

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 76

This section quotes and paraphrases other scriptures to a considerable degree, as evidenced by the copious footnotes in the modern edition D&C. The intent was to take many scattered and obscure references and weave them into a single comprehensible revelation addressing the issue in a systematic fashion.

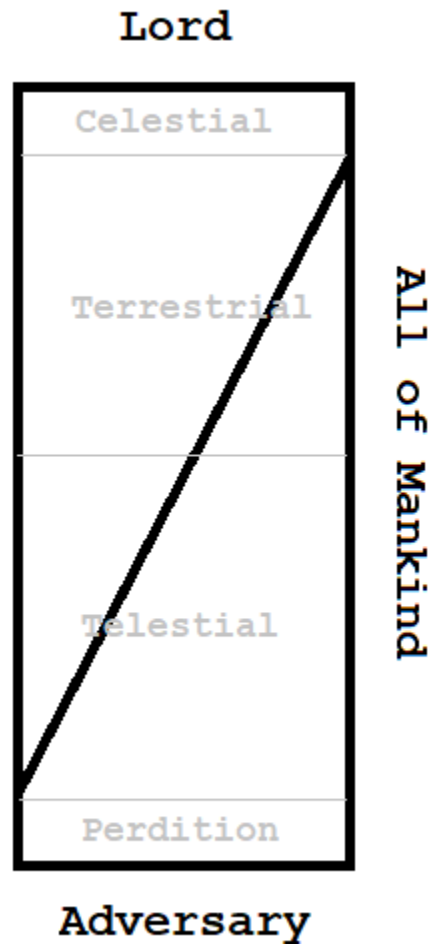
For assorted Biblical references which can be taken as commenting on, or at the very least suggesting the existence of, multiple degrees of glory, cp. Matt. 5:19, Matt. 13:43, Matt. 16:27, John 14:2, 1 Cor. 15:40-42, 2 Cor. 12:2, Hebr. 11:35. Also, clearly, this revelation employs Paul's characterization of three degrees of glory to a considerable degree, cp. 1 Cor. 15:41.

Theologically, this section is a magnum opus on the Lord's purpose for mankind. We summarize this today with the quote: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (cf. Moses 1:39). The present text spells out the subject of Moses 1:39 in much greater detail.

It flatly contradicts the doctrine of Predestination and any notion God's justice and mercy was arbitrary or capricious, both of which ideas were present in Protestantism at the time. It places the burden of responsibility on each individual, making all options available to all people, emphasizing the role of free will.

The text prominently features two people, the Lord Jesus Christ as the protagonist, and the Adversary as the antagonist. The Adversary's nature and motivation is explained, but he is given relatively little time compared to the Lord, who is featured prominently and repeatedly as the explanation unfolds as to how the entire process works together to accomplish His will.

Members of the Church tend to focus on the mechanics of eternal progress in a linear fashion following an individual's existence and passage through mortality by mapping it out as different globes or distinct divisions, of which there are numerous examples. However, the text forwards a view of a gradient, where at the two extremes are the Lord and the Adversary, and everyone else in humanity is somewhere in between, depending on their behavior. A better representation would be something like this:



The divisions between the glories are not presented as being physical or geographical, the way we tend to draw them in eternal progression maps. The divisions are based on how the person chooses to behave and whom to follow, the Lord or the Adversary. The person who tries to do good and keep the commandments is at least Terrestrial. The person who loves carnal things and excuses sin is at least Telestial. There is a gradient because there are many people, including us, making many choices in how to live their lives, and having many different levels of culpability. The relative sizes of each partition is meaningless, as at is simply a diagram, and at the individual level it doesn't matter where anyone else is outside of myself.

The point of the message of D&C 76 isn't the partition, it is to highlight the major differences in motivation and behavior in the individual. It is to emphasize there are only two major characters, the Lord and the Adversary, and the question is which one were we going to follow.

The text is a blend of comments by Smith and Rigdon and quotations of the Lord. Smith and Rigdon relate the vision they saw in their own words, obviously being influenced by the Spirit and the things they saw and heard during the vision. For example, v. 1-10 is a direct quotation of the Lord while v. 11-24 is Smith's and Rigdon's account of what they saw and heard as the vision opened. They then continue their recounting of the vision in v. 25-30 and include a quote of the Lord in v. 31-48 and they indicate they were commanded to write the quote in v. 49. The rest of the text follows the same pattern of their relating what they saw alternating with relevant quotations.

At a high level, based on subject, the text of section 76 can be arranged in a simple series of complimentary statements, as follows:

Introduction - The Lord's testimony (v. 1-10)
Introduction - Smith's and Rigdon's testimony (v. 11-19)

Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator and Redeemer (v. 20-24)
Adversary, the destroyer (v. 25-29)

Perdition (v. 30-49)
Exaltation (v. 50-70)

Sinners without law-honorable men of the earth (v. 71-80)
Sinners against law-dishonorable men of earth (v. 81-112)

Conclusion, summary of Introduction (v. 113-119)

Two specific characters are presented in the text, both of whom were in the Father's bosom (v. 13, 25, 39), but one of them did the Father's will (v. 20-24) and exalts those who follow Him (v. 50-70), and one of them rebelled against the Father (v. 25-29) and makes war against the saints and drags down as many as he can (v. 30-38).

These two characters represent the extremes of the spirit children of the Father, with all others falling somewhere in between these two (v. 30-112).

The Lord Jesus Christ is presented as central to all of the human's experience, even so much that when discussing people who classed as Perdition, the central theme is in fact the redemption, which they do not participate in (v. 39-42). Those of telestial glory are also presented as rejecting the testimony of Jesus and therefore do not receive of His fulness (v. 82-85). Christ's redemption affects everyone, regardless of whom they choose to follow. It is now simply a matter of the people in mortality choosing whether to accept Christ or be led away by the adversary.

Christ's centrality to each section of text is also part of the rhetorical presentation of the Lord versus the Adversary as Creator versus destroyer. Construction and redemption takes a lot of time and effort, where destruction is easy. The Lord is putting a lot more time and effort in the acts of redeeming all people from death and most from sin and hell, so he is central to the entire process.

Aside from the high level divisions above, the text itself is [highly structured](#) and bears careful examination.

It should be noted this single revelation has had a significant impact on Church theology. The Book of Mormon comments very little on the issues addressed herein (it comments a great deal on the reality of the physical resurrection and judgement, but nothing on subsequent assignment to degrees of glory), and the Bible is obtuse on these issues. Without this revelation and D&C 132, the Church would probably hold the standard Christian views of a dichotomous Heaven and Hell, and have a large body of speculative ideas about any other alternative.

It should also be noted Smith and Rigdon received this revelation while "translating" the Bible. The Lord was eager to have Smith understand all of the preceding revelations He had made. The Lord didn't tell Smith and the Church to ignore or discount the Bible, very much the opposite. The Lord wanted Smith and the Church to be well acquainted with the Bible, and when Smith was studying the Bible, the Lord revealed great and precious thing to him. The Lord clearly wants us to study and understand all of His revelations, both ancient and modern.

1 Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior. 2 Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and

the extent of his doings none can find out. 3 His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand. 4 From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail.

