

Early Mormon Priesthood Revelations: Text, Impact, and Evolution

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Introduction

Joseph Smith's revelation texts carved out a complex system of ranks, offices, jurisdictions, and judicial bodies that implicitly rejected the feminization of Protestantism, while forwarding a selective blend of biblical terminology, Book of Mormon-defined praxis, and antebellum legalisms in organizing an exclusively male "priesthood" structure.¹

The purpose of this paper is to examine some early Mormon revelation texts on priesthood, to begin to understand those texts in the context of their time and place, and to briefly observe how those texts influenced later Mormonism.² The textual foundations of Mormon liturgy are not just the seed of praxis, they also created doctrine, even if some of it was temporary. Joseph Smith's narrative of angelic visits and handbook-like revelations systematized and organized a hierarchy that gradually became self-sustaining even through the shock wave of his own death. His apostolic successors took these durable texts and fading memories of early contexts to form an ever-evolving picture of governmental structure that paralleled reinterpretations of the purposes of that structure.³

The essential texts and innovations that outlined and generated this evolution began with the 1830 Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ. This initial text was followed by the ordination of a Church bishop in 1831. The nature of this office and those established in 1830 caused difficulties in understanding

their relative positioning in the hierarchy. A new office, high priest, was introduced in June 1831, and following it in November 1831, revelations provided the beginnings of a skeletal structure that limited the bishop in several ways and formally placed Joseph Smith in a supervisory role. The revelation of November 11, 1831, went through some revision, and I present a possible proto-text for that pivotal revelation to help in understanding how revelations delivered early in 1832 further enriched this structure. The fall of 1832 saw revelation that opened a richer, if intermediate, hierarchical structure. At the beginning of 1835, more offices were added to the Church: the twelve apostles and the seventy. A revelation incorporating these offices in the hierarchy appeared in April 1835. These founding texts are studied in some detail below, together with consideration of how this hierarchy was reinterpreted in the decades after Joseph Smith's death.

Summary of the Article

Specifically, I will treat these texts and developments as they center around what is now Doctrine and Covenants section 107. Sections of the paper and their contents are:

1. *Defining Revelations*. Here I discuss, among other issues, parts of the Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ, an early document now found essentially in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

2. *High Priesthood—Catalyst for Change*. This section opens the discussion of some of the leadership dynamics between Church officers mentioned above.

3. *A Possible Proto-Text for the John Whitmer Portion of the Revelation of November 11, 1831*. I deliver a close reading of the text of a November 11, 1831, revelation that later became a part of Doctrine and Covenants section 107 (there were at least two, perhaps three revelations delivered on November 11). In this case, I use the Revelation Book 1⁴ text redactions to reconstruct a possible proto-text of the first portion of the revelation. This revelation introduced a new hierarch, the president of the high priesthood.

4. *The Beginning of Church Discipline Structures—A Possible Proto-Text for the Oliver Cowdery Portion of the Revelation of November 11, 1831*. This section of the paper notes and contextualizes the seg-

ment of revelation begun in the previous section. Church discipline was outlined in the revelation, responding to a further need for behavioral boundaries in the new Church.⁵

5. *Guarding against Prelate Tyranny.* Church discipline provisions outlined by the November 11 revelation extended to procedures for dealing with a president of the high priesthood. These procedures were important at the time and can be seen in part as responding to Protestant fears of prelate tyranny.

6. *What Did “Priesthood” Mean in 1831 Mormonism?* This section briefly discusses the beginning of an ongoing theme in the paper: how the word “priesthood” evolved from reference to office to category to liturgy. At this point, the reader may wish to consult Appendix 2 of the paper, which lays out by parallel genetic text the relationship between the proto-text of the November 11 revelation and a later manuscript edition found in Revelation Book 2.⁶

7. *Interregnum—The Beginnings of Internal Structure—“Appendages.”* The current section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a compilation of revelations, beginning with the November 11, 1831, revelation itself. As Appendix 2 and the proto-texts suggest, the November revelation may have been at least two revelation episodes. Between the major manuscripts of the November revelation(s) there exist several important conceptual expansions. These were initiated or at least codified in a September 1832 pair of revelations, now represented as section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Between the November 1831 and the September 1832 revelations, several steps were taken to implement the establishment of the Presidency of the High Priesthood, an important hierarchal step later meshed with practical developments in an April 1835 revelation. The following year further revelation texts expanded the presidency’s purpose.

8. *The April 1835 Revelation.* A revelation delivered at the request of the newly ordained apostles reads as a lecture-summary of the way Smith had been thinking about theological foundations of official taxonomy. It became the initial segment of what is now section 107. A close reading of this revelation appears here and captures much of the ongoing use of name/terms such as Melchizedek and Aaronic and relative status of new priesthood

groups, including patrilineal descent narratives for various officers and particular bishops who were now written into a new grouping, the Aaronic order.

9. *Holy Protologies–Holy Descendants*. This part of the paper responds to the mythos announced in the 1832 and 1835 revelations in the context of holy families, a meme that links to both earlier and later revelations, as well as to the adoption theology that expanded in the post-Joseph Smith era.

10. *Eras in Collision–Editing the November 11, 1831, Revelation*. With the decision to attempt another issuance of Joseph Smith's revelations (realized in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants) came the publication of the November 11 revelation, not as an independent text, but as a subtext following the April 1835 revelation. However, the priesthood theories presented were based in different eras of thought and usage in Mormonism. This part of the paper shows how the November revelation was redacted in the attempt to link the two eras.

11. *Kirtland and Missouri Dissent and Canonical Modifications*. Disciplinary procedures for a Church president were encoded in the November 1831 revelation. With dissent at Kirtland, Ohio, those procedures were now in play. Three revelations in 1838 responded to this situation, revamping the original procedures in ways that made it much more difficult for a single arena to decide the fate of the highest Church leaders. The revelations were "canonized" but never became part of Church-published revelation collections.

12. *The Deprecation of the High Priesthood and Its Legacy–A Case Study*. The 1835 publication of the November revelation gave textual authority to the superiority of the High Priesthood among fellow Church offices by making the Presidency of the High Priesthood the textual equivalent of the newly evolved title of First Presidency (see section 7 of the paper). With the death of Joseph Smith, there were several ways for Mormonism to find its new leader. The ascendancy of the apostles carried with it a necessity to read the revelation texts in a different way. This part of the paper discusses some of these developmental issues and offers part one of a case study in Joseph F. Smith's response to

the tensions inherent in Church discourse between 1831 and 1918.

13. *Ordination Practice and the Revelations.* The second part of Joseph F. Smith's impact on ecclesial priesthood is studied here. Smith's views in the 1870s gradually changed as he began to read D&C 107 in a new way, finding in the April 1835 revelation a new liturgical imperative. The effect of Smith's ideas eventually bore fruit in the 1960s as Church liturgy absorbed those ideas on ordination.

14. *The Genesis of Mormon Clerical Structure.* In this part of the paper, I return to the evolution of ecclesial priesthood with an office overview and review of referential change and the meaning and use of "quorums" in rereading the early revelations for the needs, practicalities, and policies of the Church in Utah.

15. *Discipline and a President of the Church.* One of the key points of the November 11 revelation was a provision for recalling the President of the High Priesthood. That provision changed in both text and possible implementation through the next century. I discuss the realities of such discipline in terms of the revelation.

16. *Epilogue: Elijah, Sealing, and a Summation of Successional Realities.* The self-vision of the Mormon leadership is founded in more than the 1830s revelations. Much of the 1840s involved an empirical realization of the theological promise of the 1830s. Several developments set the course for succession after Joseph Smith. These were deeply connected to temple theology and polygamy. The interplay of the revelations and Nauvoo realizations is important in understanding the foundations of current Mormon narratives of why and how present praxis exists.

Appendices. There are two appendices. Appendix 1 is a stemma for D&C 107, illustrating the contributing threads of the section. Appendix 2 compares texts of the November 11 revelation and its later Revelation Book 2 incarnation. The textual changes are intermediate to those found in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (see section 10 of the paper).

1. Defining Revelations

Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants⁷ has historically played a major role in both defining and proof-texting govern-

ment in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as some other manifestations of Mormonism following Joseph Smith's death. It is a remarkable document for many reasons. No discussion of early Mormonism can be complete without an understanding of this and Smith's other revelations that explicate Mormon priesthood; this requires a careful deconstruction of those texts, including their historical context, genesis, and eventual interpretation.

The introduction of a formal "priesthood" and the development of a corresponding ecclesial structure in early Mormonism began with early revelations that took officers called teachers, priests, and elders (the word "apostle" is used, but the new Church's Articles and Covenants defined this as an elder) from the pages of the Book of Mormon.⁸ At some early date, perhaps with the text of D&C 20 following Church organization, another office, deacon, was added. There was no division of authority (no "Aaronic Priesthood" or "Melchizedek Priesthood" in later terms), merely named offices with different permitted practice for each one (except in the case of deacon—allowed to do the duties of the teacher, as required). A teacher would head a congregation where no other officers were present. A priest functioned as meeting chair in the absence of elders. In practice, congregations or impromptu meetings often selected the presiding officer or moderator from among the eligible office holders.⁹

Duties of the various offices were close to those found in branches of Protestantism, such as home visiting of members, performing baptisms, administering the Lord's Supper, etc.¹⁰ The basic organizational structure consisted of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as "first and second elder" together with the mentioned pecking order among the early offices.

2. High Priesthood—Catalyst for Change

In June 1831, the office of high priest was introduced during a multi-day conference.¹¹ The office was added to the list of those already given, and was regarded as a higher office with duties that had not surfaced previously, particularly in the area of salvation assurance. Previous to this, the office of bishop had been established with certain open-ended duties whose relationship to other Church officers was unclear. Edward Partridge was

ordained a bishop February 4, 1831. Partridge was ordained a high priest in June, but the relationship of his bishopric to that circumstance was not clear at the time. Local groups of Church members selected their leaders from the group, or those leaders were appointed by missionaries preaching in the area.¹² These groups are often referred to as “churches” in the revelations. But priesthood offices were still without a formal internal structure: no architecture like “Aaronic Priesthood,” no “quorums,” or quorum presidents, etc.

Organization was added in 1831 with a revelation given on November 11, in Hiram, Ohio. The “autograph” of the revelation may be lost, but a very early copy is found in Revelation Book 1.¹³ This copy is in the handwriting of John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery. It was intended for the Book of Commandments; complete typesetting failed by virtue of the destruction of the printing office in Independence, Missouri, in 1833. The revelation was a foundation for D&C 107. Its importance as textual precursor to much of Mormon praxis and both formal and informal administrative thought cannot be overemphasized. Given that importance, I have constructed a version of this text that may be an early form, based on Revelation Book 1.

3. A Possible Proto-Text for the John Whitmer Portion of the Revelation of November 11, 1831

The Revelation Book 1 text of the November 11 revelation appears in the hands of John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery. The portion immediately below corresponds essentially to the Whitmer text.¹⁴

A Revelation given at Hiram Portage Co Nov 11th 1831

To the Church of Christ in the Land of Zion in addition to the Church Laws respecting Church business verily I say unto you, saith the Lord of hosts there must needs be presiding Elders to preside over them who are of the office of an Elder: & also Priests over them who are of the office of a Priest; & also Teachers over them who are of the office of a Teacher, & from Teacher to Priest, And also the deacons; wherefore from Deacon to Teacher, & from Teacher to Priest, & from Priest to Elder; severally as they are appointed, according to the Church Articles & Covenants: then cometh the high Priest hood, which is the greatest of all: wherefore it must needs be that one be appointed of the high Priest hood to preside over the

Priest hood: & and he shall be called President of the ~~hood~~ high Priest hood of the Church; or in other ~~high~~ words the Presiding high Priest ~~hood~~ over the high Priesthood of the Church; from the same cometh the administering of ordinances & blessings upon the Church, by the Laying on of the hands: wherefore the office of a Bishop is not equal unto it; for the office of a Bishop is in administering all ~~things~~ temporal things: nevertheless a Bishop must be chosen from the high Priesthood, that he may be set apart unto the ministering of temporal things, having a knowledge of them by the Spirit of truth; & also to be a Judge in Israel to do the business of the Church, to sit down in Judgement upon transgressors upon testimony it shall be laid before them according to the Laws, by the assistance of his councillors whom he hath chosen or will choose among the Elders of the Church.¹⁵

This portion of the revelation resolves (in part) several of the issues outlined above. It creates a new hierarchy, the president of the high priesthood, who would preside over the other priesthood offices of the Church.¹⁶ It acknowledges that the Articles and Covenants (again, essentially D&C 20) did not cover the necessary ground. The high priesthood is designated “the greatest of all.” In the ordering of offices in D&C 20, this places the high priest above the other offices—deacon, teacher, priest, elder. That ordering is based primarily on who takes charge in groups. Joseph Smith kept that ordering intact as further priesthood offices were introduced. Even so, the office of high priest still constituted the office that “presides” but it was a status that became less meaningful with the development of bureaucratic structure.¹⁷

The president of the high priesthood became what the Latter-day Saints later called the “president of the Church.” The revelation also partially mapped the office of bishop, an important feature, since Edward Partridge had been a bishop for nearly a year.

The revelation makes clear that the bishop should be a high priest though he may have counselors selected from the elders at this point—it was not until 1877 that bishops’ counselors were required in practice to be high priests. By 1877, Church leaders saw the judicial aspects of the bishopric as requiring the high priesthood. In the revelation, the bishop ranks below the president of the high priests, and this resolved an important difficulty in Church administration (i.e., where did the bishop’s dictates stand

in relation to Joseph Smith, for example). The revelation introduces the idea of “keys” (in the sense it came to be used decades later) without actually using the word, by designating the president of the high priesthood as the office which controls administration of ordinances, and “blessings on the Church by the laying on of hands” (perhaps a nascent reference to the future office of “patriarch” as well as further defining where the bishop stood in relation to the president).¹⁸

Two other matters are suggested by the preamble of the revelation. This revelation is an addition to the law of the Church.¹⁹ And it applies particularly to the Church in Zion (Missouri). At least part of the reason for the latter provision was the fact that Bishop Partridge became a resident of Independence, Missouri, months prior to this revelation.²⁰ Finally, the role of the bishop in Church discipline is briefly outlined. In the second part of the revelation, there is further information on Church discipline and the role of the president of the high priesthood in that.

