

Missionary Work

The message of the Book of Mormon and the new covenant of the gospel preached by Joseph Smith were shared through missionary work. Early missionaries performed their duties and were usually men who had been ordained elders. They received official licenses to preach from the church. Some were called by special revelation through Smith while others had a desire to share the angel message. The angel story, the newly published Book of Mormon, along with the New Testament emphasis on baptism by immersion was preached in homes, courthouses, and churches.

The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ gave the general direction on what was to be preached. Essentially the Church of Christ was a new religious movement based on the Bible with an attempt to restore New Testament Christianity. There were many similarities with beliefs and church structure with churches of the day. A new book, proclaimed as an ancient record (the Book of Mormon), was considered a second Bible as it was a witness to the Holy Bible. With a current prophet, Joseph Smith Jr., individuals and the church would be guided by modern day revelation.

Like local Protestant churches, Joseph Smith's emphasis on Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection was foundational. The structure of the infant church was led by two elders, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Quarterly conferences were to be held similar to those of the Methodists. After faith and repentance, the ordinance of baptism would need to be done by an ordained priest or elder who received his appointment from the church. Baptism by immersion was the only accepted way it could be performed. Church confirmation followed the laying on of hands with the promise of bestowal of the Holy Ghost.

As the church grew in membership, more offices were added to administer its affairs, both spiritual and temporal. Financial resources were needed to further the work in the way of printing periodicals and latter-day scriptures, providing support for full-time leaders, assisting the poor, and eventually erecting buildings like the Kirtland Temple. Though it was envisioned that there would be twelve apostles in the church it was not until some years later that this was accomplished. A large majority of faithful men were ordained to offices in the priesthood and sent on short- and long-term missions to convert those who believed in their message of hope and salvation.

The revelations of Joseph Smith dealt with issues of consecrating money for the support of members and church programs. Inspired teachings intermingled temporal as well as spiritual aspects for the benefit of individuals and families.

Missionary work in the Western Reserve around Kirtland, Ohio, commenced with the arrival of the four Lamanite missionaries Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer Jr., Ziba Peterson, and Parley P. Pratt. Pratt had recently been a preacher in the Reformed Baptist Church and was acquainted with Sidney Rigdon. He wanted to tell Rigdon about the new revelation of the Book of Mormon. The missionaries arrived in Kirtland, near Mentor, on Friday, October 29, according to a letter written by Oliver Cowdery. They first went to see thirty-seven year old Rev. Sidney Rigdon at his home, and Parley P. Pratt gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon. Rigdon was a Reformed Baptist pastor with a congregation in Mentor.

An early account mentioned that the missionaries asked the "brethren of the reformation . . . to receive their mission and book as from Heaven, which they said chiefly concerned the western Indians, as being an account of their origin, and a prophecy of their final conversion to [C]hristianity, and made them a white and delightsome people, and be reinstated in the possessing of their lands of which they have been despoiled by the whites."¹ The four missionaries mentioned that the aborigines "are a part of the tribe of Manasseh, and whose ancestors landed on the coast of Chili [sic] 600 years before the coming of Christ, and from them descended all the Indians of America."²

Rigdon commenced reading the Book of Mormon but had a hard time becoming convinced of its authenticity. Parley Pratt recalled, "It was with much persuasion and argument, that he [Rigdon] was prevailed on to read it, and after he had read it, he had a great struggle of mind, before he fully believed and embraced it."³

Meetings were held at Isaac Morley's farm where there lived those who believed "it was necessary that there should be a community of goods among the brethren."⁴ A few days later the four missionaries returned to the Morley farm and performed the first baptisms of their mission. Late on the night of Friday, November 5, seventeen individuals received the rite of baptism. Cowdery wrote that they "held a meeting with these brethren, and seventeen went immediately forward and were baptized, between eleven and twelve at night."⁵

Josiah Jones recalled that the missionaries preached in the Methodist meetinghouse and "exhorted the people to repent of their pride and priestcraft and all other sins, and be baptized by them for the remission of them, for they said that if they had been baptized it was of no avail, for there was no legal administrator, neither had been for fourteen hundred years, until God had called them to the office, and had sent them into the world to publish it to this generation."⁶

The Painesville *Telegraph* of February 15, 1831 reported that, after "seventeen persons were immersed by them in one night," Rigdon "seemed much displeased" but shortly after "was convinced that Mormonism was true and divine." On Sunday morning, November 7, Rigdon "had an appointment to preach in the Methodist chapel at Kirtland. He arose to address the congregation apparently much affected and deeply impressed. He seemed exceedingly humble, confessed the sins of his former life, his great pride, ambition, vainglory, &c. &c." On that day twenty-eight more baptisms were performed.