5 For thus saith the Lord--I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end. 6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory. 7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom. 8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations. 9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught. 10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will--yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

v1-10 A quotation of the Lord forms the preface to the revelation. The Lord is eternal and His knowledge is transcendent (v. 1-4), but He will reveal the mysteries of His Kingdom to those that revere Him (v. 5-10).

v1-4 A classic set of authority statements, ultimately designed to draw a dichotomy between the Lord and man. The Lord is eternal, all-knowing, all powerful and man is temporal, foolish and weak.

These verses may be an introduction by Smith instead of a quotation of the Lord. But, given v. 1-10 form an inverted parallelism centering on v. 5 it seems likely the section of text is a unity. It is plain v. 5-10 are a quotation given the "thus saith the Lord..." and the use of the first person. If we assume v. 1-4 are a quotation of the Lord, then these verses would represent the testimony of those faithful servants spoken of in v. 5-10 who fear Him and therefore receive great revelations from His Spirit.

v2 "the extent of his ways none can find out", no mortal can perceive the Lord's mind because His ways are higher than our ways, cp. Isa. 55:8-9.

v4 "his years never fail", i.e., the Lord is not mortal.

v5-10 These verses describe the relationship between the Lord and those who follow. The text indicates that even though the Lord is exalted (the subjected of v. 1-4) and man is lowly, the Lord condescends to man and grants him views of things that are great and marvelous.

v5 The Lord offers His mercy and grace to those who respect Him and try to live his teachings. However, the Lord is also filled with anger towards those who hate him, cf. v. 33-34.

v7 "I will reveal to them all mysteries", cp. v. 114, Matt. 13:11, D&C 71:1.

v9 Wisdom that is revealed is contrasted with man's wisdom. The second half of the verse paraphrases Isa. 29:14 where the theme is that of revelation, and is stating people who are wise in their own eyes will be confounded by the Lord's wisdom. It is important to note the context of Isa. 29:14 is that it is addressing apostate religionists and not secularized wise men.

v10 Continuing on the theme from v. 9, the Lord states He will fill His servants with His Spirit and they will learn and perceive things "those things". The "those things" and subsequent statement is a quotation from Isa. 64:4. The context there is something of an apocalypse where the Lord is coming down from heaven to wreak vengeance on His enemies and save those who worship Him in humility. "Those things" has reference to what He will be blessing His people with, namely the temporal blessings of Millennial peace and subsequent eternal life.

11 We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two-- 12 By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God-- 13 Even those things which were from the beginning before the world was, which were ordained of the Father, through his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning; 14 Of whom we bear record; and the record which we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision. 15 For while we were doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty-ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given unto us as follows-- 16 Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, concerning those who shall hear the voice of the Son of

Man: 17 And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust. 18 Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit. 19 And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about.

20 And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness; 21 And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshiping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever. 22 And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all which we give of him: That he lives! 23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father-- 24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

v11-24 Smith's and Rigdon's testimony concerning the vision they saw and why they saw it.

v11 "in the Spirit", in the context of revelation this phrase means the persons are entirely immersed by the Spirit such that all of their senses are, particularly their sight and hearing, are perceiving spiritual rather than physical things, cp. Ezek. 37:1, Rev. 4:2, 1 Ne. 11:1.

v12 The revelation was a direct result of inspiration by the Spirit. This kind of statement seems didactic, but what is happening is the "authors" are acknowledging their source and indicating that they are more documenters of the revealed than authors of a text.

v13 A portion of the eternal plan is revealed. The general structure of God's economy has been set from the Council in Heaven (cf. D&C 77:6), and that economy is being administered by His Son.

v14 Smith and Rigdon saw and spoke with Jesus Christ in the vision.

v15-19 These verses give the background on what precipitated the revelation.

v19 "the Lord touched the eyes of our understanding", typical

revelation rhetoric, cp. Ezek. 1:3.

v20-24 The revelation of the Father and the Son on Their thrones surrounded by angels is common to this kind of revelation, cp. Isa. 6, Ezek. 1, Acts 7:55-56.

v22-24 Their testimony concerning the Savior is that He lives, He is on the right hand of the Father, He is the only begotten of the Father, He is the Creator, He enables man to be spiritually born again.

25 And this we saw also, and bear record, that an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father, was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son, 26 And was called Perdition, for the heavens wept over him--he was Lucifer, a son of the morning. 27 And we beheld, and lo, he is fallen! is fallen, even a son of the morning! 28 And while we were yet in the Spirit, the Lord commanded us that we should write the vision; for we beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ-- 29 Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about. 30 And we saw a vision of the sufferings of those with whom he made war and overcame, for thus came the voice of the Lord unto us:

31 Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power-- 32 They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born; 33 For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity; 34 Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come-- 35 Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame. 36 These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels-- 37 And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power; 38 Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath. 39 For all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made.

40 And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us-- 41 That he came

into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; 42 That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him; 43 who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.

44 wherefore, he saves all except them--they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment-- 45 And the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows; 46 Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof; 47 Nevertheless, I, the Lord, show it by vision unto many, but straightway shut it up again; 48 wherefore, the end, the width, the height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except those who are ordained unto this condemnation.

49 And we heard the voice, saying: Write the vision, for lo, this is the end of the vision of the sufferings of the ungodly.

v25-49 Immediately after their testimony of the Savior, they then launch into a testimony of the reality of the adversary. Consider the contrast between these two characters, one the incarnation of love and light and truth, the other the incarnation of hate and darkness and lies. As a vision, the contrast would have been stark.

The text of these verses relates some of the history of the adversary, in that he rebelled, was cast out, called Perdition, was the "serpent" in the Garden of Eden account, and now continues to make war with the saints of God.

v26 "Perdition", i.e., destruction.

"Lucifer", i.e., morning star.

v28 "while we were yet in the Spirit...we should write the vision", this indicates they were documenting in an inspired fashion as the revelation proceeded. This was not documented by commiseration between Smith and Rigdon from memory after the fact.

v30-49 The fate of so-called "sons of perdition". This section

is a direct quote from the Lord from v. 32-49 as is indicated by v. 31 and 49.

v33 "vessels of wrath", cp. Romans 9:22, Moses 5:24.

v35 This verse describes the qualities of a "son of perdition". They are such that they would consent to and participate in the crucifixion of Christ given the opportunity. This implies a murderous intent as well as a knowledge and perception that Jesus really was the Christ and a desire to kill him for just that reason.

Surprisingly, a lot of LDS persons wonder if they are "sons of perdition" because at some point they became lax in Church attendance or failed to observe some rules. They then conclude they ignored the Holy Spirit and therefore must be perdition. This is simply a lie from Satan trying to persuade them that their case is hopeless and God wants nothing to do with them anymore. If a person is penitent at all, and seeking any form of reconciliation they cannot be perdition, as perdition is the exact opposite. Perdition is the desire to destroy the thing that indicates you are a sinner rather than repent.