4. The Beginning of Church Discipline Structures— A Possible Proto-Text for the Oliver Cowdery Portion of the Revelation of November 11, 1831

The November 11, 1831, revelation divides naturally into two segments, properly corresponding to what may have been two separate revelations. The first revelation begins with the portion quoted in the previous section in the hand of John Whitmer and concludes in the Oliver Cowdery portion given below with the word “Amen.” This “Amen” terminates judicial discussion of the revelation and begins a discussion of internal official structure. Therefore, if we include the base text of D&C 69 at least three revelations were dictated by Joseph Smith on November 11. When the terms “first” and “second” revelations of November 11 are used below, they do not refer to the base text of D&C 69, but to the combination of the portions of the proto-text given in this section and the previous section of the paper, as separated by the first “Amen” below.²¹

thus shall he [the bishop] be a judge even a common judge among the inhabitants of Zion until the borders are enlarged, & it becomes necessary to have other Bishops or judges. & inasmuch as there are other Bishops appointed, they shall act in the same office. & again,

verily I say unto you, the most important business of the church, & the most difficult cases of the church, inasmuch as there is not sufficient satisfaction upon the decision of the judge, it shall be handed over, & carried up unto the court of the church before the president of the high Priesthood & the president of the Court of the high priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve to assist as counsellors, & thus the president of the high priesthood, & his counsellors, shall have power to decide upon testimony, according to the laws of the church; & after this decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord; for this is the highest court of the church of God & a final decision upon controversies, all persons belonging to the church are not exempt from this court of the church & inasmuch as the president of the high priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common court of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counsellors of the high Priesthood, & their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him. thus none shall be exempt from the justice of the Laws of God, that all things may be done in order, & in solemnity before me, to truth & righteousness. Amen. A few more words in addition to the Laws of the church. And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of the president over the office of a Deacon, is to preside over twelve Deacons, to set in council with them, & to teach them their duty, edifying one another as it is given according to the covenants.²² And also the duty of the president over the office of the Teachers, is to preside over twenty four of the Teachers, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office as given in the covenants. Also the duty of the president over the priesthood is to preside over forty eight priests, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.²³ And again the duty of the president over the office of the Elders, is to preside over ninety six Elders, & to set in council with them, & to teach them according to the covenants. And again the duty of the president of the office of the High Priesthood, is to preside over the whole church, & to be like unto Moses. behold here is wisdom: yea, to be a Seer, a revelator, a translator, & prophet, having all the gifts of God, which he bestoweth upon the head of the church: Wherefore now let every man learn his duty, & to act in the office in which he is appointed., in all diligence. he that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand. & he that learneth not his duty & sheweth himself not approved, shall not be counted worth to stand; even so: Amen.

The establishment of Church courts begins here. There is a court of common pleas (headed by the common judge), a mimic in terminology and duty of the common law courts of antebellum

America, particularly in Ohio and New York. The word “common” takes its meaning from a standard name for lower state courts of the period (and their British common law counterparts), which heard civil and minor criminal cases.

The bishop is assigned the role of judge in the lower court. There may be a “jury” attached to a case in certain instances. The courts of common pleas typically handled civil disputes, and the bishop’s court would do the same. Cases where a Church member had a complaint against another member might be handled by this common court. The name implies that lesser infractions were the province of the bishop and that any Church member had access to this court for redress of complaint.

Following the setup of the lower court system, the revelation continues with the establishment of a superior court structure. The superior court is attached to the president of the high priesthood and functions as both an appeals court (indeed, the court of final appeal at this point) as well as one of original jurisdiction in complex or serious cases. This court may not function without what is essentially an ad hoc twelve-man jury, made up of high priests, who have no permanent status beyond a given court session, at least on paper. Again, this superior (supreme) court handles difficult cases of Church discipline, disputes between Church members, or cases on appeal.²⁴

5. Guarding against the Abuse of Authority

As a final provision, the president of the high priesthood may be tried, obviously not by the superior court system, but in the companion lower court, the “common council.” This is an augmented common court (i.e., the bishop) with a twelve-man jury (again they are to be high priests). The bishop together with his jury would pass judgment on the president of the high priesthood.²⁵ One glaring lack in the provision exists. If the president of the high priesthood is disciplined, perhaps removed or even cut off (excommunicated), then how is he to be replaced? It was some time before this gap in the system was addressed. Late in the Kirtland period (1837), the president of the high priesthood would go before the common court. However, by then there was some provision for succession.²⁶ As the revelation says, “none shall be exempt from the justice of the Laws of God,” a phrase

which defines the jurisdiction of these courts as applying to Church matters, or at least involving Church members.²⁷

The establishment of the president of the high priesthood changed some provisions in revelations given earlier in the month of November 1831. For example, a revelation given November 1 outlined provisions for selecting new bishops, who were now to be high priests. They were to be selected by a “conference of high priests.” The text of that revelation would evolve considerably by the time of its publication in the Doctrine and Covenants (1835). Those changes were deployed largely in response to the establishment of the president of the high priesthood and other provisions of the November 11 revelation.

The last portion of the revelation sets out group organization for existing priesthood offices: deacon, teacher, priest, elder, and high priest. There is no provision for presidencies in the revelation. Each office gets a president. The sizes of these groups (“quorum” would not be used for some time) seem small (twelve for the deacons), but this was not a real issue at the time; most men, when ordained at all, were ordained elders up to the June 1831 conference. Church conferences, where records exist in this period, documented small numbers. The October 25, 1831, conference at Orange, Ohio, noted twelve high priests, seventeen elders, four priests, three teachers, and four deacons. The idea of having multiple quorums of deacons, teachers, priests, and elders is not addressed but is perhaps suggested by the numerical restrictions. In any case, quorum size was not carefully observed. The Kirtland elders quorum grew to 300 members at one point. Quorum membership and leadership were generally a matter of election prior to 1841.²⁸ The high priests have no numerical restriction, but they form a group as suggested in the establishment of the president. Joseph Smith did become president of the high priesthood, but not until the following year. The establishment of a presidency (counselors) had to wait for several months.

6. What Did “Priesthood” Mean in 1831 Mormonism?

The revelation shows something of the way the early Church used titles. The phrase “Also the duty of the president over the priesthood is to preside over forty eight priests” signals that the

word “priesthood” was used in exactly the same way that “high priesthood” was: priesthood referred to the office of priest. There was no concept of Aaronic and Melchizedek divisions at this point.²⁹ When Smith quoted John the Baptist saying, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron” this meant that Smith and Cowdery were thereby made “priests.”³⁰ “Priesthood” was gradually understood differently after 1835 and the original usage was essentially lost by the twentieth century. But in revelations prior to 1835, phrases like “lesser priesthood” (for example D&C 84:30) referred to the office of priest.³¹ Reading the revelations without that in mind has generated acontextual readings over time.³²

The November 11 revelation outlines regulation of the priests group. It was to have a president from among its number. This was modified in 1835: the presidency of the priests group (later, “quorum”) would eventually fall to the office of bishop, without the benefit of counselors (see below).

7. Interregnum—

The Beginnings of Internal Structure—“Appendages”

D&C 107 is a compilation of revelations. There are two major parts in the compilation, one from November 1831 that I have briefly considered above, and another from April 1835. In D&C 107 these are arranged in reverse chronological order. It will be apparent later that the 1835 segment has a rather different character than the 1831 segment and may itself be seen as a historical compilation. As these two revelations were combined in the 1835 D&C, still other revelations and regulations were interleaved in these texts to form what we now know as D&C 107. The period between 1831 and 1835 exhibited rapid developments in Mormon leadership structure.

Between the various texts of the November 11, 1831, revelation and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants text (section 3 of that first edition, 107 of the 1981 edition) there were several developments. Among these were the two important revelations of September 22, 23, 1832,³³ combined as LDS D&C 84. In this text we see the beginnings of a taxonomy of Mormon priesthood, more nuanced than previous classifications, but not yet mature. The

September 1832 revelations review the two “priesthoods” in the Church at this point.

It is useful to recall that:

1. the lesser priesthood (or just “priesthood” in 1831) = the office of priest,³⁴ and

2. the high priesthood (or occasionally, just “priesthood” in the following text) = the office of high priest.³⁵

Within modern Mormonism, it is very common in Church literature and discussion referencing D&C 84 passages to assume that lesser priesthood references the concept of the Aaronic order and high priesthood is the Melchizedek order, but this is incorrect.³⁶ In 1832 the more refined and paradigm-shifting notions of Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood had not surfaced yet in any well-defined way. As one can see, this both rationalizes but also changes the currently assigned meaning of passages like this one (D&C 84:31–42):

31 Therefore, as I said concerning the sons of Moses—for the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed—

32 And the sons of Moses and of Aaron shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, upon Mount Zion in the Lord’s house, whose sons are ye; and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church.

33 *For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods*³⁷ of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

41 But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it,

and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.

42 And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you. [Emphasis added.]

“Sons of Aaron” is synonymous with priests, “sons of Moses” is a similar title for those ordained high priests.³⁸ Thus the “oath and covenant,” as this passage is commonly called, really applies to those of the high priesthood. However, consider the more detailed authority architecture introduced by the revelation:

29 And again, the offices of elder and bishop are necessary appendages belonging unto the high priesthood.

30 And again, the offices of teacher and deacon are necessary appendages belonging to the lesser priesthood, which priesthood was confirmed upon Aaron and his sons.

Here, two subgroups of priesthood offices are now defined,³⁹ one headed by the office of high priest, the other by the office of priest. Other offices are defined as “appendages” to these two—that is, something added to the principal idea or object, but not necessary. We see here the beginnings of the more mature taxonomy to be laid out in 1835. But that reclassification was considerably more radical in a number of ways.

Making the office of elder an appendage to the high priesthood brings the elders, riding the coattails of the high priests, into the covenant cycle mentioned above. The April 1835 revelation (and major contribution to D&C 107) alters this relationship still further.⁴⁰ The bishop, while still an appendage to the high priesthood, is different from the elder. No elder is required to be a high priest first, before acting as an elder (whatever that might mean), while the office of bishop began and remained an ordained office, later seen in the September 1832 revelations, as growing out of the high priesthood. But a bishop, both in theory and in practice, must also be a high priest. This duality of ordination eventually made its way into other offices beyond the lesser priests (where the bishop was theologically located in 1835), for example, patriarch, seventy, and, according to Joseph F. Smith, apostle.

The revelation of November 11, 1831, was accepted in Zion (Missouri) as an addition to the law of the Church on July 3, 1832, but remained unpublished to the body of the Church.⁴¹ The office of president of the high priesthood stood vacant until a January 25, 1832, conference at Amherst, Ohio, when Joseph Smith was elected to fill the office. Sidney Rigdon “ordained” Smith at the time (Joseph Smith was ordained a high priest in June 1831). Between that time and March 8, 1832, Smith became acquainted with the idea of having counselors, forming a “presidency” of the high priesthood. A revelation received on March 5, 1832, reads in part,

unto the office of the presidency of the high Priesthood I have given authority to preside with the assistance of his councellers over all the concerns of the church wherefore stand ye fast claim your priesthood in authority yet in meekness and I am able to make you abound and be fruitfull and you shall never fall for unto you I have given the keys of the kingdom and if you transgress not they shall never be taken from you. Wherefore feed my sheep even so Amen.⁴²

On March 8, 1832, Jesse Gause and Sidney Rigdon became Smith’s counselors.⁴³ Gause was the subject of a revelation at the time, which now appears as D&C 81, outlining his duties. At a subsequent conference in Missouri in April, the presidency was also sustained. The establishment of the Presidency of the High Priesthood was interrupted during the summer of 1832 when Gause left on a mission, never to return, and Rigdon had a mental breakdown, in part over his continuing issues with Edward Partridge, and was removed from office for a time.⁴⁴ Rigdon was reinstated that fall but no successor to Gause was chosen until 1833.

In January 1833 Joseph Smith received the following revelation:

Behold I say unto you my Servent Frederick, Listen to the word of Jesus Christ your Lord and your Redeemer thou hast desired of me to know which would be the most worth unto you. behold blessed art tho[u] for this thing. Now I say unto you, my Servent Joseph is called to do a great work and hath need that he may do the work of translation for the Salvation of Souls. Verily verily I say unto you thou art called to be a Councillor & scribe unto my Servent Joseph Let thy

farm be consecrated for bringing forth of the revelations and tho[u] shalt be blessed and lifted up at the last day even so Amen.⁴⁵

Williams was not formally set apart (ordained—the terminology was fluid) until March 18.⁴⁶

On March 8, 1833, a revelation (D&C 90) was received which directed that Rigdon and Frederick Granger Williams be Joseph’s counselors. Moreover, the revelation directed that they hold the “keys” jointly with Joseph. Their role in the presidency was outlined:

6 And again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom;

7 As also through your administration the keys of the school of the prophets, which I have commanded to be organized;

8 That thereby they may be perfected in their ministry for the salvation of Zion, and of the nations of Israel, and of the Gentiles, as many as will believe;

9 That through your administration they may receive the word, and through their administration the word may go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews.⁴⁷

Rigdon then requested that Joseph do as the revelation stated and on March 18 both he and Williams were “ordained” to stand with Joseph, holding the keys of the priesthood. The meaning of this morphed over time, and that change made it possible for the apostles to send Rigdon packing in the August 1844 succession disputes. Smith used “keys” in a number of ways as temple cosmology came to the forefront of Nauvoo teaching. The Book of Abraham publication in 1842 supported these expansions as did the incorporation of Masonic world-views into Nauvoo rhetoric. Keys were not just associated with hierarchical position. They were also sacred words and signs and other sacral knowledge.⁴⁸

Further evolution in the Presidency of the High Priesthood took place the following year (1834) with the coming of a permanent (standing) council of high priests, the “high council.” Members of the presidency were designated as supervisors of the body who in some sense acted as both attorneys and jurors. Organiza-

tional minutes suggest these officers were to give lifetime service, absent removal from the jurisdiction of the council, death, or transgression. In the founding document of the institution, the presidency receives some further refinement in regard to the counselors or assistants as they were sometimes called in Church minutes.⁴⁹ They are able to function alone, without the president, perhaps acknowledging the 1833 revelations. Indeed, all three were designated presidents, a tradition that passed to stake presidencies and derived from their essential equality of authority in the D&C 102 minutes.

In the meantime, there was a terminological shift, as well as a succession provision. Early New York convert David Whitmer was identified as successor to Smith, should he fall, and the Presidency of the High Priesthood at Kirtland began to be referred to as the First Presidency. The reason for the change of reference was no doubt the anticipation of other presidencies, like the Zion presidency (July 1834). The identifier "First" left no doubt which group was referred to. A number of documents was back-written to include the new name. All understood that the First Presidency was the Presidency of the High Priesthood (of the Church). However, in this case, the terminology was not applied to Smith's apostolic successors. The apostles were not identified with high priesthood directly (though they were called the traveling high council). Later Church administrations have sometimes ignored and sometimes claimed the title, Presidency of the High Priesthood.⁵⁰

In anticipation of the temple in Kirtland and Joseph Smith's removal to Far West, Missouri, a close cooperation, an interleaving of officers, began between the Missouri and Ohio presidencies and councils. The Ohio high council might operate with any of the presidents or assistants and any twelve of the twenty-four councilors making up the council. With 1837 bringing dissent in both Ohio and Missouri, the cooperative equality disappeared and the term First Presidency was strengthened as the preferred term for the Presidency of the High Priesthood in Ohio. By 1841 the assistant presidents were again called counselors with one final exception, John C. Bennett, where the term now suggested a kind of reduced status.