Elder Pratt wrote, "At length Mr. Rigdon and many others became convinced that they had no authority to minister in the ordinances of God; and that they had not been legally baptized

¹ "Mormonism," *Telegraph* 2 (February 15, 1831), Painesville, Ohio.

² "The Golden Bible, or, Campbellism Improved," *Observer and Telegraph* 1 (November 18, 1830), Hudson, Ohio.

³ Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled* (New York, 1838), 47; pamphlet dated March 24, 1838, rpt. in *The Essential Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 43.

⁴ "History of the Mormonites," *The Evangelist* 9 (June 1, 1841):133, Carthage, Ohio. This account was written by Josiah Jones in 1831 but not published until 1841. See Milton V. Backman Jr., ed., "A Non-Mormon View of the Birth of Mormonism in Ohio," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Spring 1972):308.

⁵ Cowdery to "Our beloved brethren," November 12, 1830, Kirtland, Ohio, copy preserved in a Newel Knight Journal, private possession.

⁶ "History of the Mormonites," *The Evangelist* 9 (June 1, 1841):133.

and ordained. They, therefore, came forward and were baptized by us, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and prayer in the name of Jesus Christ."⁷

The early accounts agree that Sidney Rigdon was baptized on a Monday. The baptism was performed by Oliver Cowdery and the date would have been November 8, 1830. Phebe, Sidney's wife, was also baptized by Cowdery. The *Telegraph* reported, "The Monday following he was baptized."⁸ Josiah Jones also mentions, "On Monday Elder Rigdon was *re-baptized*."⁹ Ten days after the arrival of the four missionaries, Rigdon received baptism.

As early as 1831, it was published that Sidney Rigdon had had some pre-1830 connection with Joseph Smith Jr. and the production of the text of the Book of Mormon. It appears that these accounts are not reliable. Parley P. Pratt recalled the visit to Rigdon in the fall of 1830, "We called on Elder S. Rigdon, and then for the first time, his eyes beheld the 'Book of Mormon; I, myself, had the happiness to present it to him in person."¹⁰ A few days after Rigdon's conversion, Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter telling about their success in having fifty-five baptisms:

We arrived at this place two weeks this day, on our journey we called at the Buffalo tribe, but stayed a few hours only but left two books with them. We traveled directly to this place. On the fourth after attending <a public> meeting we came to the place where we had prophesied tarrying a few days. It is where several families had united themselves as a band of brethren and put all their property together determining to live separate from the world as much as possible, and when we had returned we held a meeting with these brethren, and seventeen went immediately forward and were baptized, between eleven and twelve at night, and on the 6th there was one more, on the 7th nine in the daytime and at night nineteen, on the 8th three; on the 9th, 3. on the 10th at night, one; on the 11th, one, on this day another, making in the whole fifty five, among whom are brother Sidney Rigdon and wife.

Continuing his letter Cowdery wrote:

There is considerable call here for books, and I wish you would send five hundred immediately here, and when they are, <or> a part of them are sold, one of these will fetch the money, and if our brother Rigdon does not come before that time, I think he will then. Be that sooner or later, receive him (as) if from my own bosom, for he is am [sic; as] I am. I wish you without fail to communicate this to my aged parents. Do brethren if you respect me. We expect in a few days to pursue our journey to the Lamanites.¹¹

Eber D. Howe, editor of the *Telegraph* newspaper, published in Painesville, north of Kirtland, wrote, "About two weeks since some persons came along here with the book, one [Oliver Cowdery] of whom pretends to have seen Angels , and assisted in translating the plates.

⁷ *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 35.

⁸ "Mormonism," *Telegraph* 2 (February 15, 1831).

⁹ "History of the Mormonites," *The Evangelist* 9 (June 1, 1841):134, emphasis in original.

¹⁰ *The Essential Parley P. Pratt*, 43, emphasis omitted.

¹¹ Cowdery to "Our beloved brethren," November 12, 1830.

He proclaims destruction upon the world within a few years,—holds forth that the ordinances of the gospel, have not been regularly administered since the days of the Apostles, till said Smith and himself commenced the work. . . . We understand that he is bound for the regions beyond the Mississippi [River], where he contemplates founding a 'City of Refuge' for his followers, and converting the Indians under his prophetic authority."¹²

Parley P. Pratt summarized their labor: "We had baptized one hundred and twenty-seven souls."¹³ Among those converted were Levi Hancock, Isaac Morley, John Murdock, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, and Frederick G. Williams. On November 22, 1830, the four missionaries departed from the Kirtland region for Missouri with the addition of the newly converted Frederick Williams.

Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland about February 1, 1831. He received the laws of the church a few days later. The revelation explained, in response to a number of questions, about assembling or gathering together. The document further mentioned preaching the gospel, repeated part of the Ten Commandments, and explained if those who wanted to keep all of God's commandments shall consecrate "all of thy property" to the church through the bishop. Other instructions gave directions to the elders of the church.¹⁴

Smith wrote a letter to Martin Harris on February 22 requesting him to "bring or cause to be brought all the books [of Mormon]" to Kirtland.¹⁵ Harris made a brief trip with copies of the Book of Mormon. Martin arrived at Painesville on Saturday, March 12, bringing with him a large quantity of Books of Mormon. Harris's eccentric personality was immediately noted in the local paper:

He immediately planted himself in the bar-room of the hotel. . . . He told all about the gold plates, Angels, Spirits, and Jo Smith.—He had seen and handled them all, by the power of God!

The meeting was closed after Harris had declared to those in attendance "that all who believed the new Bible would see Christ within fifteen years, and all who did not would absolutely be destroyed and dam'd [damned]."¹⁶ A short time later, Martin Harris traveled back to Palmyra and sold his farm of 151 acres to Thomas Lakey for \$3,000.¹⁷ This amount covered the cost of printing the Book of Mormon.

William E. McLellin, who was teaching school in Paris, Illinois, was twenty-five years old when he heard Harvey Whitlock and David Whitmer preach in July 1831. He rode on horseback to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, arriving there on August 18. McLellin talked with Hyrum Smith and "inquired into the particulars of the coming forth of the record,"

¹² "The Golden Bible," *Telegraph* 2 (November 16, 1830):3.

¹³ *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 36.

¹⁴ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 107-10.

¹⁵ Smith to Harris, February 22, 1831, handwriting of Sidney Rigdon, signature of Joseph Smith Jr., CHL.

¹⁶ *Telegraph* 2 (March 15, 1831):3, emphasis omitted.

¹⁷ Deed recorded in Deed Liber 10:515-16, Wayne County, Lyons, New York.

the rise of the church and testimonies.¹⁸ McLellin wrote a letter in August 1832 to his relatives and explained what he had learned from the two elders:

They said that in September 1827 an Angel appeared to Joseph Smith (in Ontario C. New-York) and showed to him the confusion on the earth respecting true religion. It also told him to go a few miles distant to a certain hill and there he should find some plates with engravings, which (if he was faithful) he should be enabled to translate. He went as directed and found plates (which had the appearance of fine Gold) about 8 inches long 5 or 6 [inches] wide and altogether about 6 inches thick; each one about as thick as thin paste Board fastened together and opened in the form of a book containing engravings of reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphical characters, which he was inspired to translate and the record was published in 1830 and is called the book of Mormon. It is a record which was kept on this continent by the ancient inhabitants.¹⁹

William McLellin requested baptism from Hyrum Smith who baptized him on August 20 and four days later he was ordained an elder in the church. William left Independence on August 25 as Hyrum Smith's missionary companion, and they traveled to Jacksonville, Illinois, where McLellin preached in the courthouse on September 10. William explained in his letter, "We attended. [T]he house though large was full of Judges, Lawyers, Doctors, Priests and People I think about 500. I spoke 3 hours."

McLellin wrote in his journal that in his discourse he "gave them a brief history of the book of Mormon, of its coming forth &c, Then reasoned upon and expounded prophecy after prophecy and scripture after scripture, which had reference to the book and to these days and after speaking with great liberty about 3 hours I concluded with a warning to them to flee from the wrath to come and gather themselves to Zion and prepare to meet the Lord at his second coming which was nigh at hand."²⁰ The local newspaper reported some of the discourse of William McLellin without naming him:

A Preacher of this sect visited us last Saturday. We heard a part of his lecture, which occupied more than two hours. From his account, this sect came into existence a little more than a year since in the following manner:—A young man about 23 years of age somewhere in Ontario county, N.Y. was visited by an angel! (here the preacher looked around him apparently to see if the credulity of the people in this enlightened age, could be thus imposed on) who informed him three times in one night that by visiting a certain place in that town he would have revealed to him something of importance.

McLellin said that, "At the place appointed he [Joseph Smith] found in the earth a box which contained a set of thin plates resembling gold, with Arabic characters inscribed on them."

¹⁸ William E. McLellin, Journal, CHL, in Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 33.

¹⁹ McLellin to "Beloved Relatives," August 4, 1832, CCLA; Shipps and Welch, *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 79.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39, September 10, 1831.