Note the immortal glorified Lord is speaking in the 3rd person about His own past mortal flesh, cp. D&C 49:5-6.

v36-39 These verses describe the end result and eternal consequences of being perdition. These persons will be resurrected, but not redeemed. All others will inherit at least some glory in the resurrection, even those in telestial glory. Those who are perdition however will receive no glory and will be left in their misery eternally.

v40-43 This section of text forms a parenthetical description of the gospel and its purpose, namely the salvation of all of God's works. The only part of God's works not saved are sons of perdition.

v44-48 The theme from v. 39 picks up again and incorporates the theme from the parenthesis as well to described their unsaved condition and the eternal torment they will experience.

v45-48 No man knows or perceives the torment these sons of perdition will have to endure. It does not say why though. To

some it is revealed in little snippets (v. 47), but the full impact of this condition is only experienced by those who suffer it (v. 48). One could speculate that the reason it is not revealed to people is because the torment is so terrible it would kill them, but I think the intent here is to emphasize the eternal nature of the punishment rather than the excruciating nature of the pain. The reason man cannot perceive the nature of endless suffering is because they are temporal and any snippet they see of it is just a brief encounter and not an endless exposure.

v48 "those who are ordained unto this condemnation", by "ordained" I would assume this means "set apart" as in the case of D&C 25:7. However, there could be more of a foreordination overtone along the lines of Moses 5:24, where it states Cain was perdition pre-mortally. Following this line of reasoning we might conclude that some of Lucifer's followers bailed out and sustained the Father's plan because they realized Lucifer was going to lose. However, this was a selfish motivation and they were still intrinsically perdition so when they entered mortality their nature remained and they ultimately followed Satan anyway.

v49 Compare v. 28.

50 And again we bear record--for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just--

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given-- 52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; 53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. 55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things-- 56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; 57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

58 wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God-- 59 wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life

or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 60 And they shall overcome all things. 61 wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet. 62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people. 64 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection. 65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just. 66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. 67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. 69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.

v50-70 The highest, or celestial glory is described. The people described here are those who participate in the First Resurrection, or the resurrection of the just. Contrast this with the description we just had of the suffering of those who are sons of perdition.

This section of text is a series of thematic definitions regarding the quality of celestial persons (v. 50, 70). They accept Christ and endure to the end (v. 51-53), they are the royal Priesthood (v. 54-57), they will be exalted and made gods with all others beneath them (v. 58-62), they participate in the first resurrection and will accompany Christ in the Second Coming at the Apocalypse (v. 63-67), their names are written in heaven and have their sins cleansed by the Grace of Christ (v. 68-69).

v51-59 describes the quality of these people in mortality (v. 51-53) and their inheritance in eternity (v. 54-70).

This section of text brings together a long list of rhetorical cues to celestial quality people from other texts. In so doing, one can cross reference back to the original source

and positively identify them as celestial quality. The cross references in the footnotes are thorough, so I won't attempt to identify them.

v60 As Christ overcame all things, specifically sin and death, so will those whom Christ claims per v. 59.

v61 Mankind is not exalted by their own actions or merits, they are exalted by the merit, mercy, and grace of Christ, who is God's. Thus, the glory is God's and we are to acknowledge it.

71 And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament.

72 Behold, these are they who died without law; 73 And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; 74 who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it. 75 These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men.

76 These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness. 77 These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father. 78 Wherefore, they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun. 79 These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God.

80 And now this is the end of the vision which we saw of the terrestrial, that the Lord commanded us to write while we were yet in the Spirit.

v71-80 Those of terrestrial quality are characterized. One interesting thing to note is there is no explicit statement on when these persons are resurrected as is the case with celestial and telestial persons. This ambiguity may be because of dependency of their final status upon their reaction to post-mortal proselyting (v. 73). If they accept it then they end up with the celestial crowd, if they reject it then they end up staying in terrestrial glory and presumably participate in the Second Resurrection.

Terrestrial glory is less than that of the celestial (v. 71). The Law neither supports them (i.e., they aren't children less than 8, or adults who aren't accountable) nor condemns them

(i.e., they aren't deliberately rebellious) (v. 72). They were formerly in Spirit Prison and bound for Telestial Glory, but were ministered to in the Spirit world and accepted it (v. 73). While alive they did not listen to the gospel but were ministered to in the Spirit world and heard and accepted it (v. 74). They are good people who were not deliberately rebellious and not gross sinners, like those behaviors explicitly identified as Telestial behaviors in v. 103.

They heard the gospel in the flesh but didn't receive it until the Spirit world (v. 75). They get more than Telestial, but less than Celestial (v. 76). After the resurrection they will be in the presence of the Son but not the Father (v. 77). The analogy from 1 Cor. 15 is placed in context (v. 78). They did not accept the gospel in mortality so they do not get Celestial glory (v. 79). The vision of Terrestrial glory concludes (v. 80).

v72 "these are they who died without law", I take this to mean they were not presented with the law, they did not accept it when it was presented, or they were not covered by it (i.e., children or not accountable) in mortal probation. This verse appears to be a paraphrase of Romans 2:12.

v74 Especially compare D&C 138:32-35.

v75 "blinded", this probably has reference to self-imposed blindness per Isa. 6:9-10, where the listeners were just going along with the crowd and accepting things that were convenient. As v. 74 indicates, they heard the gospel in the flesh but didn't receive it until the Spirit world.

81 And again, we saw the glory of the telestial, which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon in the firmament. 82 These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. 83 These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit. 84 These are they who are thrust down to hell. 85 These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.

86 These are they who receive not of his fulness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial; 87 And the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial. 88 And also the telestial receive it of the administering of angels who are appointed to minister for them, or who are appointed to be ministering spirits for

them; for they shall be heirs of salvation.

89 And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding; 90 And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it. 91 And thus we saw the glory of the terrestrial which excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion. 92 And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things--where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever; 93 Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever. 94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace; 95 And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion. 96 And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one. 97 And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.

98 And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; 99 For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. 100 These are they who say they are some of one and some of another--some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; 101 But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant. 102 Last of all, these all are they who will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud. 103 These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. 104 These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth. 105 These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. 106 These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fulness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work; 107 when he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. 108 Then shall he be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign forever and ever. 109 But behold, and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore; 110 And heard the voice of the Lord saying: These all shall bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess to him who sits upon the throne forever and ever; 111 For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared; 112 And they shall be servants

of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end.

v81-112 Those of telestial quality are described. Similar to the description of the celestial quality persons, a series of rhetorical cues from other texts are presented in order to identify who these persons are.

v83 indicates that these persons are not including sons of perdition as detailed in v. 30-49.

v86-98 is a parenthetical interlude on the ministering of angels according to their respective glories (v. 86-88), as well as the respective glories attendant to the kingdoms (v. 89-98). It seems like a curious location for a parenthesis on these subjects, but the intent is probably to emphasize that even the telestial kingdom has glory associated with it that defies description (v. 89). Thus it is further differentiated from those in perdition beyond the statement in v. 83.

v87 The ministration of the celestial to the terrestrial would presumably be by those angels described in D&C 132:16-17.

v99-105 carries on the theme of v. 98, picks up from v. 85 and continues the identification of various rhetorical cues to who is in the telestial quality.

v106-108 describes when the people of telestial quality will be made to suffer for their actions in mortality. On the Day of the Lord (i.e. the Second Advent) the wicked will be destroyed and the second phase of the First Resurrection will commence. Those not qualifying for the First Resurrection will be thrust down to suffer during the Millennium until the Second Resurrection when they will be redeemed.

v109-112 The fate of those in the telestial glory. They still inherit mansions prepared for them by the Father, but where the Father is they cannot go.

v112 "worlds without end", an archaic English term used in the KJV, cf. Isa. 45:17, Eph. 3:21. It would be better rendered "to all generations forever and ever", cp. D&C 97:28. The general meaning intended to convey is "without end" or "forever and ever".