Joseph Smith's revelation of April 1835 was received at the request of the newly formed Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This revelation was a shift in the textual landscape of Mormonism and created fascinating terminological fault lines.⁵¹

8. The April 1835 Revelation

Joseph Smith founded two new priesthood groups early in 1835, the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy. While the apostles had been presaged before the formal organization of the Church (D&C 18), the first ordinations took place in February 1835. After their first attempt at functioning as a "traveling high council" and missionary force, the apostles felt the need for some more detailed direction regarding their standing and duty in the Church and asked Joseph Smith for this direction. Heber C. Kimball reminisced about the experience in his journal: "One evening when we were assembled to receive instructions, the revelation contained in the third⁵² section of the Doctrine and Covenants, on priesthood was given to brother Joseph as he was instructing us and we praised the Lord."⁵³

The text of the April 1835 revelation takes the form of a lecture, settling different questions, establishing terminology and the ordering of offices, and appealing to both Old Testament and New Testament-related narratives, a tradition with Joseph Smith, as well as combining several revelatory threads. The text of the revelation was printed as section 3 of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in August 1835, a project that had been underway for some time. Since it will be more efficient to comment on a text form that is familiar, I will use the form of the currently printed version in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants corresponding to D&C 107:1–57.⁵⁴

1 There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood.

2 Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest.

3 Before his day it was called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.

4 But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood.

5 All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood.

6 But there are two divisions or grand heads—one is the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this passage in modern ecclesial Mormonism. One hundred and twenty years later, it was still at work as it redefined the liturgy of ordination. Conceptually the revelation establishes two authority “pools” from which all Mormon priesthood offices are drawn. These pools are the Melchizedek Priesthood and the Aaronic Priesthood. This revelation marks the first time this revised architecture appears in detail. The remark about the Levitical priesthood is curious, since it folds the order into the Aaronic pool, while the Old Testament suggests a hierarchical difference. However, it is certainly a nod to the Mosaic era, where the Levites and the family of Aaron formed two different priestly castes. The revelation formalized a trend in the referential struggle to allow a way to speak both of groups of offices as a superset of particular officers and of individual ranks in the system. Terms like “Melchizedek High Priesthood” were being used at this period, along with other hybrids, to get some flexibility of language. Even with the April revelation that language would continue to evolve. Tracing and making useful sense of the way the rank and file spoke of Mormon authority in these early years are a frustrating and probably unhelpful enterprises in trying to draw conclusions about “doctrine.” The best that can be said is referential language had not settled into a uniform lexicon. The April revelation represents a codification of developing semantic clusters and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, a restrictive and solidifying scheme, though sometimes exegetes would force seams of historical meaning to appear consistent.⁵⁵

7 The office of an elder comes under the priesthood of Melchizedek.

This short sentence addressed a question resulting from early practice and revelation. It seems familiar from D&C 84, but recall that the system there was quite different. Its import is that the office of elder is no longer a tag-along to the high priesthood. It for-

mally sections out a bit of the reminted category, “Melchizedek Priesthood.”

8 The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things.

9 The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church.

10 High priests after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things, and also in the office of an elder, priest (of the Levitical order), teacher, deacon, and member.

11 An elder has a right to officiate in his stead when the high priest is not present.

12 The high priest and elder are to administer in spiritual things, agreeable to the covenants and commandments of the church; and they have a right to officiate in all these offices of the church when there are no higher authorities present.

Some of the important phrases here are “The Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek” and “High priests after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood.” By themselves they are not new expressions in Mormon discourse, but in the context of verses 1–5 they take on a new meaning. The high priesthood is no longer the fount from which the offices of elder and bishop spring according to the April revelation, and the high priesthood itself lives under the umbrella of the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁵⁶ The ordering phrase suggesting that an elder has the right to officiate when a high priest is not present is an artifact of the official pecking order of D&C 20. This ordering of offices effectively depends on the principle of common consent and later practice seems to negate it. The early Church struggled enough with traveling ministries interfering with local Church administration, reorganizing branches, or contravening the instructions of local officers, to the point where appointed ecclesial leadership often trumped office ordering. That, and the desire to flatten this “latent authority,” led to a certain demotion of the high priesthood.⁵⁷

13 The second priesthood is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations.

14 Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances.

15 The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same.

16 No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant of Aaron.

17 But as a high priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood has authority to officiate in all the lesser offices, he may officiate in the office of bishop when no literal descendant of Aaron can be found, provided he is called and set apart and ordained unto this power by the hands of the Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Here we have a *new* definition of “lesser priesthood.” It no longer refers just to the office of priest, as it does in D&C 84 for example, and the offices of deacon and teacher are not styled as appendages to it. Instead, all are now drawn from the pool of the Aaronic order. An important addition here is the office of bishop. It is now a part of the Aaronic order, not an appendage to the high priesthood. Moreover, the Old Testament notion of patrilineal heritage attaches to the bishopric. If a literal descendent of Aaron can be identified, he may officiate without being ordained to the high priesthood (which may still officiate in the other offices). During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, no man was identified by the presidency as being in this category. Its meaning was not practical, and its religious value lies in the linkage it creates to the ancient pre-Christian world. In Joseph Smith’s view, the “priesthoods” of all former dispensations would be included in this last restoration.

One more item related to the terminology of this portion of the revelation: the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood. This has an interesting connection to the 1832 revelations contained in D&C 84. With the priesthood architecture of the 1832 revelations, the priest is a kind of parent office, the teacher and deacon offices characterized as outgrowths of the priestly office. By the 1870s at least, some had started to use the language of verse 15 above to consider the bishop the “President of the Aaronic Priesthood.”⁵⁸ This kind of speech is curious. Focusing one eye on 1832 and another on 1835, there is a perfectly rational explanation for such language. But, this bridge between the two worlds is unstable, and then paradoxical, in a broad sense. On the other hand,

crossing that bridge brings into view the office of a functioning bishop in current praxis: he is presiding priest⁵⁹ (in 1835, no longer part of the high priesthood) and presiding high priest at the same time. In 1832 “bishop” was seen as an outgrowth of the high priesthood—though Partridge was ordained before the high priesthood was announced. This figures into the 1835 revelations and redactions in complex ways.⁶⁰

18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

20 The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.

Joseph Smith repeated the quotation from Hebrews 12 in sermons touching on a maturing temple concept and its ritual. In a sense, this passage affirms that the ideas of D&C 84 are still valid, simply expressed in a new context. In an important way, the revelation takes what was once the sole province of the high priesthood, and spreads it out into the new authority pool, the Melchizedek Priesthood. This language is clearly reflective of the book of Hebrews as a whole and Smith saw the book as particularly useful and important in a number of ways.

21 Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers growing out of, or appointed of or from among those who are ordained to the several offices in these two priesthoods.

22 Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

The Presidency of the High Priesthood is molded into the new formalism with a new title: the Presidency of the Church or, as it had already become known, the First Presidency.⁶¹ This is both a new and a continuing construct.⁶²

23 The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

24 And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned.

While early practice following this revelation evidences otherwise, the language here suggests that we look back to the twelve counselors in the court of the president of the high priesthood. Indeed, so did the establishment of the high council in 1834. In fact, the apostles are a traveling high council as later text announces. The word “quorum” appears again, which now replaces less specialized terms used in earlier revelations. The apostles as a group are equal in authority to the presidency “quorum.” The word “equal” here has never been taken seriously, except in terms of succession—with the possible exception of the financial difficulties during the Wilford Woodruff administration.⁶³

25 The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be special witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

26 And they form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named.

27 And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other—

28 A majority may form a quorum when circumstances render it impossible to be otherwise—

29 Unless this is the case, their decisions are not entitled to the same blessings which the decisions of a quorum of three presidents were anciently, who were ordained after the order of Melchizedek, and were righteous and holy men.⁶⁴

The seventy are addressed and again the word equal is applied to their standing in regard to the apostles. By transitivity, the seventy are equal to the presidency, but again, the meaning is typically seen as relevant only in terms of succession. The Church presidency is here given an ancient (Old Testament) basis. This meshing of Old and New Testaments was again typical of Joseph Smith’s ideas, later characterized by him as “welding” former revelatory epochs into one.⁶⁵

30 The decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity;

31 Because the promise is, if these things abound in them they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord.

32 And in case that any decision of these quorums is made in unrighteousness, it may be brought before a general assembly of the several quorums, which constitute the spiritual authorities of the church; otherwise there can be no appeal from their decision.

The judicial character of these groups is hinted at here, and also a new judicial body is founded, the “several quorums.” The meaning here is vague and has never been tested, although it could refer to the “solemn assembly” motif. Perhaps it also appears in the approval schemes of new policy or revelation, as in the 1978 priesthood change.⁶⁶ A group like this functioned in Kirtland for a time during 1836, where “the several quorums for Church business” constituted a general quorum or council. In that case it included the presidencies of Kirtland and Far West, the two high councils, the apostles (as traveling high council), the two bishoprics, and the seven presidents of the seventies.

33 The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews.

34 The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews;

35 The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews.

The authoritative ordering not implied in the earlier text is given here. Functionally, the presidency directs the apostles, who direct the seventies in turn. Actual praxis has never been that pure, however.

36 The standing high councils, at the stakes of Zion, form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the quorum of the presidency, or to the traveling high council.

The high councils en masse form a quorum. There are possible alternate readings (each high council forms a quorum, etc.), but intentionally, this one is suggested by other revelations discussed later, and text to follow. Never truly tested as an issue of government, it could be interpreted as a safety valve, available if the unthinkable happened.

37 The high council in Zion form a quorum equal in authority in the affairs of the church, in all their decisions, to the councils of the Twelve at the stakes of Zion.

This curious passage seems to place the Zion high council on a level, by themselves, with the Twelve Apostles (and it also tends to work against the alternate interpretation for high councils above). Since there is no designated Zion high council at present, the point is moot perhaps, but interesting.⁶⁷ Moreover, the apostles, as a body, were, in this era, barred from interfering in stakes. That would begin to change in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith began to trust Brigham Young and the apostles, removing their activity restrictions and placing many of them in his inner circle in terms of liturgy, polygamy, and politics.⁶⁸

38 It is the duty of the traveling high council to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others.

39 It is the duty of the Twelve, in all large branches of the church, to ordain evangelical ministers,⁶⁹ as they shall be designated unto them by revelation—

40 The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made.

The canonical regulation of Church “patriarchs” is here. Joseph Smith allowed that the New Testament “evangelist” was equivalent to the Mormon office of patriarch. The revelation indicates that they are to be called by the apostles in all large branches of the Church.⁷⁰ The patrilineal descent trope already mentioned in regard to bishops reappears here for patriarchs but as a continuance of the Genesis 1–11 ancients. It was never enforced except in the case of descendants of Joseph Smith Sr. relative to the “Patriarch to the Church,” a now deprecated office. The text telegraphed more apostolic intrusion in established Church zones.

The patriarchal ordinations created important emotional loyalties. Those loyalties were influential among Latter-day Saints on a social level beyond formal Church structure.

41 This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage in the following manner:

42 From Adam to Seth, . . .

53 Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

54 And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.

55 And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.

56 And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation.

57 These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time.

An excerpt here or perhaps a condensation from the Enoch mythos first explored in the early 1830s, the text gives the lineal descent of the ancient patriarchal authority that provides a background mythology for the 1834 office of patriarch. The revelation is linked to a vision of Adam-ondi-Ahman⁷¹ and it suggests the compiled nature of the April revelation. These priesthood genealogies of the Aaronic (D&C 68, 107), patriarchal (D&C 107), and high priesthoods (D&C 84) not only provide for, or subscribe to, the legitimacy of ancientness, they form a part of the narrative of gathering both in holy communities and in the Elijah-mediated chain of salvation.⁷²

The effect of the April 1835 revelation is difficult to fully quantify. It gradually changed the discursive world of Mormonism in many important ways. Perhaps the most curious part about the April revelation was not internal, but was the decision of the 1835 editorial committee to include the November 11, 1831, revelation as a continuing text in publication, even leaving in the special directive to Zion (and probably directed to the sometimes re-

calcitrant Partridge in 1831). The semantic tension between the two texts is evident. But there were certain important elements of the November revelation not found anywhere else. Smith was sensitive to charges in the past that he produced revelations at need. Preserving the text of the November revelation was important to all concerned, and useful given the rigid nature of the faith of many.⁷³

9. Holy Protologies—Holy Descendants

As noted already, patrilineal descent of bishops had no practical discernible application, so what is its purpose? While it may be interpreted as offering the office of bishop as a restoration from the ancient world, securing Mormon exceptionalism in yet another way, it also offers a look at the way early Latter-day Saints saw themselves. Their religion was not just a reappearance of the ancient order of things. The Saints were descendants of the ancients in body as well as in spirit. The idea that they might be seen as children of Aaron (an image that appears prominently in the September 1832 revelations in both a literal and an adoptive sense) conferred a kind of immortality that was strengthened through Joseph's career. Modern biology tells us that if Aaron's line didn't die out, then we are all descended from him—but patriarchal blessings continue the powerful adoption theology from the earliest years of the restoration.

