

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 96

1 Behold, I say unto you, here is wisdom, whereby ye may know how to act concerning this matter, for it is expedient in me that this stake that I have set for the strength of Zion should be made strong. 2 Therefore, let my servant Newel K. Whitney take charge of the place which is named among you, upon which I design to build mine holy house. 3 And again, let it be divided into lots, according to wisdom, for the benefit of those who seek inheritances, as it shall be determined in council among you. 4 Therefore, take heed that ye see to this matter, and that portion that is necessary to benefit mine order, for the purpose of bringing forth my word to the children of men. 5 For behold, verily I say unto you, this is the most expedient in me, that my word should go forth unto the children of men, for the purpose of subduing the hearts of the children of men for your good. Even so. Amen.

v1-5 With respect to some recently acquired land, the Lord tells them to use it to firmly establish the Church (v. 1). Whitney is to be steward over the Temple lot (v. 2). Lots are to be divided up for families in the Church (v. 3) so they may support missionary labors (v. 4-5).

v1 "this stake", the Lord is speaking figuratively as of a tent stake as the Kirtland Stake had not been formally organized yet.

v2 The pseudonym "Ahashdah" is used in place of "Newel K. Whitney" in the 1835 edition of the D&C.

"the place", i.e., the French farm, recently purchased by the Church.

v4 The Lord is presumably speaking of using the land for agricultural production to support the families of those men who are serving as missionaries.

6 And again, verily I say unto you, it is wisdom and expedient in me, that my servant John Johnson whose offering I have accepted, and whose prayers I have heard, unto whom I give a promise of eternal life inasmuch as he keepeth my commandments from henceforth-- 7 For he is a descendant of Joseph and a partaker of the blessings of the promise made unto his fathers-- 8 Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in me that he should become a member of the order, that he may assist in bringing forth my word unto the children of men. 9 Therefore ye shall ordain him unto this blessing, and he shall seek

diligently to take away incumbrances that are upon the house named among you, that he may dwell therein. Even so. Amen.

v6-9 Johnson, who is faithful (v. 6), is to join the United Order (v. 8) and receive the Priesthood (v. 9), so he may receive the allotment due him by lineal right (v. 7).

v6 The pseudonym "Zombre" is used in place of "John Johnson" in the 1835 edition of the D&C.

v7 John Johnson is identified as a natural descendant of the tribes of Israel through Joseph, and therefore one possessing right to the land, cp. 3 Ne. 20:14. Smith is similarly identified, cf. 2 Ne. 3:6-21. Typically one would assume statements dealing with the remnant of Jacob through Joseph are dealing with Native American Indians, however this is clearly not necessarily the case as neither Smith nor Johnson had that ancestry.

The 1835 edition of the D&C had "Seth" in the place of "Joseph".

v8 "the order", i.e., the United Firm.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 96

This section was first printed in the Kirtland edition Doctrine & Covenants in 1835, page 234. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 6, number 2, pages 184-785, dated February 1, 1845. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 28, page 437, dated September 4, 1852.

Excerpt from Kirtland Council Minute Book

Kirtland 23d of March 1833—

A council of High Priests & Elders assembled in the schoolroom at 9 oclock agreeable to previous arrangements After opening the council by prayer by Broth Joseph it was agreed that bro Joseph Coe and brother Moses Dailey should procede to make purchase of certain farms or to obtain or to obtain their terms of sail, and and that Bro, E, Thair be appointed to obtain the price of Pete French farm and the brethren agree to continue in prayer and fasting for the ultimate success of their mission after an absence of about three hours Bro. Coe & Bro. Daily returned and made report as follows. That Elijah Smith would sell his farm for four thousand dollars and that Mr. Morley would sell his farm for twenty one hundred dollars. And also bro. Thair returned and reported that Peter French would sell his farm for five thousand dollars and after the report of the brethren it was put to vote whether the property would be purchased and decided in the affirmative it was then agreed that bro Ezra Thair and Joseph Coe should superintend the purchasing of said farms and to have the prayer of the brethren and that they should be ordained to that office accordingly Sidney Rigdon ordained them as general agents to be set apart to act as such in this eastern branch of the Church There being no further business the council closed by prayer

F.G. Williams Clk P.T.

(Frederick G. Williams, Kirtland Council Minute Book, pages 18-19)

Excerpts from History of the Church

March 23.—A council was called for the purpose of appointing a committee to purchase land in Kirtland, upon which the Saints might build a Stake of Zion. Brother Joseph Coe and Moses Dailey were appointed to ascertain the terms of sale of certain farms; and Brother Ezra Thayre to ascertain the price of Peter French's

farm. The brethren agreed to continue in prayer and fasting for the ultimate success of their mission. After an absence of about three hours Brothers Coe and Dailey returned and reported that Elijah Smith's farm could be obtained for four thousand dollars; and Mr. Morley's for twenty-one hundred; and Brother Thayre reported that Peter French would sell his farm for five thousand dollars. The council decided to purchase the farms, and appointed Ezra Thayre and Joseph Coe to superintend the purchase; and they were ordained under the hands of Sidney Rigdon, and set apart as general agents of the Church for that purpose. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 335)

June 4. -- A similar conference assembled at the same place, and took into consideration how the French farm should be disposed of. The conference could not agree who should take charge of it, but all agreed to inquire of the Lord; accordingly we received the following:

[text of D&C 96 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 352)

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

On 23 March 1833 a council of high priests and elders was convened in Kirtland to discuss the matter of purchasing certain properties in the city. Zebedee Coltrin recorded that on this day "a council of high Priests [met] to investigate the subject of purchasing the brick tavern and farm owned by Pete French." Brethren were dispatched during the meeting to ascertain the terms upon which three farms could be purchased. Their report was that, "Elijah Smith would sell his farm for four thousand dollars and that Mr. Morley [Moore?] would sell his farm for twenty one hundred dollars, and...that Peter French would sell his farm for five thousand dollars." After hearing the above report, the assembled brethren voted to buy the properties and authorized Ezra Thayer and Joseph Coe to negotiate the purchase. Coltrin's summary of the meeting was, "It was agreed to buy it [the tavern] and several other farms which made it necessary to call the Elders out of School [of the Prophets] for the purpose of going again into the world and procuring means for paying for the farms."

On 4 June 1833 a group of high priests met in the Prophet's translating room in Kirtland to determine who should take responsibility for the French farm.

The council could not agree who should take charge of it but all agreed to enquire of the lord accordingly we received a revelation [section 96] which decided that Broth N K Whitney should take the charge thereof and also that brother John Johnson be admitted as a member of the united firm accordingly he was ordained unto the high Priesthood and admitted.

Three weeks later Sidney Rigdon wrote to William W. Phelps concerning part of this revelation: "Zombre has been received as a member of the [United] firm by commandment, and has just come to Kirtland to live." (Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

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