113 This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. 114 But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; 115 which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; 116 Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; 117 To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; 118 That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. 119 And to God and the Lamb be glory, and honor, and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

v113-119 The conclusion. Note v. 113 says that this is the end of the material which they saw and were commanded to write. Then v. 115-118 goes on to say they saw things were they were not permitted to write. Not only that, but they are incapable of writing it as it is only perceived by the Spirit of revelation.

v114 "the mysteries of his kingdom", one of the hidden mysteries was just revealed, cp. v. 7.

v119 The revelation is closed by following the counsel of v. 61.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 76

Smith and Rigdon were staying at John Johnson's (Elsa Johnson, who is John's wife, had a painfully rheumatic arm which was healed by Smith) home in an effort to have some peace and quiet, so they could continue to "translate" the Bible.

There were apparently about a dozen men present during this process, presumably just observing. Whether the men were present for the entire time, or came and went over time is unclear. Of these men the only one we are certain of is Philo Dibble, although we might safely assume some of them were Johnson himself, and perhaps his sons Luke or Lyman. The others may have been local believers or in the area as a result of the conference held some two weeks earlier at Amherst, Ohio.

It is plain from various journal accounts the contents of this revelation were hard for some members to accept, leading some to leave the Church. The two doctrinal points that likely caused consternation would have been first, that there is a near-universal redemption for mankind (e.g, all mankind except sons of perdition inherit varying amounts of glory), and second that mankind could be exalted (cf. v. 95).

The historical context of this revelation is that it occurred after the [First Great Awakening](#) and during the [Second Great Awakening](#). At a high level the First Great Awakening was a reaction to the [Age of Enlightenment](#) and the material prosperity and wealth of the newly founded American nation that had embraced capitalism and mercantilism, throwing off the prior colonial subservience to England. Religious leaders saw American culture as falling prey to secularism and [Deism](#). The result is a movement to revive American religious sentiment by reminding people of their personal responsibilities towards God. The movement heavily influenced American Protestantism and tended to emphasize the threat of Hell to the unrepentant and unconverted. One of the more influential sermons was Jonathan Edwards' [Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God](#), which provides context of where preachers were at during this time. The modern stereotype of Protestant hellfire and brimstone preaching has its origin in this movement.

With a highly emotional emphasis on the danger individuals faced of an eternity of infernal suffering, it is not hard to see why the contents of D&C 76 would be contrary to what many of the early converts to the LDS Church had learned, coming up through the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian churches.

The doctrine of exaltation is also something that would have very likely been entirely new and alien. This doctrine is something the Church is regularly attacked on to this day, despite it being eminently Biblical. Relatively few churches recognize this doctrine at all (they tend to refer to it as [divinization](#)), don't teach it over the pulpit, and see it with a considerably different viewpoint from us.

This section was known as "The Vision" among the contemporary Saints. To us, we see the First Vision as being the pivotal revelation in the Restoration. But, for those early Saints, the First Vision had not been composed yet as we know it, and wouldn't be published as such for year. The importance and theological weight of this revelation is hard to understate, as it addresses major theological existential themes. Among the early Saints, it was something not to be shared causally with those early in the stages of being proselyted into the Church.

The first excerpts below are Smith's comments on the revelation. The second is the testimony of Philo Dibble who witnessed first-hand the revelation to Smith and Rigdon, and was not a baptized member at the time of his witnessing. Third are some comments from Brigham Young, first on his own reaction to the revelation and then a comment on the general reaction of the Church. The final two are journal entries by two traveling Elders who attempted to set the church in order after some refused to accept D&C 76.

This section was first published in the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 2, pages 10-11, dated July 1832. It was then published in the Evening and Morning Star reprint at Kirtland, volume 1, number 2, pages 27-30, dated February 1835. It was then published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 225-231.

Excerpts from History of the Church

Upon my return from Amherst conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled. It appeared self-evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body the term "Heaven," as intended for

the Saints' eternal home must include more kingdoms than one. Accordingly, on the 16th of February, 1832, while translating St. John's Gospel, myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision:

[text of D&C 76 quoted]

Nothing could be more pleasing to the Saints upon the order of the kingdom of the Lord, than the light which burst upon the world through the foregoing vision. Every law, every commandment, every promise, every truth, and every point touching the destiny of man, from Genesis to Revelation, where the purity of the scriptures remains unsullied by the folly of men, go to show the perfection of the theory [of different degrees of glory in the future life] and witnesses the fact that that document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world. The sublimity of the ideas; the purity of the language; the scope for action; the continued duration for completion, in order that the heirs of salvation may confess the Lord and bow the knee; the rewards for faithfulness, and the punishments for sins, are so much beyond the narrow-mindedness of men, that every honest man is constrained to exclaim: "*It came from God.*" (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, pages 245-253)

Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob's ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 5, page 402)

Excerpts from The Juvenile Instructor

On a subsequent visit to Hiram, I arrived at Father Johnson's just as Joseph and Sidney were coming out of the vision alluded to in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, in which mention is made of the three glories. Joseph wore black clothes, but at this time seemed to be dressed in an element of glorious white, and his face shone as if it were transparent, but I did not see the same glory attending Sidney. Joseph appeared as strong as a lion, but Sidney seemed as weak as water, and Joseph noticing his condition smiled and said, "Brother Sidney is not as used to it as I am." (Philo Dibble's

Narrative, 1882, published by the office of The Juvenile Instructor)

Joseph and Sidney were in the spirit and saw the heavens open, there were other men in the room, perhaps twelve, among whom I was one during a part of the time--probably two-thirds of the time,--I saw the glory and felt the power, but did not see the vision.

The events and conversation, while they were seeing what is written (and many things were seen and related that are not written), I will relate as minutely as is necessary.

Joseph would, at intervals, say: 'What do I see?' as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, 'I see the same.' Presently Sidney would say 'what do I see?' and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, 'I see the same.'

This manner of conversation was repeated at short intervals to the end of the vision, and during the whole time not a word was spoken by any other person. Not a sound nor motion made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision.

Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked, smilingly, 'Sidney is not used to it as I am'. (Quotation of Philo Dibble, The Juvenile Instructor, May 15, 1892, pages 303-304)

Excerpt from Journal of Discourses

You can understand, from the few remarks I make with regard to the Gospel, that many things which were revealed through Joseph came in contact with our own prejudices: we did not know how to understand them. I refer to myself for an instance: I never could be persuaded that God would send every person to a lake of fire and brimstone, to be tormented by the Devil, to all eternity, for any little sin he might commit,--which was the doctrine handed down. After all, my traditions were such, that when the Vision came first to me, it was directly contrary and opposed to my former education. I said, Wait a little. I did not reject it; but I could not understand it. I then could feel what incorrect tradition had done for me. Suppose all that I have

ever heard from my priest and parents--the way they taught me to read the Bible--had been true, my understanding would be diametrically opposed to the doctrine revealed in the Vision. I used to think and pray, to read and think, until I knew and fully understood it for myself, by the visions of the Holy Spirit. At first it actually came in contact with my own feelings, though I never could believe like the mass of the Christian world around me; but I did not know how high I believed, as they did. I found, however, that I was so high, I could shake hands with them any time I wished. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 6, page 281)