The 1832 and 1835 revelations each capture within them holy genealogies for Mormon priesthoods and use those protological foundations to regularize and sacralize office. The September 1832 revelations linked the high priesthood to and simultaneously legitimized the Mosaic dispensation by providing a way for the great prophet to fit into an authoritative pathway. Such pathways formed a vital part of the message of Mormonism. Ordination to the ministry was not by the authority of the community—through believer priesthood—but by legal actors legitimized by ordination through a traceable line of predecessors: a line that had either to terminate with the first man, Adam, or God himself. The great Mormon apologists found in this the justification for Mormonism. The linkage to the ancient legal actors was lost. It could only be re-established through an angelology—the Elias⁷⁴ motif—that allowed the ancients to return, bringing with them a restoration of lost con-

nection to the Adamic era, a continuing theme that broadened, solidified, and flowered with the Elijah doctrine. One of the tributaries to the 1835 revelation rewrote the office of priest as Aaronic and the office of bishop as the high priesthood of the Aaronic order, giving the bishopric an ancient legitimacy that simultaneously matched and restructured the 1832 “priesthood” in the office of bishop. The 1834 patriarch, Joseph Smith Sr., found his holy genealogy and legitimacy within the genealogy of Genesis 1–11 as the 1835 revelation read his office back to the Adamic generation.⁷⁵ Each of these founding myths and protocols placed the various branches of Mormon priesthood in a landscape that did not simply mimic the King James language of ancient office but provided both justification and legal foundation for the new Mormon revelation. Inevitably this drew on and then emphasized the “priesthood restoration” narratives for angelic encounters with John the Baptist, Peter, James and John, Moses, “Elias” and Elijah.⁷⁶ This sets the stage to consider how Joseph Smith and his fellow editors treated the text of the November 11 revelation when they published it as “part 2” of the April 1835 revelation in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁷⁷

10. Eras in Collision—Editing the November 11, 1831, Revelation

When D&C 107 was printed (as D&C 3) in late summer 1835, it contained both the April 1835 revelation and the November 11, 1831, revelation conjoined. However the terminology and priesthood architecture of the two revelations were not the same. Meanwhile, the November 11, 1831, revelation was heavily modified in D&C 107 to reflect at least some of the organizational development in the bishopric and president of the high priesthood offices as well as the new office of seventy. But the terminological inconsistencies were not made coherent. The 1835 publication committee felt some urgency in having the November 1831 revelation in print, at least in modified form. It provided direction in a number of circumstances, integrated new priesthood offices (apostles, seventies) with old (Presidency of the High Priesthood), and provided a platform to disseminate several new revelations effecting organizational topology, which were essentially unknown or at least unpublished up to that point.

In the excerpts below, the portions of the D&C version of the November 11 revelation that are new are shown in bold, while omitted portions of the November 11 revelation are highlighted in italics. Pronoun changes and accidentals are generally ignored. To make reference easier, the text and verse numbering from the current (1981) LDS Doctrine and Covenants is used as comparator to the 1831 proto-text.

Proto-Text Nov. 11 Revelation

To the Church of Christ in the Land of Zion in addition to the Church Laws respecting Church business verily I say unto you, saith the Lord of hosts there must needs be presiding Elders to preside over who are of the office of an Elder: & also Priests over them who are of the office of a Priest;

& also Teachers over them who are of the office of a Teacher, *& from Teacher to Priest*, And also the deacons; wherefore from Deacon to Teacher, & from Teacher to Priest, & from Priest to Elder; severally as they are appointed, according to the *Church Articles & Covenants*:

D&C 107: 58–100

58 It is the duty of the Twelve, also, to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church, agreeable to the revelation which says:⁷⁸

59 To the church of Christ in the land of Zion, in addition to the church laws respecting church business—

60 Verily, I say unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts, there must needs be presiding elders to preside over those who are of the office of an elder;

61 And also priests to **preside** over those who are of the office of a priest;⁷⁹

62 And also teachers to **preside** over those who are of the office of a teacher, **in like manner**, and also the deacons—

63 Wherefore, from deacon to teacher, and from teacher to priest, and from priest to elder, severally as they are appointed, according to the **covenants and commandments of the church.**⁸⁰

then cometh the high Priest hood, which is the greatest of all: wherefore it must needs be that one be appointed of the high Priest hood to preside over the Priest hood: & and he shall be called President of the ~~hood~~ high Priest hood of the Church; or in other ~~high~~ words the Presiding high Priest ~~hood~~ over the high Priesthood of the Church; from the same cometh the administering of ordinances & blessings upon the Church, by the Laying on of the hands:

wherefore the office of a Bishop is not equal unto it; for the office of a Bishop is in administering all ~~things~~ temporal things: nevertheless a Bishop must be chosen from the high Priesthood,

that he may be set apart unto the ministering of temporal things, having a knowledge of them by the Spirit of truth; & also to be a Judge in Israel to do the business of the Church, to sit ~~down~~ in Judgement upon transgressors upon testimony it shall be laid before them according to the Laws, by the assistance of his councillors whom he hath chosen or will choose among the Elders of the church.

64 Then comes the High Priesthood, which is the greatest of all.

65 Wherefore, it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church;

66 Or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church.

67 From the same comes the administering of ordinances and blessings upon the church, by the laying on of the hands.

68 Wherefore, the office of a bishop is not equal unto it; for the office of a bishop is in administering all temporal things;

69 Nevertheless a bishop must be chosen from the High Priesthood, **unless he is a literal descendant of Aaron;**

70 For unless he is a literal descendant of Aaron he cannot hold the keys of that priesthood.

71 **Nevertheless, a high priest, that is, after the order of Melchizedek,** may be set apart unto the ministering of temporal things, having a knowledge of them by the Spirit of truth;

72 And also to be a judge in Israel, to do the business of the church, to sit in judgment upon transgressors upon testimony as it shall be laid before him according to the laws, by the assistance of his counselors, whom he has chosen or will choose among the elders of the church.

thus shall he be a judge even a common judge among the inhabitants of Zion

until the borders are enlarged, & it becomes necessary to have other Bishops or judges. & inasmuch as there are other Bishops appointed, they shall act in the same office.

& again, verily I say unto you, the most important business of the church, & the most difficult cases of the church, inasmuch as there is not sufficient satisfaction upon the decision of the judge, it shall be handed over, & carried up unto the *court* of the church before the president of the high Priesthood

73 This is the duty of a bishop who is not a literal descendant of Aaron, but has been ordained to the High Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

74 Thus shall he be a judge, even a common judge among the inhabitants of Zion, **or in a stake of Zion, or in any branch of the church where he shall be set apart unto this ministry**, until the borders of Zion are enlarged and it becomes necessary to have other bishops or judges **in Zion or elsewhere.**

75 And inasmuch as there are other bishops appointed they shall act in the same office.

76 But a literal descendant of Aaron has a legal right to the presidency of this priesthood, to the keys of this ministry, to act in the office of bishop independently, without counselors, except in a case where a President of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, is tried, to sit as a judge in Israel.

77 And the decision of either of these councils, agreeable to the commandment which says:⁸¹

78 Again, verily, I say unto you, the most important business of the church, and the most difficult cases of the church, inasmuch as there is not satisfaction upon the decision of the **bishop or judges**, it shall be handed over and carried up unto the **council** of the church, before the Presidency of the High Priesthood.

& the president of the *Court* of the high priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve to assist as counselors, & thus the president of the high priesthood, & his counsellors, shall have power to decide upon testimony, according to the laws of the church; & after this desision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord; for this is the highest *court* of the church of God & a final desision upon controverses,

all persons belonging to the church are not exempt from this *court* of the church

& inasmuch as the president of the high priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common *court* of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counsellors of the high Priesthood, & their desicion upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him. thus none shall be exempt from the justice of the Laws of God, that all things may be done in order, & in solemnity before me, to truth & righteousness. Amen.

79 And the Presidency of the **council** of the High Priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve, to assist as counselors; and thus the Presidency of the High Priesthood and its counselors shall have power to decide upon testimony according to the laws of the church.

80 And after this decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord; for this is the highest **council** of the church of God, and a final decision upon controversies in **spiritual matters**.

81 There is not any person belonging to the church who is exempt from this council of the church.⁸²

82 And inasmuch as a President of the High Priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common **council** of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counselors of the High Priesthood;

83 And their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him.

84 Thus, none shall be exempted from the justice and the laws of God, that all things may be done in order and in solemnity before **him, according** to truth and righteousness

The bulk of the textual changes here have to do with the information on patrilineal descent of the bishopric. The text links the family of Aaron with the bishop, who fills the role of the Mosaic-Aaronic high priest, an office requiring lineal descent from Aaron. The rules here are reminiscent of the Levitical rules for the tabernacle priest. Observe also the substitution of the word “council” for “court.” That same substitution eventually took place in Church instructions on Church courts in the 1990s.⁸³

Next, consider the remainder of the revelation and the corresponding changes in the 1835 text. The second part of the November 11, 1831, revelation/D&C 107 was altered in interesting ways when published in 1835 and like the first part, these changes also reflect otherwise unknown revelation(s).

Proto-Text of November 11, 1831

*A few more words in addition to the Laws of the church.*⁸⁴ And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of the president over the office of a Deacon, is to preside over twelve Deacons, to set in council with them, & to teach them their duty, edifying one another as it is given according to the covenants.

And also the duty of the president over the office of the Teachers, is to preside over twenty four of the Teachers, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office as given in the covenants. Also the duty of the president over the priesthood is to preside over forty eight priests, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.

D&C 107:85–100

85 And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of a president over the office of a deacon is to preside over twelve deacons, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their duty, edifying one another, as it is given according to the covenants.

86 And also the duty of the president over the office of the teachers is to preside over twenty-four of the teachers, and to sit in council with them, teaching them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.

87 Also the duty of the president over the Priesthood of **Aaron**⁸⁵ is to preside over forty-eight priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office, as is given in the covenants—

And again the duty of the president over the office of the Elders, is to preside over ninety six Elders, & to set in council with them, & to teach them according to the covenants.

And again the duty of the president of the office of the High Priesthood, is to preside over the whole church, & to be like unto Moses.

behold here is wisdom: yea, to be a Seer, a revelator, a translator, & prophet, having all the gifts of God, which he bestoweth upon the head of the church:

88 This president is to be a bishop; for this is one of the duties of this priesthood.⁸⁶

89 Again, the duty of the president over the office of elders is to preside over ninety-six elders, and to sit in council with them, and to teach them according to the covenants.

90 This presidency is a distinct one from that of the seventy, and is designed for those who do not travel into all the world.⁸⁷

91 And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses—⁸⁸

92 Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.

93 And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy;

94 And the seventh president of these presidents is to preside over the six;

95 And these seven presidents are to choose other seventy besides the first seventy to whom they belong, and are to preside over them;

96 And also other seventy, until seven times seventy, if the labor in the vineyard of necessity requires it.

97 And these seventy are to be traveling ministers, unto the Gentiles first and also unto the Jews.

98 Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church.⁸⁹

Wherefore now let every man learn his ~~duty~~ duty, & to act in the office in which he is appointed., in all diligence.

he that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand. & he that learneth not his duty & sheweth himself not approved, shall not be counted worth to stand; even so: Amen.

99 Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

100 He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen.

The compiled versions of the November 1831 and April 1835 revelations served as a foundation for much of LDS organization and became a litmus test for change and expansion.

11. Kirtland and Missouri Dissent and Canonical Modifications

D&C 107 was a long time in the making and contains many separate revelations woven together into a whole. Witness: The November 11 revelation, itself perhaps two separate revelations, the vision of the Seventy, the vision of Adam, the esoterica of bishops, the “Enoch” text and others (see Appendix 1 for a stemmatic treatment). The story is one worth telling, not only to understand the process of revelation, but also to understand the way Lat-

ter-day Saints speak and how that speech and its understanding were effected by the processes of textual influence.

In spite of the publication of the November 11, 1831, revelation as a “part 2” of D&C 107 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, that was not the end of it. The trial procedures for the president of the high priesthood that appear in the November 1831 revelation (or as it was altered in D&C 107, “a” president of the high priesthood) were given in terms of the common council: a bishop plus twelve high priests selected for the purpose.

Two kinds of issues drove the evolution of this concept:

1. The deterioration of the Kirtland economy and the increasing criticism of Joseph Smith for the failure of the Mormon “bank,” led to charges of financial duplicity from apostles Lyman Johnson and Orson Pratt.⁹⁰

2. In Far West, Missouri, the excommunication of Oliver Cowdery (a member of the Presidency of the High Priesthood) took place. Cowdery claimed the court was illegal, but it appears that the bishop at Far West (Edward Partridge) did take part.

With a first brush with Church discipline and the possibility of others looming, Joseph Smith sought clarification. The result was three revelations, given January 12, 1838. These revelations may have been relevant to the Cowdery case, but they were not reported to the Church at large until July 6, 1838. Since they are relevant to D&C 107, I give two of them here:

Revelation Given at the French Farm in Kirtland Geauga Co. Ohio. In the presence of J. Smith Jr., S Rigdon V Knight & Geo. W. Robinson January 12th 1838.—?When inquiry was made of the Lord relative to the trial of the first Presidency of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, For transgressions according to the item of law, found in the Book of Covenants 3rd Section 37 Verse? Whether the descision of such an Council in one Stake, shall be conclusive for Zion and all her stakes

Thus saith the Lord, Let the first Presidency of my Church, be held in full fellowship in Zion and all her stakes, untill they shall be found transgressors, by such an high Council as is named in the above alluded section, in Zion, by three witnesses standing against each member of said Presidency, and these witnesses shall be of long and fathfull standing, and such also as cannot be impeached by other witnesses before such Council, and when a decision is had by such and Council in Zion, it shall only be for Zion, it shall not answer for her stakes, but if such descision be acknowledged by the Council

of her stakes, then it shall answer for her stakes, But if it is not acknowledged by the stakes, then such stake may have the privilege of hearing for themselves or if such decision shall be acknowledged by a majority of the stakes, then it shall answer for all her stakes And again, The Presidency of my Church, may be tried by the voice of the whole body of the Church in Zion, and the voice of a majority of all her stakes And again Except a majority is had by the voice of the Church of Zion and a majority of all her stakes, the Charges will be considered not sustained and in order to sustain such Charge or Charges, before such Church of Zion or her stakes, such witnesses must be had as in named above, that is the witnesses to each President, who are of long faithful standing, that cannot be impeached by other witnesses before the Church of Zion, or her stakes, And all this saith the Lord because of wicked and aspiring Men, Let all your doings be in meekness and in humility before me even so Amen—

The next revelation addressed the possibility of “piling on” in an effort to get a majority against the presidency.

Revelation Given the same day January 12th 1838, upon an inquiry being made of the Lord, whether any branch of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints can be considered a stake of Zion, until they have acknowledged the authority of the first Presidency by a vote of such Church

Thus saith the Lord, Verily I say unto ~~no~~ you Nay No stake shall be appointed, except by the first Presidency, and this Presidency be acknowledged, by the voice of the same, otherwise it shall not be counted as a stake of Zion and again except it be dedicated by this presidency it cannot be acknowledged as a stake of Zion, For unto this end have I appointed them in Laying the foundation of and establishing my Kingdom Even so Amen.

