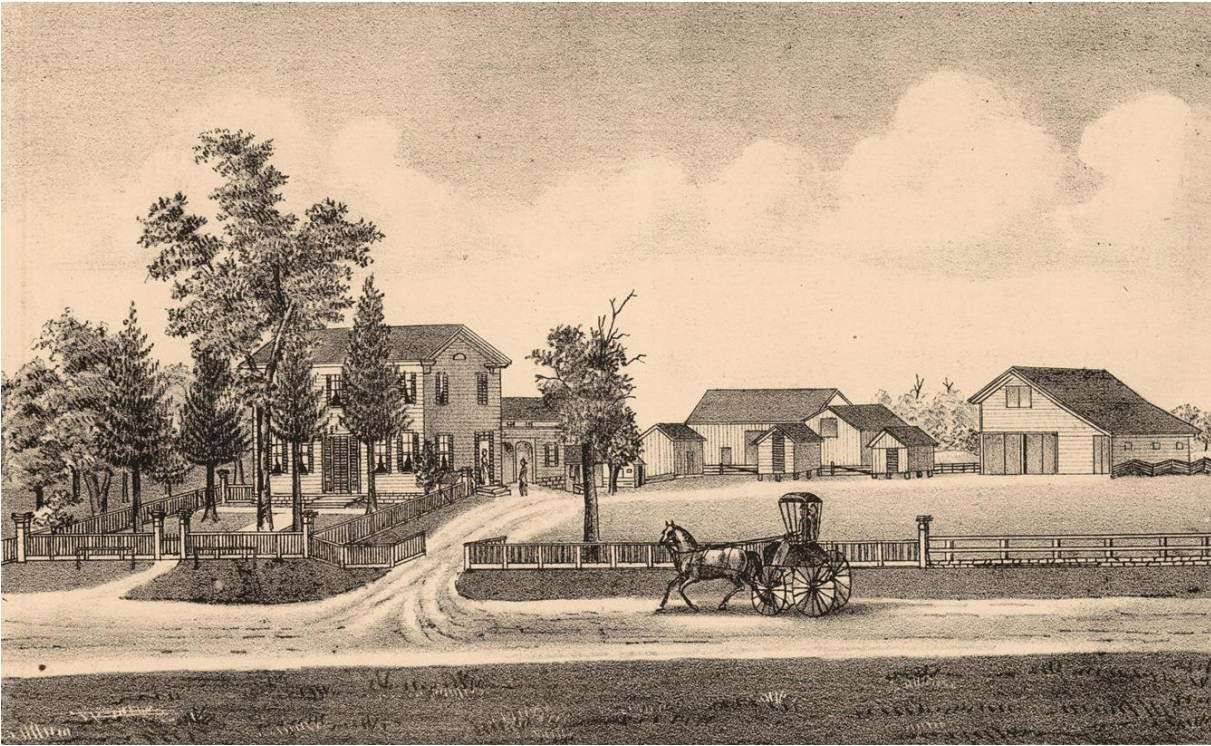


Image #1: Home of John and Elsa (Alice) Johnson, Hiram, Ohio. Engraving by N. Friend, 1874. Image from Combination Atlas Map of Portage County, 1874. (Courtesy David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com.); from josephsmithpapers.org.



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.

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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.

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