The Latter-day Saints need talking to a great deal--they need continual preaching and instruction upon almost everything. I am happy to say there is an improvement, still I hear of strife, brother going to law with brother, contention in families and in the community. This should not be. Have we not learned yet to be meek and lowly? Are we not willing to receive and abide the providences of God with patience? How many are willing to do this as they should? But very few. That disposition that came from the fall is planted in our hearts, and will occasionally arise in the bosom. Will we ever get experience enough so that we can overcome these temptations that arise in the heart, so that we can say good-bye to the fashions and follies of the world, and instead of them imbibe good and wholesome principles? Certainly we will; this is what we are after. The Latter-day Saints must learn to be one in Christ. We are one in the ordinances and doctrines; one in the ordinances of baptism, the laying on of hands, the administration of the sacrament, the blessing of children, the ordinations of the Priesthood, the endowment; also in the baptism for the dead, though this was a trial for some at the first. When God revealed to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that there was a place prepared for all, according to the light they had received and their rejection of evil and practice of good, it was a great trial to many, and some apostatized because God was not going to send to everlasting punishment heathens and infants, but had a place of salvation, in due time, for all and would bless the honest and virtuous and truthful, whether they ever belonged to any church or not. It was a new doctrine to this generation, and many stumbled at it, but Joseph continued to receive revelation upon revelation, ordinance upon ordinance, truth upon truth, until he obtained all that was necessary for the salvation of the human family. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Vol.

Excerpt from Journal of John Murdock

24th [April 1833] arrived at Bro. [Brother] Lyon's near Warsaw. We met with the Brethren--Lyman Johnson, Orson Pratt, Sylvester Smith, and Harper Riggs. We held a number of meetings in this region of country together. Continued till near the 1st of May. Brother Z. being sick which terminated in smallpox that he caught at James Town; And I left him in the care of Bro. [Brother] Lyons, and on the 1st of May Bro. L. [Brother Lyman] Johnson came to me in the morning from Geneseo, and said that he and Bro. [Brother] Orson Pratt had been to Geneseo, visited Ezra Landen, Elder, who denied the vision in the Book of Covenants and some of the revelations, and a number of the Church joined him. They wanted me to go and help deal with them. Bro. [Brother] Rich and myself went with him.

We met Bro. [Brother] Landen in conference, 6 o'clock afternoon, four High Priests forming the council viz: Bros. [Brothers] Rich, Lyman, Orson and myself. I acted as moderator and opened the conference by dedicating ourselves in prayer to the Lord. Bro. [Brother] Orson laid the case before the conference, by stating that Bro. [Brother] Landen said "the vision was of the devil," And that he did not believe it, any more than he believed the devil was crucified, and many like things which Bro. [Brother] Lyman witnessed too. Landen stated that he would not have the vision taught in the Church for one thousand dollars and was very much opposed. Landen rose after this statement and thanked God that he was permitted to speak for himself, and was quite haughty about it, and with a wining [whining] sectarian tone tried to work up sympathy in us and everyone present, by telling the sacrifices he had made, the hardships he had endured, and the good he had done for the cause.

I answered him, "He had told us quite a story but what did it all amount to?"

It was true I had made as great sacrifice as perhaps he had made, but this was nothing to the case. Ezra Booth also suffered privations and hardship and travelled through Missouri, and afterwards denied the revelations and was cut off from the Church. Landen became ashamed and I exhorted him to repent. He became bound in spirit and was willing to be taught the vision.

We adjourned till next morning at eight o'clock and met agreeable to adjournment.

Brother Orson led in explanation of the vision and the other revelations. Myself and Brother Lyman followed. We continued till after 12, dismissed and came together at one. Brother Landen acknowledged the things we taught. Brother Orson said he did not like his confession for it seemed to be exhorted from him, but Brother Landen confessed that he had talked hard to the brethren, asked them forgiveness, said that he heartily received all that we taught and would teach it to the Church, and said he would not for two thousand dollars be set back where he was when we came to him. We allowed him to stand in his office and a good portion of the Church met that afternoon and we taught the same things to the Church and they promised obedience to them and to all the commandments of the Lord, and the Spirit attended. (John Murdock, 1792-1864, <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/JMurdock.html>)

Excerpt from Journal of Orson Pratt

September 16th [1833]. I left Bolton for Kirtland and providentially came across [brother?] ether Lyman in Utica. We both took the stage until we came near to Geneseo. We then went to visit the Church in that place and some of the brethren received not our teachings, among whom was Brother Landen, a high priest. (Orson Pratt, 1811-1838, <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/OPratt.html>)

Comments on the Etymology of the Word "Telestial"

Regarding the origin of the word "telestial", it is not entirely clear where Smith obtained the term. He never comments on the origin of the word, he simply starts using it. We are left to guess at where the word came from and where its meaning was derived.

Below is an entry from [A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles](#), the predecessor of the Oxford Dictionary of English, volume 9, part 2, page 146, edited by James A. H. Murray, et al. The "c" before a number means "circa" and the number is the Anno Domini date of the text. The noun and verb forms of "tele" follow:

Tele, tel, sb. *Obs.* Forms: 1 tael, 4 tel, teyl, 5 tele. [OE. *tael* fem. (also *tal*: see TOLE) allurement. OTeut. *taela* str. fem., had app. some such general sense as 'hostile or malevolent attack, persecution', which the specialized senses in the various langs. See also TELE v.

1. Evil speaking, detraction, calumny, blame.

c 897 K. AELFRED *Gregory's Past.* C. xxxiii. 222 AElc *dweora*, & aelc ierre..& tael sie anumem fram eow. a 1000 *Gloss.* in Wr. Wulker 196/16 *Blasphemia*, *uituperatio*, tael. *Ibid.* 220/23. 1303 R. BRUNNE *Handl. Synne* 2042 But bogh a man sey neuer so weyl Vunto hys sawys men fynden teyl.

2. Deceit; enticement, allurement.

c 1300 *Havelok* 191 he sholde yemen hire wel With-uten lac, with-uten tel Til bat she were tuelf winter hold. a 1450 MYRC *Par. Pr.* 368 So with cha[r]mes & wyth tele, He ys I-brozte azeyn to hele.

Tele, v. *Obs.* Forms: 1 taelan (telan), 2-3 taelen (3 (*Orm.*) taelenn, 3-5 tellen), 2-4 telen, 3-4 tele. [OE. (WSax.) *taelan* (*Angl. telan*) = ON. *taela* to deceive, betray, entice : - Oteaut. *taeljan*, f. *taela*: see TELE sb. Cf. OHG. *Zalon* (: - *taelojan*) to rob, pillage.]

1. *trans.* To speak evil of, or to; to revile, calumniate; to mock, scorn, deride.

c 888 K. AELFRED *Boeth.* xxxviii. ~s~ 3 lc wolde undeawas taelen & goode herian. c 890 *Laws K. AElfred* c. 37 Netael du dunne Drhyten. a 900 *Kentish Gloss.* in Wr.-Wulker 55/19 *Et detraxerunt*, and his teldan. *Ibid* 76/31 *Detrahent* telad. c 950 *Lindsif. Gosp.* John xii. 48 Sede mec telles [c 975 *Rushw.* teled]. 10.. *Glosses* (Cott. Cleop.) in Wr. Wulker 373/26 *Carpere*, telan. c 1160 *Hatton Gosp.* Luke xiv. 29 Ealle be hit zeseod aginned hine taelen [*Ags. Gosp.* taelen]. c 1200 ORMIN 2039-40 Ziff batt tu will taelen me be birrd ec hire taelenn. a 1250 *Prov, AElfred* 237 in O.E. *Misc.* 116 Byfore he be meneb by-hynde he be teleb. c 1490 *Prompt. Parv.* 488/1 (MS. K.) Tellynge, or grochyng, *murmuracio*.