These revelations amplify the text of D&C 107 (from the November 11, 1831, revelation) to the effect that “impeachment and conviction” of a president of the high priesthood requires a “zion” unit to begin the process. Far West evidently fit the bill at the time. The council of stakes then had to approve a conviction. And there could be no stacking the deck. The “council of stakes” perhaps suggests the quorum of high councils mentioned in D&C 107 from the April 1835 revelation but it could mean a popular vote. In any case, if Kirtland held a common council trial and convicted Joseph and/or Sidney, it would not be the final voice.⁹¹

Cowdery’s case may have been different. He was removed in a more mundane way in November 1837 when Smith simply didn’t

present him as a member of the presidency at the same time that Frederick G. Williams was dropped. Cowdery's subsequent excommunication might be interpreted as legal then. The nature of perseverance of priesthood after excommunication was not carefully settled, as evidenced by Cowdery's reaction when he heard of D&C 124. The policy of dissolving the presidency upon the death of the president, in force from Brigham Young's time on, obviated a repetition of the Rigdon situation.⁹² One thing is clear: firing Joseph was not the same as firing his counselors.⁹³

Rigdon felt he deserved a full-blown procedure in Nauvoo, but perhaps since the revelation recognized a popular vote, his case was never heard in an extended way. Nauvoo may have been the "zion" unit at the time.⁹⁴ The three revelations were read in Church conference in Missouri, and sustained there. But they were lost from view and not published until the 1980s.⁹⁵

12. The Deprecation of the High Priesthood and Its Legacy—A Case Study

To examine the influence of 1831 and 1835 revelations, it is helpful to consider some of the conceptual real estate for Church policy and procedure in the latter portion of the nineteenth century. The term "high priesthood" as a reference to the office of high priest in Mormon discourse gradually died out in the twentieth century, and its use in Mormon scripture became confused with "Melchizedek Priesthood." Reading Joseph Smith's revelations this way creates interesting potential paradoxes.⁹⁶ Joseph F. Smith's position on the high priesthood, specifically his interpretations of D&C 107 and 84, illustrates those tensions. Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) was the son of Hyrum Smith, brother to Joseph Smith the prophet. Joseph F. was an independent thinker. Growing up in Utah, he became somewhat of a street urchin following his mother's death in 1852. At age 15 (1853) Church leaders called him on a mission to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) to redirect his life. The contacts and experiences he had there would color his future writings and speeches. He would even draw later experience back into his narratives of that mission. He led an interesting and provocative life, divorcing his first wife but becoming a relatively successful and prolific polygamist. Smith presided over the European mission during 1860–63 and was ordained an apostle three

years later. Brigham Young made him a counselor in the First Presidency at the same time, placing him in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that fall (usual practice today might suggest that membership in the quorum and ordination to apostle are simultaneous events— not so historically, mostly in cases of Brigham Young’s children). Joseph F. Smith found his own administrative theory and praxis, which was based on Joseph Smith’s revelations. He had no experience with Joseph Smith as an administrator and was outside any kind of formal instruction in his religion for much of his youth. His leadership style was independent and rather literal in the sense that the “Book of Covenants” formed a guide for him. It served him well as transitional leader of Mormonism from insular and exceptional nineteenth-century Utah to a progressive and expansive twentieth-century organization.⁹⁷

After the death of Brigham Young, the apostles formed the leading body of the Utah church until October 1880 when John Taylor became Church president. During this apostolic leadership period, the apostles encountered several interesting cases of leadership change. One of these changes was in the Eighth Quorum of the Seventy. Seventies quorums were Church quorums, not local quorums, but their members were not in any sense general authorities, the exception being the First Council.⁹⁸ Each quorum of seventy had its own presidency of seven men. Each was a president, and the longest serving president presided over the other six. The apostles presided over the seventy and generally took interest in the issues in these quorums.⁹⁹

The Eighth Quorum of Seventy had such an issue in 1879–80. John Pack, long time Latter-day Saint and member of the presidency of the eighth quorum, came under fire from his quorum—they petitioned the apostles to have him reassigned. The apostles considered the matter and invited Pack to join with the high priests. Pack felt badly about the decision and saw this move as a demotion. On the 8th of June, 1880, Pack wrote to his acquaintance Joseph F. Smith, who passed the letter to John Taylor, president of the apostles. In return, Taylor asked Smith to pass along the minutes of a meeting between Pack and Taylor on May 24, 1880, to Pack. Smith did so on June 18th. Pack’s letter of the 8th represented a reneging on his promise to go along with the

ruling by the apostles. The reasons behind Pack's reluctance reflect the repositioning of the high priesthood after Joseph Smith's death. Joseph F. Smith's complete response reflects an administrative view that relied on both 1831 and 1835 meanings:

June 18th 1880.
Elder John Pack
Salt Lake City?

Dear Brother:—

Your letter of the 8th inst. came duly to hand. I caused it to be read to President John Taylor and shall now answer you as directed by him and I trust it will be satisfactory. I was directed by Pres. Taylor to send you the following minutes taken at the time of our interview with him at his office? May 24th 1880. "Elders John and Ward E. Pack called and read, also obtained a copy of the petition of Elder ——— and members of the 8th Quorum of Seventies in regard to Elder John Pack. Also the action of the Apostles in regard thereto. After which Pres. Taylor and Elder Jos. F. Smith talked with bro. John Pack on this matter upon which he said he did not wish to have any thing more to do with that Quorum and would fully carry out the desires of the Apostles so far as the (8th) Quorum (of 70) was concerned but did not wish to join himself with the High Priests Quorum. Elder Smith explained to bro. Pack why he should join the High Priests. Also Pres. Taylor in speaking his mind suggested that bro. Pack carry out fully the mind of the council and that he associate himself with the High Priests Quorum, and thus put himself beyond all contention in the matter. Bro. Pack said he was willing to do so and would let the matter drop." With the foregoing fresh on my mind you may imagine my surprise at the contents of your letter of the 8th inst. to which this is a reply. My own judgement is that you are very impudent in attempting to agitate this matter again and I advise you, as a friend and a brother it cannot possibly result in any good to you, but may result in much injury. I advise you therefore, most seriously, to stop this matter short where it is, and carry out your promise as made before Pres. Taylor—myself—your son Ward and bro Nuttall—on May 24th. This will be for your best good. You lose nothing by joining the High Priest Quo. now, but actually gain the right and Keys of Presidency—(by appointment) (or if appointed) and that is more than you hold as a Seventy, except to presided over a quorum when appointed. For you to persist any further in your course in opposition to the decision of the Council of Apostles, could be considered no less than obstinate rebellion against [this?] will in the matter, which would be foolish in the extreme. Therefore I exhort you to be advised and begin to act with more moderation and greater wisdom or you will precipitate yourself into a vortex of trou-

ble and dishonor far greater than now and from which you and your friends will be powerless to relieve you.

I have no doubt you have labored long and honorably in the Kingdom for the good of yourself, your family and others, and therefore what strikes me as most strange is, why, at your time of life, and with the vast experience you claim to have had, you are not more confiding in the providences of God, why you are not more humble, why you are so persistent against the will of your brethren and the decisions of their councils. Experience has taught me, to use the means God has provided me with for the redress of my real or supposed injuries or wrongs. And where, as it may seem those means fail, then to leave my cause in the hands of God, and await calmly His final decision. I am not afraid to risk the consequences when my case is appealed and submitted to the Great and righteous Judge. If you still feel as you expressed yourself in your letter you had better appeal, silently and peaceably, to God and with him leave the whole matter, for there is no higher tribunal on earth, on spiritual matters—or in your case than the Council of Apostles and they have rendered their decision and are not likely to reconsider it at the present.

Your own conduct is against you. Your own course more than anything else, had injured your cause, and the longer and stronger your persistancy, you must see, the more disastrous the results will be for you.

Now. As you have said, “my mission is to save” and the object of this writing is to assist and save you from greater troubles. Notwithstanding I have spoken plainly, my rebukes, to you, should be better than the kisses of an enemy.

I tell you candidly—were I of your age, and a Seventy, if the offer of the office of High Priest were made me I would joyfully accept it, as a greater gift than that I possessed, and yet I would not be considered as seeking office, but in the language of Joseph Smith the Prophet “The melchisedec High Priesthood,” (i.e. the office of High Priest in the Melchisedec Priesthood) “is no other than the Priesthood of the Son of God.” This office hold the Keys of Presidency over the Melchisedec Priesthood, and also over the Lesser Priesthood” and over the whole church. However the power and right of Presidency depend upon appointment by the proper authority.

With kind regards I am your bro in the gospel. Jos. F. Smith¹⁰⁰

Joseph F. Smith tried to persuade Pack that making a move to the office of high priest was a promotion, contrary to Pack’s feeling that it amounted to the opposite, while moving him away from what he felt to be his duty to preach. Pack was elderly and it’s not clear he would have been able to fulfill that promise in any case. In fact, Pack died five years later.

But the more interesting part of Smith's letter for the purposes of this essay involves his own view of the office of high priest. Joseph F. Smith assigns his beliefs to quotations from Joseph Smith's revelations and statements made nearly five decades previously. Observe his use of the term "high priesthood" as a synonym for high priest. This reflects the early Mormon (1831) usage, which in turn appears in several revelations cited by Joseph F. Smith in his letter to Pack. Smith clearly places (based on the November 11, 1831, revelation and the September 1832 revelations) the office of high priest at the top of the list in terms of presiding authority in the Church. This has interesting implications for succession and Smith himself entertained various ideas about the successional impact of the revelations during his own term as Church president. A number of these are in tension.

When ordaining George Albert Smith an apostle (who became Church president himself in 1945) and placing him in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, Joseph F. Smith also ordained George Albert a high priest, explaining that George could not preside in the Church without the high priesthood.¹⁰¹ Joseph F. Smith's view contrasted sharply with Brigham Young's, for example. Young stated the office of apostle was superior to the high priesthood and it was an insult to suggest that apostles needed to be ordained high priests.¹⁰²

13. Ordination Practice and the Revelations

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, how is a man ordained to the priesthood? This question has some interesting historical complexity both in the meaning of the terms deployed in that question and in the ways in which acceptable practice has evolved over the years.

Over the first ninety years of LDS Church organization, priesthood ordination ceremony gradually developed into more or less the following pattern:

By authority of the Holy Priesthood and by the laying on of hands, I ordain you an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and confer upon you all the rights, powers keys and authority pertaining to this office and calling in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.¹⁰³

Historically this probably unrolled from Book of Mormon text:

In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a priest, (or, if he be a teacher) I ordain you to be a teacher, to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.¹⁰⁴

The nearer to 1830, the simpler the form becomes. Ordinations in Ohio were quite simple: “Brother — we lay our hands upon thee and ordain thee an elder . . .,” for example. There were some variations on this. Some words of blessing were often included.¹⁰⁵

In 1919, in a collection of Joseph F. Smith’s sermons and writings titled *Gospel Doctrine*, a new liturgy for ordination was proposed:

The revelation in section 107, Doctrine and Covenants, verses 1, 5, 6, 7, 21, clearly points out that the Priesthood is a general authority or qualification, with certain offices or authorities appended thereto. Consequently the conferring of the Priesthood should precede and accompany ordination to office, unless it be possessed by previous bestowal and ordination. Surely a man cannot possess an appendage to the Priesthood without possessing the Priesthood itself, which he cannot obtain unless it be authoritatively conferred upon him.

Take, for instance, the office of a deacon: the person ordained should have the Aaronic Priesthood conferred upon him in connection with his ordination. He cannot receive a portion or fragment of the Aaronic Priesthood, because that would be acting on the idea that either or both of the (Melchizedek and Aaronic) Priesthoods were subject to subdivision, which is contrary to the revelation.

In ordaining those who have not yet received the Aaronic Priesthood, to any office therein, the words of John the Baptist to Joseph Smith, Jr., and Oliver Cowdery, would be appropriate to immediately precede the act of ordination. They are: “Upon you my fellow servants [servant], in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron.” Of course, it would not necessarily follow that these exact words should be used, but the language should be consistent with the act of conferring the Aaronic Priesthood.¹⁰⁶

The procedure advocated by Smith of “conferring” the “priesthood” prior to ordination seemed odd or unnecessary to many; and after his death in 1918, the new First Presidency

(Heber J. Grant era) issued a statement to the effect that the “old” way was quite as effective and acceptable as Joseph F. Smith’s process. Of course, Smith’s argument is partly without basis regarding the ordination by John the Baptist. Whether the rest of his argument was forceful was a relative matter.¹⁰⁷

Joseph F. Smith’s view of the priesthood was colored by the natural misunderstanding derived from the joining of the April 1835 revelation with the November 1831 revelation. Consider this remark:

Further in the same revelation [D&C 107] verses 65 and 66, we are told: “Wherefore it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the Priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church:

“Or in other words, the presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church.”

It is well to remember that the term “High Priesthood,” as frequently used, has reference to the Melchizedek Priesthood, in contradistinction to the “lesser,” or Aaronic Priesthood.¹⁰⁸

The meaning of “lesser priesthood” had textually shifted by the April 1835 portion of D&C 107. But “high priesthood” was never shifted in meaning by Joseph Smith; in fact, he and most everyone else was using the term to refer to high priests up until he died.¹⁰⁹ His successors in Utah used it the same way. Joseph F. Smith used it the same way, at least until he became Church president.

In spite of the Heber J. Grant First Presidency letter regarding ordinations, with the genetics of D&C 107 submerged in historical amnesia, a later generation of leaders saw President Smith’s position as compelling, and it eventually became policy (officially in 1968). In this case it may be true that the Joseph F. Smith method was popularized by Bruce R. McConkie’s 1958 book *Mormon Doctrine*.¹¹⁰ From a recent edition of the LDS Church handbook¹¹¹ of instruction:

To perform a priesthood ordination, one or more authorized priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person’s head. Then the priesthood holder who performs the ordination:

1. Calls the person by his full name.
2. States the authority by which the ordination is performed (Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood).
3. Confers the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood unless it has already been conferred.

4. Ordains the person to an office in the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood and bestows the rights, powers and authority of that office. (Priesthood keys are not bestowed in conferring the priesthood or ordaining to one of these offices.)
5. Gives a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.¹¹²

Hence, the joining of the two revelations and the eventual fading of meanings influenced liturgical practice in the twentieth century.

Joseph F. Smith saw his 1899–1902 interpretations of the revelations as incorporating a broad view of succession. If all Church authority was wiped out by some unimaginable cataclysm, with the exception of a single elder, that elder held full authority (the “Melchizedek Priesthood”) to reconstruct every aspect of the institutional Church. There was no reason for angels to revisit earth in that case.

Meanwhile, Joseph F. Smith’s procedure was not just mechanical, it provided for a kind of “super-office” or a sort of “possessing the order” as well as some office or another in that “order.” This is a curiosity that was built into Mormon understanding by the adoption of this liturgy.