The newspaper article included probably the earliest printing of biblical passages used by missionaries to confirm the story line about the Book of Mormon. The book told of building a ship and coming to the western world. The article continued:

To prove this, the preacher referred us to Genesis, 49th chapter and 22d verse, and said the branches running over the wall was neither more nor less than the progeny of Joseph, leaving their own and coming to this country! He went into a detail of the reasons which induced him to join himself to this people—that on account of so many sects being in the world, and the discrepances in their opinions, he became sceptical—that hearing of these people in July last, he joined himself to them, believing them to constitute the true Church—and that he came this way to meet a convocation of elders in Jackson county, Missouri, which is to be their New Jerusalem, but was disappointed in not seeing them there. He insisted on the bible being joined with his book, by quoting the 16th and 17th verses of the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, and comparing the bible and Mormon's book to the two sticks there spoken of.²¹

In the middle of October 1831 at Kirtland a number of families were getting ready to move to the promised land of Missouri. Nancy Towle, an evangelist, and Elizabeth Venner came to town. The ladies were entertained by Elizabeth Godkin Marsh, wife of Thomas B. Marsh. Towle wrote that she came to investigate the sect. After spending a day she considered it a deception though "they may be saved at last" by fire. At that time, Nancy Towle conversed with William W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, and Joseph Smith about the new religion.

Harris told her: "I have authority to say to you—You shall not enjoy, the comforts of God's grace, until you believe that book [the Book of Mormon]! . . . I should be willing to bear, all the sins of the human family, beyond the grave—if these things, are not so!" She had a question for Joseph Smith: "Mr. Smith,—Can you, in the presence of Almighty God, give your word upon oath—that, an Angel from Heaven, shewed you the place, of those Plates:—and that, you took the things, contained in that Book, from those plates: and at the direction of the Angel, you returned the Plates, to the place, from whence you had taken them?" Joseph answered, "I will not swear at all!" He confirmed some women and children with the Holy Ghost. Nancy Towle asked Smith, "Are you not ashamed, of such pretensions?" and he replied, "The gift, has returned back again, as in former times, to illiterate fishermen." Nancy wrote, "So he got off, as quick as he could. . . . As we left the Mormonites, (for so they are called,) a number of families, started for the 'Promised-Land.' One turned to us, with much apparent animation, and said, 'We are now going to that Land, which is to be our dwelling-place, forever-more!'"²²

Called by revelation, Lyman E. Johnson and Orson Pratt were to preach in the eastern states. In Pennsylvania they preached in Franklin, Venango County, on February 11, 1832. Like

²¹ "Mormonism," *New-Hampshire Gazette* 76 (October 25, 1831):4, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, emphasis omitted. Reprinted from the *Illinois Patriot* (Jacksonville, Illinois), issue of September 16, 1831, no known copy extant.

²² *Vicissitudes Illustrated, in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America. Written by Herself* (Charleston: Printed for the Authoress by James L. Burges, 1832), 138, 143-46, emphasis omitted. The visit to Kirtland appears to have covered October 15-17, 1831.

other traveling elders, they used the local courthouse as a good location for citizens to hear their message.

We of this place were visited on Saturday last by a couple of young men styling themselves Mormonites. They explained their doctrine to a large part of the citizens in the court house that evening. They commenced by reading the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: also by giving an account of their founder, Joseph Smith, then an inhabitant of the state of New-York, county of Ontario, and town of Manchester. Having repented of his sins, but not attached himself to any party of Christians, owing to the numerous divisions among them, and being in doubt what his duty was, he had recourse [to] prayer. After retiring to bed one night, he was visited by an Angel and directed to proceed to a hill in the neighborhood where he would find a stone box containing a quantity of Gold plates. The plates were six or eight inches square, and as many of them as would make them six or eight inches thick, each as thick as a pane of glass.

The two preachers explained that Joseph Smith by divine aid produced the Mormon bible as a revelation to part of the house of Joseph. As reported in the newspaper the missionaries told about the Book of Mormon. They related to those attending:

About 600 years before Christ, with a prophet of the name of Lehi, of the tribe of Joseph, and a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah, who had also warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem of their idolatry, & becoming unsafe in the city, was ordered by God to leave Jerusalem and journey toward the Red Sea. He with another family who accompanied him, built themselves a ship and landed on the coast of South America, where they increased very fast, and the Lord raised up a great many prophets among them. They built cities, and encouraged the arts and sciences.—Their prophecies foretold the appearance of the Messiah on the other continent, and gave as a sign that they should have two days without a night—also of his death, which was the cause of the terrible earthquakes, which rent all the rocks in our hills into the different shapes they now are. After our Savior's ascension to heaven, that he came down to this continent and appointed twelve disciples, and that Christianity flourished for three or four generations.—After that the inhabitants divided and wars ensued, in which the pagans prevailed.—The first battle was fought nigh to the straits of Darien, and the last at a hill called Comoro [Cumorah]²³

The missionaries besides discussing the contents of the Book of Mormon preached repentance, the return of the Jews to Palestine and "insisted that our Savior would shortly appear, and that there were some present who would see him on the earth—that they knew it—that they were not deceiving their hearers; that it was all true."

