

Section 91

There was a hot debate among members of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the late 1820s. Some members advocated that the Society should include in its Bibles the Apocrypha—“the dozen or so books not found in the Hebrew canon but that were included in the Greek version of the Old Testament.”¹ Other members of the Society thought they were “adulterating the Scriptures, by circulating the lies and fables of the Apocrypha along with the words of eternal life.”² That debate had been ongoing among Christians for centuries. Joseph did not know whose argument was best.

Joseph’s version of the King James Bible included the Apocrypha. Section 90, revealed on March 8, 1833, told Joseph to finish his revision of the Old Testament before moving on to other pressing duties. The next day he asked the Lord whether he should read the Apocrypha and revise it along with the rest of the Old Testament. His history says, “Having come to that portion of the ancient writings called the Apocrypha, I received the following” revelation.³

The Lord tells Joseph that he need not translate the Apocrypha, and he explains why. Much of it is true and already translated correctly. Much of it is also not true,

¹ Historical Introduction to “[Revelation, 9 March 1833 \[D&C 91\]](#),” p. 55, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 9, 2020.

² Quoted in the Historical Introduction of “[Revelation, 9 March 1833 \[D&C 91\]](#),” p. 55, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 31, 2020.

³ “[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#),” p. 279, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 9, 2020.

uninspired, and uninspiring, and it includes late additions. The revelation hinges on the *therefore* that begins verse 4. Because there is much truth and much else in the Apocrypha, let it be understood by the Spirit, which testifies of truth. That is the way to get the most from the Apocrypha.

Section 91 helps us understand the nature of scripture and of revelation. There have been many historical arguments and dogmatic positions taken relative to the Apocrypha. The revealed answer may be the least dogmatic. Rather than declaring the highly varied books of the Apocrypha absolutely true or false, the Lord focuses on truth and error within the texts. Nor does he seem worried about errors in or sufficiency of scripture, a term Latter-day Saints do not even use. He gives instead an infallible principle that can be applied to all texts and all subjects. The principle is that seeking truth in the light of the Holy Spirit will enable people to discern truth from error wherever it may be found.