14. The Genesis of Mormon Clerical Structure

The November 11 revelation circulated in manuscript copies and was tagged to be a part of the proposed 1833 *Book of Commandments* (BC), the first attempted publication of Smith’s revelations. The destruction of the Mormon press in Missouri in 1833 prevented the completion of the printing.¹¹³

The November revelation revamped Church leadership in the wake of the introduction of the high priesthood and in hindsight cleared the way for a decentralized expansion and eventual *local* Church organizations. Regulation was still not complete however. For example, would every deacon belong to a quorum? The practical answer to this was no. Far-flung churches (branches) had a presiding elder (or in some cases a high priest or perhaps a priest or teacher) but no “quorums” within the branch.¹¹⁴ Indeed, quorums, when they became more ubiquitous, were not regarded as restricted to a given branch of the Church. Eventually, when Church ecclesiastical base units (branches, wards, or stakes connected to a presiding elder or a bishop or other officer) became more com-

mon, even requiring separating geographic boundaries (Nauvoo), an elders quorum, for example, might include members from more than one such unit. Indeed, up until recent times, elders quorums in the LDS Church often crossed ecclesiastical unit lines. The quorums of elders and high priests in Utah up to 1870 remained largely non-functional as instructional institutions.¹¹⁵

With the priesthood reorganization movement of 1877, high priests quorums, seventies quorums, and elders quorums began to be more subordinate to ecclesiastical units and more regulated in their practices of recruiting new members and disciplining them. High priest quorums were confined to stakes. Elders quorums were stake level institutions and, via the November 1831 revelation, limited to ninety-six members. Hence many quorums might exist within a stake. Seventies were not connected to ecclesiastical boundaries, and once a member became part of a seventies quorum, he remained in that quorum no matter his geographical movements. More practical rules for seventies membership followed the 1877 changes in 1883, when each quorum became identified with a geographic region and change of residence resulted in change of quorum. Of the three groups, the seventies underwent the most change in succeeding decades.¹¹⁶

The correlation movement of the 1960s in effect made Melchizedek Priesthood quorums into ecclesiastical unit auxiliaries. Before the 1960s, high priest quorum presidents were stake level officers different from the stake president, requiring a general authority to call and set them apart.¹¹⁷ They were in some ways on a level with the stake president and, in a quirky way, presided over him. Correlation in essence erased the high priest quorum and substituted basic unit level “groups” (in stakes) somewhat puzzling entities, simultaneously making the notion of authoritative “keys” a more problematic concept in the process.¹¹⁸ The high priests groups functioned authoritatively in precisely the same way as the elders quorums, whose presidents were designated as holding keys, making the notion of keys effectively an empty concept.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, while Melchizedek Priesthood leaders were placed under the authority of the bishop, their activities were more systematic and statistically measured. But they were clearly, and deliberately, placed under the direction of the bishop,

removing their decision powers of membership, and restricting the ability of quorum members to carry out quorum discipline. This elevated the bishop and the textual support was evident: the bishop holds two primary positions in twentieth-century Mormonism. He was designated as “presiding high priest” and the “president of the Aaronic Priesthood,” an office that combines the early pecking order of section 20, the instruction of 1831, and the forms of 1835 and 1841 into a single office.¹²⁰ These changes began gradually and long before the 1960s. This shows an interesting flow in design as “stakes” were modeled on the Kirtland organization rather than the “Zion” of the era and wards in Utah gradually became much of what stakes were in Joseph Smith’s later career.

15. Discipline and a President of the Church

One of the interesting issues raised by the history of section 107 is the question of a transgressing President of the Church. The November 11 revelation introduced a Church court system. The two leading offices in the 1831–1832 Church were the bishop and the president of the high priesthood. The revelation defined a way for each officer to be disciplined, should the need arise. This was to work by using each of the court systems attached to these officers, to judge the other.

As the Church matured, there continued to be only one president of the high priesthood over the entire Church, but the number of bishoprics gradually increased. Since the original revelation left open what should happen in that event, some clarification was needed. The January 8, 1838, revelations offered some regulations to substitute for the earlier instruction. But those revelations, while subjected to congregational vote, did not provide a lasting answer to the question of how to deal with a transgressing Church president. Moreover, it was clear that people in the know saw the November 11 revelation applying to each member of the Church presidency even though it could not have done so when delivered (D&C 90 probably mediated this change).¹²¹

The Twelve Apostles had no defined role in the problem, partly because they didn’t exist in November 1831. The first portion of D&C 107, the April 1835 revelation, defines the role of the apostles, but does not give them overt disciplinary responsibilities

with regard to the Church presidency, and in the question of Joseph Smith's trial in Kirtland, they played no role beyond the two plaintiffs. The April 1835 revelation set up a kind of general court consisting of all the Church authorities (107:32). A somewhat unwieldy group, and not clearly applicable to this case, it does expand the judicial horizon of the November revelation by implying an appeals process beyond the court of the president of the high priesthood.

The 1838 revelations made it clear that the November 11 revelation was deprecated and was to be discarded with reference to this disciplinary issue. But another office was in store in Nauvoo: a presiding bishop. This bishop presided over other bishops. While revealed in Nauvoo, it was never occupied during Joseph Smith's lifetime.¹²² A naive reading of D&C 107 led some to suppose that the presiding bishop would be the judge of a Church president, reinvigorating the November 11 revelation.

In a sense, the problem disappeared with the death of Joseph Smith. Of course it was Sidney Rigdon's position that he was a president of the high priesthood and that (in essence) based on policies like those found in D&C 102, he should lead the Church.¹²³ A segment of the Church believed him. When the apostles assumed leadership, they weren't, and did not become, presidents of the high priesthood. Indeed, Brigham Young came to describe his office as superior to the high priesthood.¹²⁴ When the First Presidency was re-formed in 1847, there was no mention of the high priesthood either in the stormy private discussions preceding that, or the public announcements that followed.¹²⁵ Historically, the identification of the First Presidency and the Presidency of the High Priesthood was merely a convenient renaming process. With the desire to elevate the office of apostle, the old title was left behind. It's worth noting that Brigham's point of view would not stick. As already observed, Joseph F. Smith read D&C 107 in a different way than Young. Recall that apostles such as George Albert Smith, who was not a high priest before induction into the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, were ordained as high priests too, since Joseph F. Smith believed the high priesthood was necessary to preside (a similar practice was adopted with the First Council of the Seventy decades later).¹²⁶

Still, an analogous problem existed with Brigham Young's new First Presidency in 1848. How would a member of the First Presidency be dealt with? In Young's later years, the presidency had become involved in various clandestine political activities, and by the 1880s, during Taylor's presidency, not even the three of them were cognizant of what perhaps two had agreed to (it is a fact that the "raid" dampened all sorts of communication among Church leaders).¹²⁷ By the 1890s, a number of the apostles were uncomfortable with some of presidency member George Q. Cannon's activities, and only learning of some of them by rumor made it worse. Some apostles felt Cannon should be dropped. The idea angered Woodruff, but the apostles asserted themselves, partly based on D&C 107 and perhaps also because of Young's occasional expression that he was merely an apostle with a different assignment. The resolution of the tiff put the two bodies on a more even footing.¹²⁸

The idea that a member of the presidency may be dropped was not without precedent. It had happened twice in 1832 and twice again in 1837. Joseph Smith attempted to drop Rigdon in 1843, but failed. Rigdon was dropped in 1832 for a few months and of course there was Rigdon's counterpart, Jesse Gause, and then John Cook Bennett. Bennett was probably not considered a president of the high priesthood, while Gause's status is not precisely clear, but Rigdon and Gause gave some precedence to Cowdery and Williams. Cannon was certainly not dropped, but the presidency's autonomy was reined in somewhat. This was important for various reasons, one of which was the presidential disability that became a significant issue in the twentieth century.

However, it is difficult to believe that a Church president could be dropped. Instead, President Wilford Woodruff offered another resolution: if a Church president went haywire, God would take him out of the mortal shell (see the ancillary text for D&C Official Declaration 1). The discipline would come from above, not below, and it would be permanent. Hence, fears of ecclesial despotism or enforced error and the ability to deal with that were confronted by Woodruff with a rather different approach than by Joseph Smith or Brigham Young.¹²⁹

By the 1940s, some reference to the president of the high

priesthood (as Church president) began to reappear in general conference addresses. However, “high priesthood” by this time had morphed into a synonym for “Melchizedek Priesthood.” Hence the question of applying a deprecated D&C 107 becomes considerably muddled. With no formal method for recalling a Church president, the Woodruff solution remains to this day.

The recalling of a president has low probability though, for other reasons. The system of leadership presently in place in the Church makes it unlikely that a young, vigorous man will rise to the senior tranche.¹³⁰ But even in the case of a vigorous leader gone “astray” (whatever that might mean) the present system is capable of dealing with any extreme moves. Given the embedded bureaucracy in the Church, and the consensus-driven approval process for big moves, something suggested in the April 1835 revelation itself and illustrated by the 1978 revelation, and surfacing in the apostles’ criticism of the presidency in the 1890s, it would be nearly impossible for the untoward formal announcement to arrive at a news desk. What about speech? Could an off-the-reservation Church president be muzzled? It is clear that presidents who have been less functional can be isolated. This happened with Ezra Taft Benson and Spencer W. Kimball.¹³¹

This suggests that a presidential recall would be unnecessary except for a vigorous president who began to *speak* what was judged as heterodox. The ugly head of schism rises in this case, but it seems clear that since the apostles have been king-makers since Brigham Young (even if in a perfunctory way), they would have to act as a quorum to depose the president. The common council is really a dead issue unless the presiding bishop was officially inserted into the November 11 reading (the January 1838 revelations would only come into play in some worst case scenario, perhaps). There are all kinds of nightmare scenarios here, each as unlikely as the next.

Sidney Rigdon argued for succession based in part on the ideas of the November 1831 portion of D&C 107. Brigham Young argued for succession in part based on the April 1835 portion of D&C 107. Could Rigdon have made a stronger case? Perhaps, but the insiders in Nauvoo knew Rigdon had problems with Joseph Smith’s innovations like polygamy, and unlike Young he never had

any cachet in the “sealing” or “fullness of the priesthood” enterprise. Rigdon might have cited the July 1837 revelation (now D&C 112) as clearly marking out the territory of the First Presidency as superior to the Twelve. On the other hand, the same revelation suggests that Joseph would hand the “keys” to Thomas B. Marsh and the apostles (and hence Brigham Young and other apostles). The apostles did try to reinforce their position later, perhaps vis-a-vis this revelation, by publishing a modified version of a statement assigned to Joseph Smith to the effect that when he was not present, there was no First Presidency over the Twelve.¹³² (And while that statement was a fabrication, it still plays into the recall question.)

Finally, the recall provisions of the November 11 revelation seem not only temporary in fact, but temporary in need. They responded to the old Protestant fear of ecclesial tyranny. Nevertheless, the narrative of tried-and-true leadership over decades of steady service is a convincing one, and combined with the Woodruff doctrine and isolation in the case of mental aberration or disability, it is relatively complete in theory. But whatever the case, the second half of D&C 107 is unlikely to ever play a role in deposing a Church president.

16. Epilogue: Elijah, Sealing, and a Summation of Successional Realities

The early 1830s revelations were important texts that helped define how the Church hierarchy eventually saw itself and to some degree the associated terminology and theology of succession of a Church president. However, they were overtaken by events like the failure of Kirtland, the end of the Zion experiment, and the coming of the Nauvoo temple liturgy. That liturgy defined a new kind of priesthood, one that only intersected ecclesial power at its apex. The early revelations were known to the Church at large, but it would be these later events and the largely unknown revelations that came with them, that determined who would sit in the seat vacated by Joseph Smith’s death.

An 1837 revelation, now found as D&C 112, placed the Twelve Apostles of the Church as second in command to the presidency in a fairly natural reading and had the effect of diminishing the powers of local presidents of the high priesthood.¹³³ However, D&C 112 was not published until 1844 and did not appear in

print during Joseph Smith's lifetime.¹³⁴ Indeed, its release was too late to be seen by most Church members as an authoritative reference during the succession meetings of August 1844 though it did circulate in manuscript copies from 1837.

The April 3, 1836, vision (D&C 110) experienced in the Kirtland temple¹³⁵ was not organizational per se, but in the narrative of Mormon priesthood it finds a place of prominence. Indeed, Brigham Young saw it as a defining element for the top leaders of the Church. It, like section 112, was not published prior to Joseph Smith's death. More remarkably, it was not circulated prior to his death. Key revelations were nearly always hand copied in early days and shared by missionaries and others (the earliest extant version of D&C 112 appears in a letter).

D&C 110 was not, at the time of its reception or ever, openly referenced in Smith's lifetime. Some were evidently told of some of its contents, but it was treated either as a kind of private blessing or simply mysterious in terms of meaning (and some of it, at least, remains that way). It is ironic, given the emphasis the event has received in the modern Church, that neither Smith nor Cowdery ever spoke of it, at least publicly. W. W. Phelps appears to have known of the vision, but perhaps not in detail. Warren Cowdery recorded the two men's account of the vision in the third person. Oliver Cowdery did not mention the revelation in his report of foundational events during his testimony upon returning to Mormonism after Smith's death. Smith does not report the experience in his letter on baptism for the dead (excerpts of which appear in D&C 128), which details his visions through the years, including obscure events like hearing the voices of Michael and Raphael. Willard Richards copied the Cowdery entry expressing D&C 110 into the manuscript history of the Church while changing the viewpoint to first person. Except for this silence, the experience has parallels, at least in reporting, to the John the Baptist visitation. However, while the Baptist was reported as making physical contact, the 1836 vision offered only verbal announcements.¹³⁶

The April 3 vision and the Nauvoo revelation on plural marriage and sealing written on July 12, 1843 (D&C 132), did not appear in print until September 14, 1852, in a *Deseret News Extra* following Orson Pratt's famous speech on the subject of polygamy.

Pratt referenced the revelation in his speech, and the newspaper produced a follow-up that included the text as edited by Richards. There seems to be no public acknowledgement of the 1836 vision prior to that.¹³⁷

Elijah, the final person to appear in the 1836 vision, is a person of some moment in Mormonism, and he became the masthead of Mormon family theology. Given that Smith may have been initially ignorant of the future position of Elijah theologically, it is clear that he was on board by 1844.¹³⁸ Why not mention the fact that the ancient one from Tishbi had made an appearance, since he seems to be one of the foci of discursion by the time of Nauvoo? A number of reasons may be presented, but none seems very forceful.¹³⁹

Aside from this mystery, there are a few things about the vision that beg explanation. Of the four angelic persons who make an appearance, all but one seem to offer a fairly obvious reason (from the present vantage point) for their visits. The one that is strange is the next to last, Elias. Joseph Smith had a record of identifying biblical figures (like Noah or Adam) with angelic figures (Gabriel and Michael in these cases). The game here is to guess the alternate moniker for Elias. It's an awkward name because most everyone, including Joseph Smith, knew that Elias was the New Testament name for Elijah. On the other hand, Joseph had revelations on the books (e.g., D&C 27, 84) suggesting a biblical identity for various people called Elias. The situation increases in complexity when we see that it's an official name in Mormonism as well, that is, a name that identifies both a class of biblical persons and an office having to do with restoring lost information or authority, being a forerunner, or in other words, the dispensational paradigm of Mormonism. Elias restores the keys of the "gospel" of Abraham. Since Abraham formed the intersecting link between the protologies of the high priesthood and the patriarchal priesthood, he is a figure representing renewal of the Adamic era and the distribution of this duality to all who come after, both in bodily and "adoptive" descendants.¹⁴⁰

The Elijah vision is the (often implicit) centerpiece of much of modern Mormon preaching and practice. Elijah is seen as the foundation of temple sacraments, and those sacraments are in turn seen

as the ultimate liturgical goal of Latter-day Saints. (Interestingly, Elijah makes no appearance in temple ritual or in revelations such as D&C 132, which announces exaltation and sealings for eternity.)