²³ "Mormonism," *The Fredonia Censor* 11 (March 7, 1832):4, Fredonia, New York; rpt. from the *Venango Democrat*, circa February 1832, Franklin, Pennsylvania. Lyman and Orson preached on February 8 in Mercer County. See "The Mormonites," *The American Sentinel* 16 (February 25, 1832):2, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; rpt. from *The Western Press*, Mercer, Pennsylvania.

At the church conference held on January 25, 1832, in Amherst, Lorain County, Ohio, Orson Hyde and Samuel H. Smith were called as missionaries at the same time as Lyman Johnson and Orson Pratt. Hyde and Smith were also to preach in the eastern United States: "And again verily thus saith the Lord let my servant [servant] Orson Hyde and my servant Samuel take their journey into the eastern countries and proclaim the things which I have commanded them and inasmuch as they are faithful lo I will be with them even unto the end."²⁴

Samuel H. Smith and Orson Hyde departed on their mission on February 1 and returned to Kirtland on December 22. This is one of the best documented proselytizing missions performed by two stalwart church representatives. Both Hyde and Smith kept journals while spreading the gospel in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. They sold copies of the Book of Mormon and baptized converts. For example, on April 14, 1832, they held a meeting at the courthouse in Batavia, New York. The local newspaper did not look favorably upon them and reported, "Two Mormonites, last Saturday evening, attempted to give a history of their sect, and explain the principles of mormonism."²⁵ Orson Hyde recorded in his journal: "14th went on to Batavia 40 miles Preached once on the way publicly & from H[ouse] to house preached at the court House in Batavia to a large congregation & quite attentive." Samuel H. Smith wrote about the meeting: "in Batavia in the Court house Warned them faithful[l]y of the Judgments that was Coming & the Court house was Crowded with people."²⁶ Though there was opposition to their preaching and many did not come forward to join the church they had a successful mission.

In April 1832 Joseph Smith with some other elders traveled to Missouri to accomplish church business. Joseph returned in June to the Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, which was his official residence until September. Sidney Rigdon, one of two counselors to Joseph Smith, shook up the church at Kirtland when he spoke to members at one of their meetings. Lucy Mack Smith recorded that her husband requested Sidney to preach, but Sidney refused and "replied vehemently the keys of the kingdom <are> rent from the church and there shall not be a prayer put up in this place to day." Joseph Smith Sr. said I hope not. The saints were greatly excited over this and the sisters cried.

Sister Howe²⁷ <particularly> was much terrified Oh! dear Me, said she, what shall we do[?] what shall we do[?] the keys of the Kingdom are taken from us - <and what shall we do>[?]

I tell, repeated Syney [Sidney], with much apparent feeling, the keys of [the] Kingdom are <wrent> [rent] from <you> and you never will have them again untill you build me a new house.²⁸

²⁴ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 184; LDS D&C 75:13; RLDS D&C 75:3.

²⁵ "Mormonism," *Republican Advocate* 1 (April 17, 1832):3, Batavia, New York.

²⁶ Orson Hyde, Journal, April 14, 1832 and Samuel H. Smith, Journal, both in CHL.

²⁷ This may have been Sophia Hull Howe, wife of E. D. Howe, editor of the *Painesville Telegraph*, or his sister Harriet Howe, who according to Parley P. Pratt were both church members. See Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 40; rpt. in *Essential Parley P. Pratt*, 42.

²⁸ Lucy Mack Smith, draft manuscript, CHL. See Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 561-62. Lucy Smith places this event before Joseph Smith's trip to Missouri rather than after his return. In 1843 this incident was not included in Manuscript History Book A-1.

Hyrum Smith hearing this left Kirtland and rode to Hiram to get Joseph to settle Sidney's claim. At a meeting held in Kirtland, Joseph Smith "told the brethren to cast of[f] all their fear for they were under a great mistake that they were under no transgression and, said he, I myself hold the Keys of this last dispensation and I forever will hold them in time and eternity so set your hearts at rest for all is well."²⁹ Reynolds Cahoon recorded the following in his journal:

thursday [July 5] 4 Ocloc[k] Met with some of the Br[ethren] for Me[e]ting and at the me[e]ting Br Sidney remarked that he had a revelation from the Lord & said that the kingdo<m> was taken from <the> Church and left with him

fryday [July 6] Br Hiram went after Joseph when he came he affirmed that the kingdom was ours & never Should be taking [taken] from the faithful.³⁰