2. To deceive, entrap [cf. ON. *taela* to betray].

c 1325 *Metr. Hom.* (1862) 12 His [Christ's] godhed in fleis was felid Als hok in bait, quare thoru he telid The fend, that telid our fadir Adam. *Ibid.* 152 That he no haf miht us to tele With gastly dranc and wit darnele. 13.. *Metr, Hom.* (Vernon MS.) in Herrig's *Archiv* LVII. 276 But faste he fondeb mon to tele. Vre lord vs schilde from his teolyng. Hence Teling *vbl.* sb. (also 3 teolunge, 4-yng, teliinge, 4-5 telyng, teeling), deception, sorcery, withcraft. a 1225 *Ancr. R.* 208 Sigaldren, & false teolunges, leuunge on ore & swefness & alle wichchecreftes. c 1315 *SHOREHAM* iii. 178 By-lef bou in no wychecraft, Ne ine none teliinge. 13.. [see TELE v. 2]. 1387 *TREVISA Higden* (Rolls) iii. 343 He triste on his endyngge [*v.r.* enditynge] and tellynges [*v.rr.* teelingis, telyngs. tellyngys] as olde wifes used. a 1450 *MYRC Par. Pr.* 360 Wychcrafte and telynge. c 1480 [see TELE v. 1].

Note the two scripture quotes above are John 12:48, using a judgement to condemnation theme, and Luke 14:29, using a mockery theme. Both of these themes fall in closely with Smith's usage of the term "telestial". Also note the rhyme from the circa 1450 *MYRC* where the word "tele" is placed in parallel with hell:

So with cha[r]mes & wyth tele,
He ys I-brozte azeyn to hele.

Regarding the celestial/terrestrial/telestial triplet, a very similar heavenly/earthly/hellish is found throughout the Bible. The original triplet occurs in the Genesis Creation account of Gen. 1:6-10.

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. 9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Each time God gives a name to the creations He has made. They are "Heaven", "Earth", "Seas", the "seas" being below the earth. (As a side note, the sun, moon, stars triplet employed by Paul in 1 Cor. 15 also has its origin in the Creation account, cf. Gen. 1:16.)

The heaven/earth/seas triplet is subsequently used

elsewhere in the Scriptures, as in Exod. 20:4.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

It appears in Isa. 44:23.

Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

And it also appears in Psalms 148.

1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights! 2 Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host! 3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! 4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. 6 And he established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

8 fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command! 9 Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! 10 Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! 11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! 12 Young men and maidens together, old men and children!

All of creation is addressed from the heavenly heights (v. 2-6), to the lowest depths (v. 7) and the all things on the land (v. 8-12) as well. Paul uses the triplet as well in Philipp. 2:10.

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Given the repeated appearances it is plain the triplet of heavenly/earthly/hellish is one that is not a novelty by Smith. Thus, we can see that while Smith's term "telestial" is something of a novelty, the root "tele" preceded him and the triplet he forms with it is eminently Biblical.

Poetical Commentary on Substance of Doctrine & Covenants 76

The text below is a quotation of text from Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 6, published Feb. 1, 1843. The second section of poetry is commentary by Joseph Smith on a number of subjects treated in D&C 76 (cf. stanzas 11-15). As Smith is commenting on the substance of D&C 76, a number of the comments he makes shed additional light on that text. Of particular note is stanza 15 wherein Smith explicitly identifies John 5:29 as the initial springboard of the revelation.

It is unclear if W. W. Phelps is the actual author of this poetical arrangement, and he deferred to Smith as the original author of D&C 76, or whether Smith himself actually did the poetical arrangement. If it was Smith, it is the only example of him writing this kind of poetical arrangement.

ANCIENT POETRY.

The following very curious poetic composition, is at once both novel and interesting; for while the common landmarks of modern poetry are entirely disregarded; there is something so dignified and exalted conveyed in the ideas of this production, that it cannot fail to strike the attention of every superficial observer.

Uncontrolled by the narrow limits of this earth, and raised above all sublunary objects, his mind soars aloft unto other kingdoms, unravels the secrets of eternity, and contemplates the organization of worlds, in other spheres: the destiny of the living, the dying, and the dead are developed; together with the laws that govern other worlds, and the state of their inhabitants; the "heavens of heavens," open before his gaze, and the celestial kingdom; the habitation of the great "I Am," with all its resplendent, brilliant, and dazzling glory, bursts upon his sight. The Celestial, the Terrestrial and the Telesstial worlds, with all their magnificence and beauty are open to his view; whilst the various states of their respective inhabitants, are presented before his vision. The dark and gloomy abodes of the departed lost, are also unlocked, and their confusion, and misery developed. Our poet seems to be perfectly at home among heavenly worlds, and converses about their proceedings with as much familiarity as one could do about his domestic economy. He unlocked great, and important principles which were indeed made known to the ancients; but which have been hid for ages: and when we contemplate the things that are unfolded we shall be led to say with Paul, "great is the mystery of godliness."

Concerning the style of the poetry, there seems to be a native simplicity, a brilliance of thought, and an originality in the composition, that can only be equaled in the oracles of truth; and by those who profess the same spirit; and when the muse of those ancient poets was fired by the spirit of God, and they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, there was a richness a dignity and a brilliancy of ideas; and an exuberance of thought

that ran through all their productions, as in the fascinating beauties of poesy they rolled forth the words of eternal life, with all their richness, and dignity, and glory; while at the same time they paid little or no attention to the rules of poetic composition. Let the curtains of heaven be withdrawn, and the purposes and glories of the eternal world burst upon his view and the dry forms, and simple jingling of poetry, alone, will be very dry and insipid to the enlarged and enlightened understanding of a man of God.

On this subject we quote the following from the learned Rev. John Brown: "The songs of Moses, Deborah, and Hannah, the prayer of Hezekiah, and Habakkuk, if not also of Mary and Zacharias, Exod. xv., Judg. v., 1 Sam. ii., Isaiah, xxxviii., Hab. iii., Luke i., and the Psalms, most of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations, appear to be of the poetic kind. But after all the pains of the learned, we cannot understand the rules of their metre; nor can we say if they attended to any fixed rules; and the truth is, no rules in the world will render a man a true poet, who has not a proper stock of imagery and fire in his own mind. Besides the unequalled fire and bold strokes of imagery in scripture poems, their principal excellency is their being calculated to promote the honor of God, and the everlasting happiness of mankind."-(Dic. of the Bible.

The last principle mentioned by Mr. Brown is certainly very clearly developed in the poetry of Mr. Smith; and whatever may have been the preconceived opinion of Justin Butterfield Esq., we are persuaded that he will now be convinced that the modern Prophets can prophecy in poetry, as well as the ancient prophets and that no difference, even of that kind any longer exists.-[ED.

FROM W. W. PHELPS TO JOSEPH SMITH:
THE PROPHET.

VADE MECUM, (TRANSLATED.) GO WITH ME.