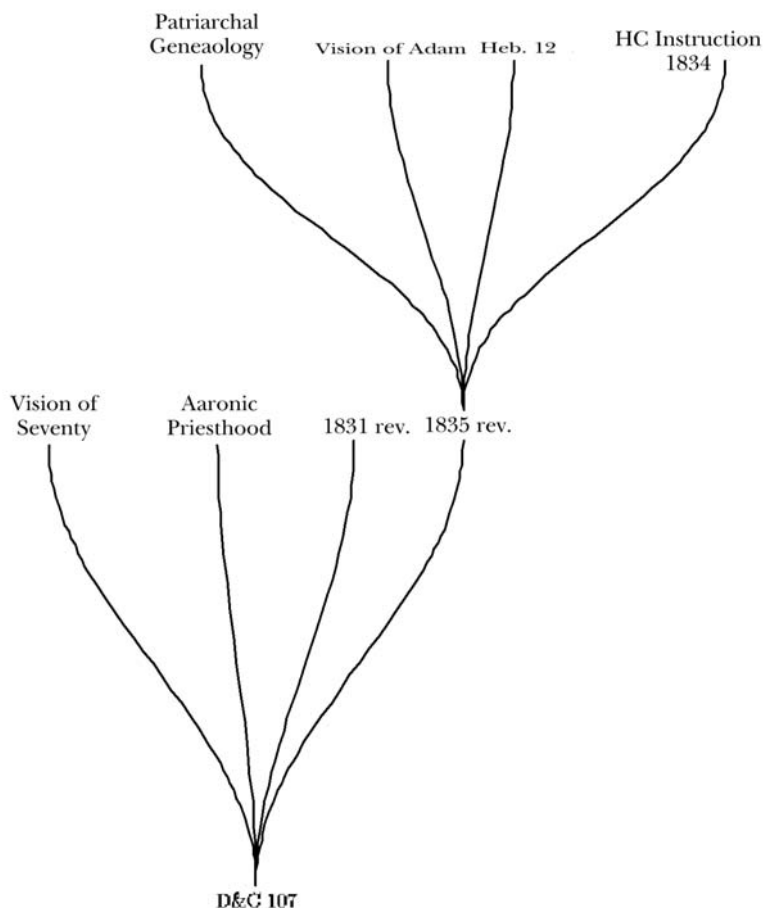
The revelation of July 12, 1843, did not provide direct successional regulation, but it did announce a theology and bureaucracy that placed those who practiced plural marriage in Nauvoo deep in Joseph Smith's inner circle. Its influence on, and elevation of, temple Mormonism made it one of the most important of succession documents. The April 3, 1836, vision and July 12, 1843, revelation define those who lead the present-day Church more clearly than the priesthood revelations.¹⁴¹ The sealing and plural marriage doctrines of D&C 132, while founded on Elijah in Smith's sermons, were centered in one man, Joseph Smith. It was Smith's deepest inner circle that understood the connection of these dual doctrines to Church leadership as the insurance for their continuance, and from Smith on, sealing praxis, aside from the John Taylor years, and the associated post-Manifesto die-down of polygamy, was tightly controlled by the First Presidency. Among all other issues of authority and procedure, Elijah sat at the center of succession from the death of Joseph Smith onward.¹⁴²

Appendix 1: A Genetic Stemma for D&C 107

D&C 107 has an interesting tributary system and a stemmatic representation is helpful in grasping its genetics. The representation is incomplete in a number of ways. It must fail to graph the gradual rereading of the September 1832 terminology, for example. See the following page for illustration.

Appendix 2: Genetic Texts for the November 11 Revelation and What They Reveal

The November 11 revelation was copied and edited a number of times. Considered below is the "first" revelation in the November 11 text from the previously exhibited proto-text with a comparison to the manuscript edition of the revelation found in Revelation Book 2 (RB2).¹⁴³ Revelation Book 2 is commonly known as the Kirtland Revelation Book (KRB). The November 11 revelation in RB2 is in the handwriting of



A Genetic Stemma for D&C 107

Frederick G. Williams, a clerk and counselor to Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio. Williams failed to note the complete date of the revelation in his RB2 manuscript, leaving out the day. A bit of textual detective work narrows down the date, even without the benefit of Revelation Book 1 (RB1). It is important to note that the revelation was edited before it was copied into RB2—likely in 1834—and therefore the differences in the following texts may approximate changes to the archetype in RB1 and RB2. The textual changes between 1831 and 1834 reflect some of the terminological evolution in the first few years of Mormonism.

**Proto-Text of the
Nov. 11 Revelation**

To the Church of Christ in the Land of Zion in addition to the Church Laws respecting Church business verily I say unto you, saith the Lord of hosts there must needs be presiding Elders to preside over them who are of the office of an Elder: & also Priests over them who are of the office of a Priest;

& also Teachers over them who are of the office of a Teacher, & from Teacher to Priest, And also the deacons; wherefore from Deacon to Teacher, & from Teacher to Priest, & from Priest to Elder; severally as they are appointed, according to the Church Articles & Covenants: then cometh the high Priest hood, which is the greatest of all: wherefore it must needs be that one be appointed of the high Priest hood to preside over the Priest hood: & and he shall be called President of the Church; or in other high words the Presiding high Priest hood over the high Priesthood of the Church; from the same cometh the administering of ordinances & blessings upon the Church, by the Laying on of the hands:

wherefore the office of a Bishop is not equal unto it; for the office of a Bishop is in administering all things temporal things: nevertheless a Bishop must be chosen from the high Priesthood, that he may be set apart unto the ministering of temporal things, having a knowledge of them by the Spirit of truth; & also to be a Judge in Israel to do the business of the Church, to sit down in Judgement upon transgressors

Revelation Book 2 Text

regulating the Presidency of the Church.¹⁴⁴

To the Church of Christ in the Land of Zion in addition to the Church Laws respecting church business verily I say unto you saith the Lord of hosts there must needs be presiding Elders to preside over the those who are of the office of a priest¹⁴⁵

and also teachers over those who are of the office of a teacher in like manner and also the Deacons wherefore from Deacon to Teacher and from Teacher to Priest and from Priest to Elder & severally as they are appointed according to the Church Articles and Covenants then cometh the High Priesthood which is the greatest of all wherefore it must needs be that one be appointed of the high Priesthood to preside over the Priesthood and he shall be called President of the high priesthood of the Church or in other words the presiding high Priest over the high priesthood of the Church from the same cometh the administering of ordinances and blessings upon the church by the laying on of the hands

wherefore the office of a Bishop is not equal unto it for the office of a Bishop is in administering all temporal things nevertheless a Bishop must be chosen from the high priesthood that he may be set apart unto the ministering of temporal things having a Knowledge of God, that all things may be done in or Elders of the church then shall he be a Judge even a common Judge among the inhabitants of

upon testimony it shall be laid before them according to the Laws, by the assistance of his councillors whom he hath chosen or will choose among the Elders of the church.

thus shall he be a judge even a common judge among the inhabitants of Zion until the borders are enlarged, & it becomes necessary to have other Bishops or judges. & inasmuch as there are other Bishops appointed, they shall act in the same office. & again, verily I say unto you, the most important business of the church, & the most difficult cases of the church, inasmuch as there is not sufficient satisfaction upon the decision of the judge, it shall be shall be handed over, & carried up unto the court of the church before the president of the high Priesthood

& the president of the Court of the high priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve to assist as counsellors, & thus the president of the high priesthood, & his counsellors, shall have power to decide upon testimony, according to the laws of the church; & after this decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord; for this is the highest court of the church of God & a final decision upon controversies, all persons belonging to the church are not exempt from this court of the church & inasmuch as the president of the high priesthood shall transgress, he shall be had in remembrance before the common court of the church, who shall be assisted by twelve counsellors of the high Priesthood, & their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him. thus none of

Zion until the borders are enlarged and it becomes necessary to have other Bishops or Judges and inasmuch as there are Bishops appointed they shall act in the same office. And again verily I say unto you the most important business of the church and the most difficult cases of the church inasmuch as there is not satisfaction decision of the Judges it shall be handed over and carried up unto the court of the church before the President of the high Priesthood

And the President of the court of the high priesthood shall have power to call other high priests even twelve to assist as counsellors and thus the president of the high priesthood and his counsellors shall have power to decide upon testimony according to the laws of the church and after the decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord for this is the highest court of the church of God and a final decision upon controversies there is not any person belonging to the church who is exempt from this court of the church¹⁴⁶

and inasmuch as the President of the high priesthood shall transgress he shall be had in remembrance before the common court of the church who shall be assisted by twelve counsellors of the high priesthood and their decision upon his head shall be an end of controversy concerning him thus none shall be exempt from the justice and the Laws of God that all things may be done in order and in solemnity before me according to truth and righteousness Amen.—

them shall be exempt from the justice of the Laws of God, that all things may be done in order, & in solemnity before me, to truth & righteousness. Amen.

The RB2 text is in the hand of Frederick G. Williams and suggests perhaps more strongly that the November 11 revelation represents two revelations.¹⁴⁷ Observe again that the text never uses the word “quorum.” My use of the word in reference to these texts is only to provide context. The word appears in revelation texts for the first time in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, like the word “priesthood,” during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, was used in a much looser way than Latter-day Saints use it now.

Note the comparison of the president of the high priesthood to Moses. While there was no such president at the time this revelation was given, Joseph Smith eventually filled the office. This marked one of several times a revelation drew parallels between Moses and Joseph Smith (D&C 28, 103).¹⁴⁹ The parallel with the Old Testament prophet is apt for several reasons. Smith was an Old Testament prophet in a number of ways, with many of his sermons, visions, and revelations appealing to Old Testament prophets. This was clear from the beginning with the Moroni visits and their extensive Old Testament references. In contrast to the other restorationists like Stone, Campbell et al., Joseph Smith restores both the patriarchal Old Testament and the Christian New.¹⁵⁰ The present revelation itself is a puissant example.

The Proto-Text for the “Second” Revelation of November 11, 1831

And also the duty of the president over the office of the Teachers, is to preside over twenty four of the Teachers, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office as given in the covenants. Also the duty of the president over the priesthood is to preside over forty eight priests, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.

Revelation Book 2 Text

and also the duty of the president over the office of the Teachers is to preside over twenty four of the Teachers and to sit in council with them teaching them the duties of their office as given in the covenants also the duty of the president over the priesthood¹⁵¹ is to preside over forty eight Priests and to sit in council with them and to teach them the duties of their office as given in the covenants.

And also the duty of the president over the office of the Teachers, is to preside over twenty four of the Teachers, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office as given in the covenants. Also the duty of the president over the priesthood is to preside over forty eight priests, & to set in council with them, & to teach them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.

and again the duty of the President over the office of the Elders is to preside over Ninety six Elders and to set in council with them and to teach them according to the covenants and again the duty of the President of the office of the high Priesthood is to preside over the whole church and to be like unto Moses.¹⁵²

Notes

1. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 117, 124, 202. Smith leavened Mormonism late in his career with a Female Relief Society that was charged with charitable works and spiritual improvement. Additionally, he introduced temple sacraments that called for female administrators. Finally, early Mormonism was filled with female enthusiasm, healing, and blessing, making it generally more participatory for women than nineteenth-century American Protestantism in general. See Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Winter 2011): 1–85; Jonathan A. Stapley, "Last Rites and the Dynamics of Mormon Liturgy," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 50.2 (2011): 96–128.

2. The literature on Mormon priesthood is huge, both in devotional and academic terms. I make no attempt to provide sources for every instance of referenced ideas in this essay, and manuscript sources are usually privileged over others. One important exception is the Joseph Smith Papers (JSP) Project and its volumes in print. My abbreviation for published volumes in the JSP imprint series is guided by internal practices in the JSP volumes. The volumes in the various series referenced here are Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Manuscript Revelation Books* (hereafter *MRB*), facsimile edition, first volume of the Revelations and Translations series of THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2009) (*JSP*, *MRB*); Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Riley Lorimar, eds., *Published Revelations*, second volume of the Revelations and Translations series of THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church

Historians Press, 2011) (*JSP*, RT2); Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Assigned Histories, 1831–1847* second volume in the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2012) (*JSP*, H2); Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, first volume of the Histories series of THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2012) (*JSP*, H1); Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals Volume 1: 1832–1839*, first volume of the Journals series of THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2008) (*JSP*, J1); Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, second volume of the Journals series of THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2011) (*JSP*, J2). This work was completed prior to the release of the first two volumes of the Documents Series of The Joseph Smith Papers. There is some overlap in concepts and conclusions with those volumes.

3. For illustrations of the Nauvoo schismata see, John C. Hamer, “Mapping Mormonism and the Latter Day Saint Movement,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 32.2 (Fall/Winter 2012): 1–35.

4. Revelation Book 1 is found in *JSP*, *MRB*. It is self-titled as Book of Commandments and Revelations. In addition to “covenants,” early Mormon speech used “commandment” for Smith’s divine communications that conveyed moral rules or perhaps specific requirements of the target audience. “Revelation” referred to such communications that were cosmological or informational in nature. Terminology moved away from this early usage fairly rapidly, but left terminological detritus through early Mormonism. See *JSP*, *MRB*, xxv.

5. The “Law,” Doctrine and Covenants section 42, outlined much of this behavioral expectation, but left open disciplinary details and methods.

6. Revelation Book 2, often referred to as the Kirtland Revelation Book, was a later compilation of Smith’s revelations. See *JSP*, *MRB*.

7. Doctrine and Covenants was the name attached to an early (1835) compilation of Smith’s revelations (called covenants in early Mormon parlance) bound with a collection of lectures formulated ca. 1835, probably by Smith’s assistant, clerk, and co-leader, Sidney Rigdon. Doctrine and

Covenants is often abbreviated as D&C. On early Mormon revelation texts, see Robin Scott Jensen, “‘Rely Upon the Things Which Are Written’: Text, Context, and the Creation of Mormon Revelatory Records,” M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2009.