Replacing Rigdon as Joseph's scribe at this time was Frederick G. Williams, who was appointed on July 20. Eight days later "Brother Sidney was ordained to the hight [high] priesthood the second time."³¹ In a letter written to William W. Phelps in Missouri Joseph Smith explained:

For a moment he [Sidney] became frantick & the advisary taking the advantage, he spake unadvisedly with his lips after receiving a severe chastisement resigned his commis[s]ion and became a private member in the church, but has since repented like Peter of old and after a little suffering by the buffiting of Satan has been restored to his high standing in the church of God.³²

Joseph Smith after traveling with Bishop Newel K. Whitney to the cities of New York, Albany, and Boston returned to Kirtland and an addition to his family, a son named Joseph Smith III, born on November 6, 1832.³³ Shortly after the birth of this son, the Prophet Joseph Smith commenced keeping a better account of himself and the councils in church government that had, for the most part, been neglected during the first two years of the church. Though separate minutes of meetings, some retained correspondence, and the original handwritten revelations had been kept, it was now thought proper for Smith to have a permanent record that would contain his and the church's acts for future generations.

In November Joseph Smith dictated and wrote his 1832 account of his early religious experiences, copied letters into what is known as Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, and started his personal journal. Soon after some of Joseph's revelations were copies into the Kirtland Revelations Book and minutes of meeting were recorded in the Kirtland Council Minute Book.

²⁹ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 563.

³⁰ Reynolds Cahoon Journal, CHL, entries for July 5-6, 1832.

³¹ Hyrum Smith, Journal, July 28, 1832, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. See Jeffrey S. O'Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith: A Life of Integrity*, 68-69.

³² Smith to Phelps, July 31, 1832, copy of letter, CHL. See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 273.

³³ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:18, 386.

These valuable records would be used in part to help compose the Manuscript History of Joseph Smith and the church.

Though missionaries described what they heard about how the Book of Mormon was obtained, Joseph Smith had still not made a written record of the event for church members. At a conference held on October 25, 1831, at Orange, Ohio, the minutes recorded:

Br. Hyrum Smith said that he thought best that the information of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon be related by Joseph himself to the Elders present that all might know for themselves. Br. Joseph Smith jr. said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon, & also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things &c.³⁴

A brief reference to Smith's early visions was included in the Articles and Covenants of the church: "For after that it was truly manifested unto this first Elder that he had received a remission of his Sins he was entangled again in the vanities of the world but after truly repenting [G]od ministered unto him by an Holy angel whose countenance was as lightening & whose garments were pure & white above all whiteness & gave unto him commandments which inspired him from on high."³⁵

Now Smith, with his scribe Frederick G. Williams, wrote an account telling about his experiences and connecting them with the establishment of the church, "A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr. an account of his marvilous experience and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Ch[r]ist the son of the living God of whom he beareth record and also an account of the rise of the church of Christ in the eve of time according as the Lord brough<t> forth and established by his hand."

Next was written four occurrences that supported Smith's importance in the leadership of the church. First, Joseph Smith receiving the testimony from on high; second, the ministering of angels; third, the reception of the holy priesthood by the ministering of angels; and fourth, a confirmation and reception of the high priesthood with the keys of the Kingdom of God conferred upon him. Smith then recorded in his own hand the account of his first vision:

Therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy and the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in <the> attitude of calling upon the Lord a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the <Lord> opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph <my son> thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy <way> walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life <behold> the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned asside from the gospel and keep not <my> commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit

³⁴ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 23.

³⁵ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 63; BC 24:6-7; LDS D&C 20:5-8; RLDS D&C 17:2 (June 1830).

them according to their ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it [is] written of me in the cloud <clothed> in the glory of my Father.³⁶

Frederick G. Williams taking down dictation recorded the second vision regarding an angel appearing to Joseph in a heavenly vision:

And it came to pass when I was seventeen years of age I called again upon the Lord and he shewed unto me a heavenly vision for behold an angel of the Lord came and stood before me and it was by night and he called me by name and he said the Lord had forgiven me my sins and he revealed unto me that in the Town of Manchester Ontario County N.Y. there was plates of gold upon which there was engravings which was engraven by Maroni [Moroni] & his fathers the servants of the living God in ancient days and deposited by the commandments of God and kept by the power thereof and that I should go and get them and he revealed unto me many things concerning the inhabitants of the earth which since have been revealed in commandments & revelations.

And it was on the 22d day of Sept. AD 1822 and thus he appeared unto me three times in one night and once on the next day and then I immediately went to the place and found where the plates was deposited as the angel of the Lord had commanded me and straightway made three attempts to get them and then being exceedingly frightened I supposed it had been a dream [dream] of Vision but when I considered I knew it was not.

