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# Stewards over the Revelations

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D&C 70:3

Six of the brethren—Joseph Smith Jr., Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, and William W. Phelps—were given stewardships over the revelations: “I, the Lord, have appointed them, and ordained them to be stewards over the revelations and commandments” (D&C 70:3). These brethren became the nucleus, or original members, of the Literary Firm. As such, they were to consecrate, manage, print, and distribute revelations so “that the revelations may be published, and go forth unto the ends of the earth” (D&C 72:21).

The first book that the Literary Firm was to manage was the printing of the Book of Commandments. The attempt to publish that book was fraught with impossibilities, as the printing press in Independence was destroyed by a mob. A few pages of the book were saved by Mary Elizabeth Lightner and her sister Caroline.

Recalling the circumstances, Mary penned, “My sister Caroline and I were in a corner of the fence trembling watching [the mob destroy the printing office].” It was when the sisters saw mobbers bring out a pile of large sheets of paper and heard them say, “Here are the damned Mormon Commandments” that Mary knew what she had to do. She “determined to have some of” the papers even though it would put her life in grave danger. Her sister Caroline agreed to help her but said, “They will kill us.” The sisters waited until the mob turned to pry “out the gable end of the [printing] building.” Mary recalled, “[We then] ran and got our arms full and were turning away when some of the

mob saw us and called for us to stop. But we ran as fast as we could into a large cornfield, laid the papers on the ground and then we laid flat over them.”<sup>1</sup>

The corn was about five or six feet tall and “very thick.” Mobbers “hunted quite a while for us, coming very near and making our hearts beat faster but finally left,” Mary penned. After the sisters were satisfied that the men were gone, they came out of the cornfield and ran to safety. The pages that they saved were later “bound in small books.” Of the book given to Mary, she wrote, “I prized it highly.”<sup>2</sup>

The Literary Firm initiated the combining of sixty-five revelations that were to be printed in the Book of Commandments with other revelations received since November 1831 into one book called the Doctrine and Covenants. One of the great difficulties faced was obtaining necessary funds to print the Doctrine and Covenants. In hopes of alleviating this difficulty, the Saints were asked “to donate ... the means and money you can that we may be enable[d] to accomplish the work as a great means towards the Salvation of Men.”<sup>3</sup>

At the conference on August 17, 1835, the Doctrine and Covenants was approved for publication. The 1,835 printed sheets of the Doctrine and Covenants were sent to Cleveland, Ohio, for binding. Bound copies of the Doctrine and Covenants were available for purchase by mid-September 1835 at a cost of one dollar.

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<sup>1</sup> “Autobiography of Mary E. R. Lightner,” 4. Church History Library.

<sup>2</sup> “Autobiography of Mary E. R. Lightner,” 4.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Church Brethren, June 15, 1835. Joseph Smith Papers.