Go with me, will you go to the saints that have died,-
To the next, better world, where the righteous reside;
Where the angels and spirits in harmony be
In the joys of a vast paradise? Go with me.
Go with me where the truth and the virtues prevail;
Where the union is one, and the years never fail;
Not a heart can conceive, nor a nat'ral eye see
What the Lord has prepar'd for the just. Go with me.
Go with me where there is no destruction or war;
Neither tyrants, or sland'ers, or nations ajar;
Where the system is perfect, and happiness free,

And the life is eternal with God. Go with me.
Go with me, will you go to the mansions above,
Where the bliss, and the knowledge, the light, and the love,
And the glory of God do eternally be?-
Death, the wages of sin, is not there. Go with me.
Nauvoo, January, 1843.

THE ANSWER.

TO W. W. PHELPS, ESQ.

A Vision.

1. I will go, I will go, to the home of the Saints,
Where the virtue's the value, and life the reward;
But before I return to my former estate
I must fulfil the mission I had from the Lord.
2. Wherefore, hear, O ye heavens, and give ear O ye earth;
And rejoice ye inhabitants truly again;
For the Lord he is God, and his life never ends,
And besides him there ne'er was a Saviour of men.
3. His ways are a wonder; his wisdom is great;
The extent of his doings, there's none can unveil;
His purposes fail not; from age unto age
He still is the same, and his years never fail.
4. His throne is the heavens, his life time is all
Of eternity now, and eternity then;
His union is power, and none stays his hand,-
The Alpha, Omega, for ever: Amen.
5. For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,
I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those
that fear me, and life for the life that's to come;
My delight is to honor the saints with repose;
6. That serve me in righteousness true to the end;
Eternal's their glory, and great their reward;
I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them,-
Tho' great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd-
7. From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth.
And for ages to come unto them I will show
My pleasure & will, what my kingdom will do:
Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.
8. Great things of the future I'll show unto them,
Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;
for their wisdom and glory shall be very great,
And their pure understanding extend to the skies:
9. And before them the wisdom of wise men shall cease,
And the nice understanding of prudent ones fail!
For the light of my spirit shall light mine elect,
And the truth is so mighty 't will ever prevail.
10. And the secrets and plans of my will I'll reveal;
The sanctified pleasures when earth is renew'd,
What the eye hath not seen, nor the earth hath yet heard;
Nor the heart of the natural man ever hath view'd.
11. I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,
And the eyes of the inner man truly did see
Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,
Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.
12. Those things which the Father ordained of old,
Before the world was, or a system had run,-
Through Jesus the Maker and Savior of all;

- The only begotten, (Messiah) his son.
13. Of whom I bear record, as all prophets have,
And the record I bear is the fulness,-yea even
The truth of the gospel of Jesus-the Christ,
With whom I convers'd, in the vision of heav'n.
 14. For while in the act of translating his word,
Which the Lord in his grace had appointed to me,
I came to the gospel recorded by John,
Chapter fifth and the twenty ninth verse,
which you'll see.
Which was given as follows:
"Speaking of the resurrection of the dead,-
"Concerning those who shall hear the voice of
"the son of man-
"And shall come forth:-
"They who have done good in the resurrection of the just.
"And they who have done evil in the resurrection of the just.
"And they who have done evil in the resurrection of the unjust."
 15. I marvel'd at these resurrections, indeed!
For it came unto me by the spirit direct:-
And while I did meditate what it all meant,
The Lord touch'd the eyes of my own intellect:-
 16. Hosanna forever! they open'd anon,
And the glory of God shone around where I was;
And there was the Son, at the Father's right hand,
In a fulness of glory, and holy applause.
 17. I beheld round the throne, holy angels and hosts,
And sanctified beings from worlds that have been,
In holiness worshipping God and the Lamb,
Forever and ever, amen and amen!
 18. And now after all of the proofs made of him,
By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,
This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea he lives!
And sits at the right hand of God, on his throne.
 19. And I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav'n,
He's the Saviour, and only begotten of God-
By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,
Even all that career in the heavens so broad,
 20. Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons,
By the very same truths, and the very same pow'rs.
 21. And I saw and bear record of warfare in heav'n;
For an angel of light, in authority great,
Rebell'd against Jesus, and sought for his pow'r,
But was thrust down to woe from his Godified state.
 22. And the heavens all wept, and the tears drop'd like dew,
That Lucifer, son of the morning had fell!
Yea, is fallen! is fall'n, and become, Oh, alas!
The sons of Perdition; the devil of hell!
 23. And while I was yet in the spirit of truth,
The commandment was: write ye the vision all out;
For Satan, old serpent, the devil's for war,-

- And yet will encompass the saints round about.
24. And I saw, too, the suff'ring and mis'ry of those,
 (Overcome by the devil, in warfare and fight,)
 - In hell fire, and vengeance, the doom of the damn'd;
 - For the Lord said, the vision is further: so write.
 25. For thus saith the Lord, now concerning all those
 - Who know of my power and partake of the same;
 - And suffer themselves, that they be overcome
 - By the power of Satan; despising my name:-
 26. Defying my power, and denying the truth;-
 - They are they-of the world, or of men, most forlorn,
 - The Sons of Perdition, of whom, ah! I say,
 - 'T were better for them had they never been born!
 27. They're vessels of wrath, and dishonor to God,
 - Doom'd to suffer his wrath, in the regions of woe,
 - Through the terrific night of eternity's round,
 - With the devil and all of his angels below:
 28. Of whom it is said, no forgiveness is giv'n,
 - In this world, alas! nor the world that's to come;
 - for they have denied the spirit of God.
 - After having receiv'd it: and mis'ry's their doom.
 29. And denying the only begotten of God,-
 - And crucify him to themselves, as they do,
 - And openly put him to shame in their flesh,
 - By gospel they cannot repentance renew.
 30. They are they, who must go to the great lake of fire,
 - Which burneth with brimstone, yet never consumes,
 - And dwell with the devil, and angels of his,
 - While eternity goes and eternity comes.
 31. They are they, who must groan through the
 - great second death,
 - And are not redeemed in the time of the Lord;
 - While all the rest are, through the triumph of Christ,
 - Made partakers of grace, by the power of his word.
 32. The myst'ry of Godliness truly is great;-
 - The past, and the present, and what is to be;
 - And this is the gospel-glad tidings to all,
 - Which the voice from the heavens bore record to me:
 33. That he came to the world in the middle of time,
 - To lay down his life for his friends and his foes,
 - And bear away sin as a mission of love;
 - And sanctify earth for a blessed repose.
 34. 'Tis decreed, that he'll save all the work of his hands,
 - And sanctify them by his own precious blood;
 - And purify earth for the Sabbath of rest,
 - By the agent of fire, as it was by the flood.
 35. The Savior will save all his Father did give,
 - Even all that he gave in the regions abroad,
 - Save the Sons of Perdition: They're lost; ever lost,
 - And can never return to the presence of God.
 36. They are they, who must reign with the devil in hell,
 - In eternity now, and eternity then,
 - Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd;-