Therefore I cried unto the Lord in the agony of my soul why can I not obtain them behold the angel appeared unto me again and said unto me you have not kept the commandments of the Lord which I gave unto you therefore you cannot now obtain them for the time is not yet fulfilled therefore thou wast left unto temptation that thou mightest be made acquainted with the power of the adversary therefore repent and call on the Lord. Thou shalt be forgiven and in his own due time thou shalt obtain them.

For now I had been tempted of the adversary and sought the Plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandment that I should have an eye single to the glory of God therefore I was chastened and sought diligently to obtain the plates and obtained them not untill I was twenty one years of age and in this year I was married to Emma Hale Daughter of Isaach [Isaac] Hale who lived in Harmony Susquehan[n]a County Pen[n]sylvania on the 18th January AD. 1827, on the 22d day of Sept of this same year I obtained the plates.³⁷

Joseph Smith's personal journal is of interest since he recorded when he bought the blank book and includes his thoughts at the time. Smith wrote the following entries (with misspellings) in his own hand at the commencement of his journal:

³⁶ Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, CHL; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:3, 6-7. After the words "calling upon the Lord" Williams added above the line "in the 16th year of my age."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-9. The date 1822 is recorded as 1823 in other accounts.

Joseph Smith Jrs Book for Record Baught on the 27th of November 1832 for the purpose to keep a minute ac[c]ount of all things that come under my obsevation &c Oh may God grant that I may be directed in all my thoughts Oh bless thy Servent Amen

November 28th this day I have [spent] in reading and writing this Evening my mind is calm and Serene for which I thank the Lord

November 29th this day road from Kirtland to Chardon to See my Sister Sop[h]ronia [Smith Stoddard] and also ca[lled] to See my Sister Catherine [Smith Salisbury] [and fou]nd them [well] this Evening Brother Frederic[k G. Williams] Prophecyed that next Spring I Should go to the city of PittsBurg to establish a Bishopwrick and within one year I Should go to the city of New York the Lord Spare the life of thy Servent Amen.³⁸

Church members were forced to leave Jackson County, Missouri, in November 1833. Bishop Edward Partridge wrote a letter to Joseph Smith that mentioned a prophecy of Parley P. Pratt: "br[other]. Parley has prophesied that we shall be enabled to return to our houses by the first of next Jany [January] & enjoy the fruit of our labor & none to molest or make afraid. [H]e says he was constrained to prophesy & if he ever spoke by the spirit of God he then did & if it does not come to pass we may call him a false prophet."³⁹

Disappointed at not being able to establish the city of the New Jerusalem, Joseph Smith was told in a revelation to have armed young and middle-aged men march to Missouri, replant the saints in their inheritances in Jackson County, and redeem the land of Zion. This army was known as Zion's Camp.

Smith recorded that on February 26, 1834, he "Started from home to obtain volenteers [volunteers] for Zion" traveling through Erie County, Pennsylvania to New York. The company arrived at Alvah Beeman's home in Avon, Livingston County, New York, on March 15 and the next day "Brother Sidney [Rigdon] preached to a very large congregation in <Geneseo>."⁴⁰ Smith was interviewed on the same day at Geneva. The unnamed person who spoke with Joseph Smith did not have a high regard for him. His account of the short interview is as follows:

Embracing the opportunity thus thrown in my way, the following colloquy, substantially and almost verbatim, ensued between us.

Self: Sir, is your name Jo. Smith, Jun.?

Mormon Prophet. That is my name, Sir.

S. [Self] Have you a mission from God to this generation?

M. P. [Mormon Prophet] That question I shall leave you to answer, at present.

You heard my testimony to-day.

S. [Self] But not being convinced of the truth of that testimony, I have embraced this opportunity to obtain more satisfactory evidence that your mission is from above; or more ample proof that you are an impostor. Ought you not to "be

³⁸ Joseph Smith Journal, entries for November 27-29, 1832, CHL. See Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:2, 4. Smith did not make a trip to Pittsburgh or New York City within the year. These entries were not included in Manuscript History Book A-1.

³⁹ Partridge to Smith, November 1833, Joseph Smith Papers, CHL.

⁴⁰ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:21, 25.

ready always to give me an answer" and "a reason to every man that asketh you"?

M. P. [Mormon Prophet] When put in a good spirit and at a proper time, I should be ready to answer. You commenced this conversation abruptly.

