

## Section 69

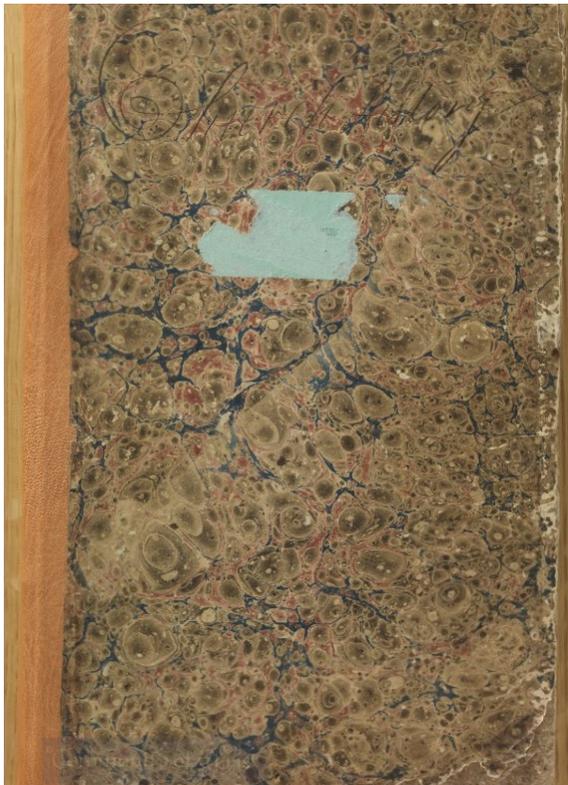
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Joseph spent the first two weeks of November 1831 in Hiram, Ohio, closely reviewing the revelations and counseling with his brethren about their publication. The Church's press was in Independence, Missouri. The handwritten copies of the revelations and the money to print them was in Ohio. John Whitmer wrote that "it was in contemplation for Oliver Cowdery to go to Zion and carry with him the Revelations and Commandments, and I also received a revelation to go with him."<sup>1</sup>

Seeing that it would not be wise to send Oliver Cowdery alone to Missouri with the invaluable Book of Commandments and quite a bit of cash in his possession, the Lord appointed John as his companion. The Lord, moreover, gave John the command to continue to document the important history of the Church (see section 47) and to be counseled and assisted as church historian by Oliver, William Phelps, and perhaps others in Missouri who know important historical information or were good writers. The missionaries in the field should write about their experiences and send the accounts to Zion for John to use in keeping the Church history. Zion is the place for John to do this work and the Saints to send him their documents. He should, however, travel often to the various branches to gather knowledge. He can preach and explain at the same time he writes, copies, selects, and obtains historical information.

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<sup>1</sup> "[John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847](#)," p. 38, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020.



*Book of John Whitmer, Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri.*

Joseph told the council that the revelations should be prized more than the riches of the earth and that he wanted to dedicate them, together with Oliver and John, to the Lord.<sup>2</sup> Then John went faithfully with Oliver to Missouri, carrying with them the revelation to parents in Zion (section 68), the priceless Book of Commandments to be published by William Phelps in Independence, Missouri, and considerable cash for printing and for Bishop Partridge to buy land in Missouri.<sup>3</sup>

Together with Sections 21 and 47, section 69 gives the commandments to document the history of the Church. In the restored Church of Jesus Christ, *history* functions much as *theology*

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

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<sup>2</sup> “Minutes, 12 November 1831,” p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 5, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> John wrote that he and Oliver left Ohio on November 20, 1831, and arrived safely in Independence, Missouri on January 5, 1832. Book of John Whitmer, 38.

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

Being to the many reports which have been put in circulation  
 by evil disposed and designing persons in relation to the rise and progress of the  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors  
 thereof to militate against its character as a Church, and its progress in the world,  
 I have been induced to write this history so as to disabuse the publick mind, and put  
 all enquirers after truth into possession of the facts as they have transpired in relation  
 to the Church, as far as I have such facts in possession.

In this history I will present the various events in relation to this Church in brief  
 and righteousness as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now the  
 eighth year since the organization of said Church. I was born in the  
 year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty third day of  
 December, in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, State of Vermont. My father  
 Joseph Smith Senior, <sup>settled by 1802</sup> left the State of Vermont and moved to Palmyra, Ontario  
 (now Wayne) County, in the State of New York where I was in my tenth year.

In about four years after my father's arrival at Palmyra, he moved with his fam-  
 ily into Manchester in this same County of Ontario. His family consisting of eleven  
 persons, namely, My Father Joseph Smith, My Mother Lucy Smith whose name  
 previous to her marriage was, Mack, daughter of Solomon Mack, the first  
 Abenaki (who ~~settled~~ <sup>settled</sup> <sup>in 1783</sup> <sup>in the</sup> <sup>town of</sup> <sup>Palmyra</sup> <sup>in the</sup> <sup>State of</sup> <sup>New York</sup> <sup>in the</sup> <sup>year</sup> <sup>1783</sup>)  
 my mother, and my sisters Sophonia, Catharine and Lucy. Sometime in  
 the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where  
 I lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with  
 the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of  
 country, indeed the whole district of Country seemed affected by it and I

Manuscript History of Joseph Smith, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.