

Section 75

The Church convened quarterly conferences in its early years, including an important one in January 1832 in Amherst, Ohio, the home of several Latter-day Saint families, about fifty miles east of Church headquarters in Kirtland. The Lord had recently revealed that at this conference the elders would learn what he wanted them to do next (see section 73). Joseph’s history says they “seemed anxious for me to inquire of the Lord that they might know his will, or learn what would be most pleasing to Him for them to do.”¹ Joseph asked and received two revelations and Sidney Rigdon wrote them down.² Combined, they now comprise section 75.

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

¹ “[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#),” p. 180, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 6, 2020.

² Elden J. Watson, *Orson Pratt Journals*, January 25, 1832; Edson Barney statement reported in St. George, Utah Stake General Minutes, December 23, 1860, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; Manuscript copies of Section 75, Newel K. Whitney Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

William McLellin started his mission to the South with Luke Johnson but was soon overwhelmed by doubts. The Lord promised him that continual prayer would sustain him, that if William and Luke would pray, then “I will be with them even unto the end.” William said he could not bring himself to pray in faith. He had his eyes on a young lady named Emiline Miller. He quit his mission and took a job so he could marry her, noting, meanwhile, that he was too sick for missionary work.³ “Preferring not to proceed alone,” Luke returned to Hiram, Ohio, where Joseph called Seymour Brunson to replace William. Luke and Seymour filled their call and enjoyed the Lord’s promised blessings on their mission in the “south countries,” Virginia and Kentucky.⁴

Orson Hyde noted that he and companion Samuel Smith did “one of the most arduous and toilsome missions ever performed in the Church.”⁵ For eleven months they walked from Ohio to Maine and back. Samuel wrote that they followed the revelation as they “went from house to house” and shook the dust from their feet as a testimony against those who rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶

Lyman Johnson and Orson Pratt went east, as commanded, ending up in New England. They baptized many, including a future apostle, and at Charleston, Vermont, twenty-two-year-old Orson Pratt pronounced a priesthood blessing that raised Olive Farr from bed where she had lain invalid for seven years. “Thank God,” she wept, “I’m healed!” Such evidence that the Lord was with the elders, as he said he would be in the revelation, greatly increased their success. They immersed 104 sons and daughters of God for the remission of their sins and organized them into branches before returning to Ohio, after walking nearly 400 miles.⁷

³ William McLellin to Beloved Relatives, August 4, 1832, typescript, Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri, in Shipps and Welch, *The Journals of William E. McLellin* (Urbana and Provo: University of Illinois Press and *BYU Studies*, 1994), 79–86. See Porter, “Man of Diversity,” in Shipps and Welch, 301–02.

⁴ *Millennial Star* 26 (December 31, 1864): 835.

⁵ Orson Hyde, “History of Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* 26 (3 December 1864): 776.

⁶ Events in the Life of Samuel Harrison Smith Including His Missionary Journal for the Year 1832, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

⁷ Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 29–31, 306.

No known records tell whether Asa Dodds, Calves Wilson, Major Ashely, and Burr Riggs obeyed section 75. Simeon Carter and Emer Harris did with great success, though they each ended up serving with their brothers as companions.⁸ Ezra Thayre and Thomas Marsh apparently served their mission. Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon obediently served together, and on his return home, Hyrum set out to obey other instructions in the revelation. He noted that he “went to work with mine hands for the support of my family.”⁹ Seymour Brunson reported his mission with both Daniel Stanton and Luke Johnson. They baptized fifty-three and organized them into a branch.¹⁰

Sylvester Smith and Gideon Carter obeyed the revelation. Sylvester had it in mind the next summer, too, when he went out again “resolved to blow the trumpet of the Gospel.” He knew that if he would the revelation promised that the Lord would be with him. “I trust I shall continue to receive the grace of God to support me even to the end.”¹¹ There is no known evidence that Ruggles Eames and Stephen Burnett obeyed this revelation. Micah Welton and Eden Smith obeyed. Eden’s journal shows that he was especially mindful of the revelation’s instructions to preach and provide for his family as best he could. “Preachd and then returned home and Laboured for the support of my family,” he wrote, echoing the Lord’s instructions.¹²

⁸ *The Evening and the Morning Star* volume 1 (February 1833): 69–70, (March 1833): 84; volume 2 (May 1834): 156; Mark B. Nelson and Steven C. Harper, “The Imprisonment of Martin Harris in 1833,” *BYU Studies* 45:4 (2006): 113–15

⁹ Hyrum Smith diary, 1831–1835, Church History Library, page 27.

¹⁰ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (June 1833): 100.

¹¹ Sylvester Smith to Dear Brother, May 16, 1833, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2:14 (July 1833): 107.

¹² Eden Smith, Journal, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.