S. [Self] The questions were proposed in a spirit of candor. I do not reside in this neighborhood, and probably may never meet you again: I, therefore, have seized on such a time as circumstances have permitted. The importance of the subject matter to which my interrogatories had reference, must apologize for my abruptness of manner.⁴¹

The writer commented that Joseph Smith then "murmured out something which became inaudible in the distance, as he urged on his horse and was soon out of the reach of my voice." Parley P. Pratt wrote concerning the elders' visit at the house of Alvah Beeman:

Among those whose hospitality we shared in that vicinity was old father Beeman and his amiable and interesting family. He was a good singer, and so were his three daughters; we were much edified and comforted in their society, and were deeply interested in hearing the old gentleman and brother Joseph converse on their early acquaintance and history. He had been intimate with Joseph long before the first organization of the Church; had assisted him to preserve the plates of the Book of Mormon from the enemy, and had at one time had them concealed under his own hearth.⁴²

The three daughters of Sarah and Alvah Beeman were Mary Adeline, Louisa, and Artemisia. Twenty-three-year-old Mary wrote in her journal about the visit of Joseph Smith to her father's home: "This was the first time I ever beheld a Prophet of the Lord and I can truly say at the first sight that I had a testimony within my bosom that he was a man chosen to God to bring forth a great work in the last days."⁴³

At the conference held on March 17 in Avon, Joseph Smith spoke of obtaining the men needed to assist in the redemption of Zion, gather funds to purchase land in Jackson County, and obtain \$2,000 "for the relief of the brethren in Kirtland" from debt.⁴⁴ Parley P. Pratt mentioned in his journal an occurrence that happened after the Avon conference relating to a separate meeting held at Sackets Harbor, New York:

While in Jefferson co. we held a meeting in the large village of Sacketsharbor and the house was filled to overflowing. After we were through preaching the Rev.

⁴¹ "Interview with the Mormon Prophet," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* 5 (April 5, 1834):107, Utica, New York. The interview was contained in a letter to the editors by "M. L. P.," of Henrietta, Monroe County, New York, March 17, 1834; emphasis omitted.

⁴² *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 90. Alvah Beeman became president of the elders quorum in Kirtland on January 15, 1836. He died in November 1837.

⁴³ Journal of Mary A. Noble, CHL. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 3:309. Mary Adeline married Joseph Bates Noble later in 1834, Louisa was sealed to Joseph Smith in 1841 by Joseph Noble, and Artemisia married Erastus Fairbanks Snow in 1838.

⁴⁴ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 42-43, CHL.

Mr. More, a man noted for talents, learning and salary, arose and testified to the congregation that he had read the book of Mormon, and that there was no such thing written in it as Christ appearing to the Nephites, and teaching them his gospel and the mode of baptism. He also testified that there was no testimony of three witnesses written in the book, that they had seen an angel. The people then gave a shout and the whole house rang. With much ado I got their attention to hear one remark, which was this, I am happy, said I, to state that the book of Mormon is before the public, and if this congregation will take the trouble to examine it half an hour, they will have the satisfaction of proving to a demonstration, that the Rev. Mr. More is a willful liar. The house again resounded with the shouts of the multitude.⁴⁵

Joseph Smith with his portion of Zion's Camp left Kirtland on May 5. In the middle of June, they arrived in Clay County, the county north of Jackson County. Though Zion's Camp made the long journey to Clay County, Missouri, they did not accomplish the plan of returning members to the land purchased for their settlements on the central land of Zion. Joseph Smith did set up a presidency of three men and a twelve man high council to administer the affairs of the church in Missouri.

At the meeting held on July 7, the ordinations took place. Smith ordained David Whitmer at this time as church president in Zion and as his own successor as prophet in case Joseph fell into transgression. Whitmer's assistants were his brother John Whitmer and William W. Phelps. The twelve counselors were also ordained.⁴⁶ The minutes fail to mention David Whitmer's ordination as Joseph Smith's successor.

Joseph Smith returned to Kirtland on August 1, 1834. On August 16, he set the date of the redemption of Zion to be September 11, 1836. In his letter he wrote, "in case the excitement continues to be allayed and peace prevails use every effort to prevail on the churches to gather to those regions and situate themselves to be in readiness to move into Jackson Co[unty]. in two years from the Eleventh of September next which is the appointed time for the redemption of Zion."⁴⁷

Missionary work continued to be performed locally with short missions and to wider areas and longer duration as it had years earlier. Kirtland remained the center of church operations through 1837. Reports and letters from missionaries were published in the *Evening and the Morning Star* and later in the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*. The vast majority of journals kept by missionaries are preserved in the LDS Church History Library.

⁴⁵ Journal of Parley P. Pratt, as published in *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834):157, Kirtland, Ohio.

⁴⁶ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 71-72. The minutes were copied into the Far West Record at a later date.

⁴⁷ Smith to Lyman Wight et al., August 16, 1834, Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1:86, CHL. See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 349; *History of the Church* 2:145. The September 11 date refers to an earlier revelation that stated the land of Kirtland would be a stronghold for five years.