- And the punishment still, is eternal. Amen.
37. And which is the torment apostates receive,
But the end, or the place where the torment began,
Save to them who are made to partake of the same,
Was never, nor will be, revealed unto man.
 38. Yet God shows by vision a glimpse of their fate,
And straightway he closes the scene that was shown:
So the width, or the depth, or the misery thereof,
Save to those that partake, is forever unknown.
 39. And while I was pondering, the vision was closed;
And the voice said to me, write the vision: for lo!
'Tis the end of the scene of the sufferings of those,
Who remain filthy still in their anguish and woe.
 40. And again I bear record of heavenly things,
Where virtue's the value, above all that's pric'd
Of the truth of the gospel concerning the just,
That rise in the first resurrection of Christ.
 41. Who receiv'd and believ'd, and repented likewise,
And then were baptiz'd, as a man always was,
Who ask'd and receiv'd a remission of sin,
And honored the kingdom by keeping its laws.
 42. Being buried in water, as Jesus had been,
And keeping the whole of his holy commands,
They received the gift of the spirit of truth,
by the ordinance truly of laying on hands.
 43. For these overcome, by their faith and their works,
Being tried in their life time, as purified gold,
And seal'd by the spirit of promise, to life,
By men called of God, as was Aaron of old.
 44. They are they, of the church of the firstborn of God,-
And unto whose hands he committeth all things;
For they hold the keys of the kingdom of heav'n,
And reign with the Savior, as priests, and as kings.
 45. They're priests of the order of Melchisedek,
Like Jesus, (from whom is this highest reward,)
Receiving a fulness of glory and light;
As written: They're Gods; even sons of the Lord.
 46. So all things are theirs; yea, of life, or of death;
Yea, whether things now, or to come, all are theirs,
And they are the Savior's, and he is the Lord's,
Having overcome all, as eternity's heirs.
 47. 'Tis wisdom that man never glory in man,
but give God the glory for all that he hath;
For the righteous will walk in the presence of God,
While the wicked are trod under foot in his wrath.
 48. Yea, the righteous shall dwell in the presence of God,
And of Jesus, forever, from earth's second birth-
For when he comes down in the splendor of heav'n,
All these he'll bring with him, to reign on the earth.
 49. These are they that arise in their bodies of flesh,
When the trump of the first resurrection shall sound;
These are they that come up to Mount Zion, in life,
Where the blessings and gifts of the spirit abound.

50. These are they that have come to the heavenly place;
To the numberless courses of angels above:
To the cif God; e'en the holiest of all,
And the home of the blessed, the fountain of love:
51. To the church of old Enoch, and of the first born:
And gen'ral assembly of ancient renown'd.
Whose names are all kept in the archives of heav'n,
As chosen and faithful, and fit to be crown'd.
52. These are they that are perfect through Jesus' own blood,
Whose bodies celestial are mention'd by Paul,
Where the sun is the typical glory thereof,
And God, and his Christ, are the true judge of all.
53. Again I beheld the terrestrial world,
In the order and glory of Jesus, go on;
'Twas not as the church of the first born of God,
But shone in its place, as the moon to the sun.
54. Behold, these are they that have died without law;
The heathen of ages that never had hope,
And those of the region and shadow of death,
The spirits in prison, that light has brought up.
55. To spirits in prison the Savior once preach'd,
And taught them the gospel, with powers afresh;
And then were the living baptiz'd for their dead,
That they might be judg'd as if men in the flesh.
56. These are they that are hon'orable men of the earth;
Who were blinded and dup'd by the cunning of men:
They receiv'd not the truth of the Savior at first;
But did, when they heard it in prison, again.
57. Not valiant for truth, they obtain'd not the crown,
But are of that glory that's typ'd by the moon:
They are they, that come into the presence of Christ,
But not to the fulness of God, on his throne.
58. Again I beheld the telestial, as third,
The lesser, or starry world, next in its place.
For the leaven must leaven three measures of meal,
And every knee bow that is subject to grace.
59. These are they that receiv'd not the gospel of Christ,
Or evidence, either, that he ever was;
As the stars are all diff'rent in glory and light.
So differs the glory of these by the laws.
60. These are they that deny not the spirit of God,
But are thrust down to hell, with the devil, for sins,
As hypocrites, liars, whoremongers, and thieves,
And stay 'till the last resurrection begins.
61. 'Till the Lamb shall have finish'd the work he begun;
Shall have trodden the wine press, in fury alone,
And overcome all by the pow'r of his might:
He conquers to conquer, and save all his own.
62. These are they that receive not a fulness of light,
From Christ, in eternity's world, where they are,
The terrestrial sends them the Comforter, though;
And minist'ring angels, to happify there.
63. And so the telestial is minister'd to,

- By ministers from the terrestrial one,
 As terrestrial is, from the celestial throne;
 And the great, greater, greatest, seem's stars, moon, and sun.
64. And thus I beheld, in the vision of heav'n,
 The telestial glory, dominion and bliss,
 Surpassing the great understanding of men,-
 Unknown, save reveal'd, in a world vain as this.
65. And lo, I beheld the terrestrial, too,
 Which excels the telestial in glory and light,
 In splendor, and knowledge, and wisdom, and joy,
 In blessings, and graces, dominion and might.
66. I beheld the celestial, in glory sublime;
 Which is the most excellent kingdom that is,-
 Where God, e'en the Father, in harmony reigns;
 Almighty, supreme, and eternal, in bliss.
67. Where the church of the first born in union reside,
 And they see as they're seen, and they know as they're known;
 Being equal in power, dominion and might,
 With a fulness of glory and grace, round his throne.
68. The glory celestial is one like the sun;
 The glory terrestr'al is one like the moon;
 The glory telestial is one like the stars,
 And all harmonize like the parts of a tune.
69. As the stars are all different in lustre and size,
 So the telestial region, is mingled in bliss;
 From least unto greatest, and greatest to least,
 The reward is exactly as promis'd in this.
70. These are they that came out for Apollos and Paul
 for Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;
 For Enoch and Moses, and Peter, and John;
 For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.
71. For they never received the gospel of Christ,
 Nor the prophetic spirit that came from the Lord;
 Nor the covenant neither, which Jacob once had;
 They went their own way, and they have their reward.
72. By the order of God, last of all, these are they,
 That will not be gather'd with saints here below,
 To be caught up to Jesus, and meet in the cloud:-
 In darkness they worshipp'd; to darkness they go.
73. These are they that are sinful, the wicked at large,
 That glutted their passion by meanness or worth;
 All liars, adulterers, sorc'ers, and proud;
 And suffer, as promis'd, God's wrath on the earth.
74. These are they that must suffer the vengeance of hell,
 'Till Christ shall have trodden all enemies down,
 And perfected his work, in the fulness of times:
 And is crown'd on his throne with his glorious crown.
75. The vast multitude of the telestial world-
 As the stars of the skies, or the sands of the sea;-
 The voice of Jehovah echo'd far and wide,
 Ev'ry tongue shall confess, and they all bow the knee.
76. Ev'ry man shall be judg'd by the works of his life,
 And receive a reward in the mansions prepar'd;

- For his judgments are just, and his works never end,
As his prophets and servants have always declar'd.
77. But the great things of God, which he show'd unto me,
Unlawful to utter, I dare not declare;
They surpass all the wisdom and greatness of men,
And only are seen, as has Paul, where they are.
78. I will go, I will go, while the secret of life,
Is blooming in heaven, and blasting in hell;
Is leaving on earth, and a budding in space:-
I will go, I will go, with you, brother, farewell.

JOSEPH SMITH.
Nauvoo, Feb. 1843.

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