8. The “Articles and Covenants” was the founding document of the Church. Drafts were composed at an early date (ca. 1829) by Oliver Cowdery. One early copy suggests that the date of the writing of a more or less complete document is April 10, 1830, four days following the formal Church founding on April 6, 1830. See *JSP*, MRB, 21–2; also Oliver Cowdery, Revelation, ca. June 1829, CHL; Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University), 1974, vol. 1: 287–90; also, D&C 18:1–5. Also, Scott H. Faulring, “An Examination of the 1929 ‘Articles of the Church of Christ’ in Relation to Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants,” *BYU Studies* 43, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 57–91.

9. Searching the published revelations for mentions of priesthood offices can be chronologically misleading. When revelations were printed, a number was modified to make reference to offices not known when those revelations were originally delivered. Doctrine and Covenants section 20 (D&C 20) is perhaps the leading example. Consider, for example, verses 65–67 in the current (1981) edition, which mention bishops, high councilors, common consent, presidents of the high priesthood, high priests, etc. Manuscripts were also updated with sequential changes. Again D&C 20 is a good example. In fact, it has more variants in both imprints and manuscripts than any other revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants. Minute Book 2 reports the first Church conference, June 9, 1830. The reading there suggests that the office of deacon was not present in the text. The first recorded deacon ordination waited until 1831 (see Minute Book 2, October 25, 1831, CHL). A most interesting change in the text(s) of D&C 20 was the baptismal prayer from the Book of Mormon form to the present wording in 1835. On election of meeting chairs, irrespective of Church office, see, for example, Minute Book 2, p. 84 (November 7, 1837). Minute Book 2 is commonly known as the *Far West Record*. It is available online at <http://josephsmithpapers.org>.

10. An unusual difference during the period was the duty of elders in the laying on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Textually, this may be seen as a Book of Mormon/New Testament derived practice. Protestant-like confirmation ceremony was incorporated into Mormonism nearly from its beginning and typically consisted of the Lord’s Supper and the laying on of hands. Richard Robert Osmer, *Confirmation: Presbyterian Practices in Ecumenical Perspective* (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996); *JSP*, H1:366, 429.

11. Mark L. Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2010), chapter 12. This innovation/restoration is rarely mentioned in the modern Church, but it was a major development. Part of the reason for this lack of attention was the careful emphasis on the apostolic office by the Mormon apostles, post-martyrdom. The demotion of "the high priesthood" among other measures seems meant to help ensure no official competition for Church leadership. It was a strategy in the long run that obscured the nature of Church government over Joseph Smith's lifetime. See below.

12. The procedures for installing local Church officers were frequently quite egalitarian throughout the nineteenth century. For example, during the 1877 systematization and reform of leadership practice, the apostles often polled congregations.

13. *JSP, MRB*: 217–18.

14. Another revelation was delivered on the 11th. It would become the basis of D&C 69. The revelation under discussion here was perhaps, itself, two revelations. This division is discussed below.

15. The word "priesthood" in the early revelations was not the designator of a class of individuals or offices. It named an office. This is partly telegraphed to modern readers in the spelling above (priest hood). It gradually evolved in usage so that priesthood meant a multitude of things. A good example of this generality occurs in D&C 124, an 1841 revelation that illustrates this in verses 91, 95, 121, 132, etc. A beginning to this broadening is seen in what became D&C 84 as discussed below.

16. President was a relatively common term in religious contexts deployed both formally and informally in literature and practice. Tertullian used it (third century) to refer to the head of a Christian community. Proximate to Joseph Smith, Methodism used the term for those elected to govern a "conference" or collection of regional congregations. See the "Wesleyan Methodist Church Presidents Scrapbook" (Drew University Methodist Library) for vignettes of presidents in the British Conference beginning with John Wesley himself. After Wesley died, fears of ecclesial abuse led to yearly elections of new presidents from the ranks of ordained presbyters, a tradition that found place in Mormon praxis for a time. On organizational structure and methods, see Christopher Jones, "We Latter-Day Saints Are Methodists': The Influence of Methodism on Early Mormon Religiosity" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009), 77–93; also Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005): 69–70, 153, 251, 254; Kathleen Flake, "From Conferences to Councils: The Development of LDS Church Organization, 1830–1835," in *Archive of Restoration Culture Summer Fellows'*

Papers, 1997–1999 (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for LDS History, 2000): 1–8.

17. The term “high priesthood” was well understood to refer to the office of high priest. Similar terminology dated from the Book of Mormon translation and was found in Masonic movements of the time. “Melchizedek” became attached to the high priesthood in early discourse and, by 1835, was firmly embedded in priesthood taxonomy.

18. On the 1877 changes see William G. Hartley, “The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young’s Last Achievement,” *BYU Studies* 20.1 (Fall 1979): 3–36.

19. This was more or less what is now D&C 42—see *JSP, MRB*: 61. For the textual development of D&C 42, see Grant Underwood, “The Laws of the Church of Christ’ (D&C 42): A Textual and Historical Analysis,” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context*, edited by Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo and Salt Lake City, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2008), 108–41; Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 299.

20. Another bishop was ordained a month later—Newel K. Whitney, in Kirtland, Ohio.

21. Text in brackets is explanatory, not original.

22. The presence of the deacon office suggests its complete integration into the official structure.

23. Kirtland and Nauvoo set a partial precedent for the Utah LDS practice that confined the deacons, teachers, priests, and elders as “stake” quorums in Utah. Bishops in the stake would select men (and, gradually, boys) to fill the ranks of deacons with perhaps a number of quorums of each rank, but the quorums would not be affected by ward boundaries. Boys finally filled the teachers and priests quorums as well but as teachers were deployed in Church discipline in nineteenth-century Utah Mormonism, boys generally did not invade their ranks at first. On bishops and early Utah organization see D. Gene Pace, “Community Leadership on the Mormon Frontier: Mormon Bishops and the Political, Economic, and Social Development of Utah before Statehood” (PhD diss., Ohio State University), 1983. Also see William G. Hartley, *My Fellow Servants: Essays on the History of the Priesthood* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2010); Dale Beecher, “The Office of Bishop,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15.4 (Winter 1982): 103–15.

24. Naturally one sees the beginnings of the “high council” system here, which was formalized in February 1834. High council may be seen

as a title originating both in civil government just as “common council” (common pleas court, superior court) and also Smith’s visions of the Old Testament patriarchs sampled in D&C 107. Church government issues prior to formal high councils were handled by the *ad hoc* high priesthood councils. For example, see Minute Book 1 (summer 1833), MS 3432, CHL, also available online at <http://josephsmithpapers.org>. Minute Book 1 is also known by the title Kirtland Council Minute Book.

25. The role of the bishop’s counselors is not completely clear from the text. In ordinary cases they seem to act as attorney/jurors, presenting aspects of the case, much like the high priesthood councils and the eventual high council. Their role evolved with further regulation.

26. Church judicial formalities regarding a president of the high priesthood were modified in August 1835 and again in January 1838. See below.

27. The Saints gradually withdrew from the judicial institutions of civil government in favor of the Church court system for resolution of disputes and other issues. Mark Ashurst-McGee, “Zion Rising: Joseph Smith’s Early Social and Political Thought” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2008), 293–94.

28. For most of the nineteenth century, quorum and other leaders were elected by their constituents. At least visiting leaders polled the feelings of those affected by the establishment of new officers. Exceptions were general officers, where practice varied from announcement by the Church president to discussion of names by affected groups (like the apostles for instance) and offering those names to the president for approval of one. Styles of leadership dictated procedure. See, for example, Joseph F. Smith, *Special Conference Report*, October 1901, 82; *Gospel Doctrine*, 220–21; Minute Book 2, 81–2; Hartley, “Priesthood Reorganization,” 16, 19.

29. The idea that the bishop was the president of the priests came later. A priest was to be assigned as president of the priests group and the bishop was not a priest at this point. Quorum organization records are sparse until after 1835. When the present information was incorporated in D&C 107 in 1835, a discontinuity remained. The Aaronic bishop mythos introduced later impressed more consistency on the organization, moving the bishop into the ranks of the Aaronic order and effectively identifying him as the directing priest—the Mosaic high priest. In fact, the “High Priesthood after the order of Aaron” was deployed for a time in 1833. See the discussion of the April 1835 revelation below. On quorums, see Lyndon W. Cook and Milton V. Backman Jr., eds., *The Kirtland Elders Quorum Record, 1836–1841* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book Co., 1985) (original in Community of Christ historical archives) or

Teachers Quorum Minutes, December 1834–December 1845, MS 3428, CHL.

30. Smith's report of the angel's words was given in 1838. However, Cowdery's 1834 report uses essentially the same language. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834):14–16; *JSP*, H1:43.

31. Suggested by Cowdery in his 1834 explanation of his delayed membership in the First Presidency. *JSP*, H1:43. On Cowdery's account, see *JSP*; H1:24–28.

32. Some of the section headings of pre-2013 editions of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants perpetuated (historical) misunderstanding here. See for example the 1981 edition heading for D&C 84. It has been suggested that “high priesthood” was something separate from office, or an office that disappeared from Mormon liturgy and hierarchy. Textually the picture is somewhat clearer. Appeals to reports of lived Mormonism show that referential structures were more complicated “on the ground” and equally evolutionary. See Matthew C. Godfrey, “A Culmination of Learning: D&C 84 and the Doctrine of the Priesthood,” *You Shall Have My Word: Exploring the Text of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2012), 167–81; Gregory R. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 27–28. Early Mormons saw the Book of Mormon version of high priesthood as the June 1831 “Joseph Smith” high priesthood. Cp. Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 45. Also, Minute Book 2 (October 25, 1831); see also, David Grua, “On Higher, and Lesser, Priesthoods,” *The Juvenile Instructor*, November 24, 2010, <http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/on-higher-and-lesser-priesthoods>.

33. *JSP*, *MRB*: 275–90.

34. Shipps and Welch, *Journals*, 45. The usage coincides with commonly understood meanings, i.e., the office of a priest. For example, see Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*, or *Oxford English Dictionary* period entries.

35. Outside the texts represented here, it is seldom useful to try to understand then contemporaneously lived Mormonism in terms of rigid definitions. Terminology was in flux and discursive edges were often fuzzy. A good example is a sermon written, and perhaps delivered, by Algernon Sidney Gilbert, ca. 1832. Gilbert wrote: “Now I ask, what order of Priesthood do your priests belong to? do they belong to the order of Aaron, I think you will answer no. I ask again do they belong to the order of Melchizedeck, I think you cannot say they do—” (MS 4583, book B, 118–24, CHL). Already the notion of “orders” had surfaced and Joseph

Smith's affinity for the book of Hebrews may have been important here. The terminological drift ("Melchisedec order") was an early one as illustrated by Mormon dissident Ezra Booth's critiques in the *Ohio Star*. Booth wrote nine letters for the *Star* that appeared between the October 13 and December 8, 1831, issues. The letters also appeared in other newspapers. Afterward, they were reprinted in Eber D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled*, (Painesville, Ohio, 1834): 175–221. It should be noted however that Booth equates the high priesthood and the "Melchisedec" order, probably a Hebrews allusion. A vision received on February 16, 1832 (*JSP, MRB*: 249; *D&C* 76:57), speaks of the "order of Melchisedec which is after the order of Enoch which is after the order of the Son of God." The notion of orders and high priesthood found its way briefly into discourse on the lesser priesthood. The 1833 Zion temple plans referenced "the high priesthood after the order of Aaron." In 1835, this referential swirl settled in to match the new priesthood architecture of the April revelation. Compare, Godfrey, "A Culmination."

36. That is, Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood as presently defined in Mormonism. A fascinating example of the confusion created by the adjustment of terminology appears in the arc of Joseph F. Smith's instructions on priesthood. Joseph F. Smith played a key role in the modern understanding of these revelation texts and his own transition in understanding is important here. This is explored briefly below.

37. Smith expanded and reformulated priesthood orders through his life. Much of this was connected to temple theology and liturgy. For example, see his sermons of August 27, 1843, and March 10, 1844, in Lyndon W. Cook and Andrew F. Ehat, *Words of Joseph Smith* (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1990), 243–47, 327–36 (hereafter cited as *WJS*).

38. This trope is connected to the expanding adoption theology of Mormonism. Cf. Samuel M. Brown, "Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, vol. 3 (Summer 2011): 3–52. Also, Jonathan A. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* (Summer 2011): 53–118.

39. The reader will see that in this meta-discussion of Mormon priesthood I often employ the current (essentially post-1900) terminology in referring to LDS priesthood. Complete precision is difficult here without introducing a companion meta-language.

40. Just as the November 11 revelation exists in the Newel K. Whitney collection at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, BYU (hereafter LTPSC), so *D&C* 84 appears there, as well as in the *KRB*. There is only one intriguing alternate reading in those texts and it does not apply to the passages above. Two other manuscript versions of the

revelation exist but, like the Whitney version, do not bear on the discussion here.

41. Minute Book 2, p. 28.

42. Newel K. Whitney Collection, LTPSC. Compare D&C 81:1–2 given a few days later. The word “presidency” in the revelation didn’t necessarily refer to a plurality of persons. The interesting use of “priesthood” here means that early usage of the term was fluid and time-sensitive. Latter-day Saint establishment of priesthood (in the 1835 sense) was very unusual among contemporary Protestants in whom the fear of ecclesial tyranny ruled. Mormon nomenclature expanded, contracted, and otherwise altered in several ways as things progressed. As an aside, the use of “ordained” had a somewhat fluid meaning as well. This fluidity is still echoed in the twentieth century with Church presidents often being “ordained and set apart.” Probably because the event occurs so rarely, and is invested with profound reverence, there has been no opportunity to formalize the language.

43. On Gause, see Erin B. Jennings, “The Consequential Counselor: Restoring the Root(s) of Jesse Gause,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, vol. 2 (2008): 182–227.

44. Rigdon’s outlandish behavior was possibly due in part to the lingering effects of the beating he received by a Hiram, Ohio, mob that attacked him and Smith in March. Rigdon was delirious for days following the event. Outwardly he may have been frustrated with his Hiram (a small log cabin near the John Johnson home) and Kirtland living accommodations together with ongoing threats of violence. Rigdon felt a continuing dissatisfaction regarding Partridge’s treatment of Kirtland leaders during their visit to Missouri in April 1832. He apparently blamed Partridge for the miserable return journey brought on by Partridge’s purchase of canoes for a river trip, as well as Partridge’s skepticism of the location of Zion in 1831. On the mob, see Staker, *Hearken*, chap. 27.

45. Frederick G. Williams papers, CHL (dated incorrectly there as 1834).

46. Minute Book 1, 16.

47. See *JSP*, *MRB*: 313–18.

48. Samuel Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 179–202; *WJS*, 3–12, 119–20, 243–47.

49. Minute Book 1, 27–41; D&C 102. With the establishment of the high council, its members were often referred to as “counselors.” To avoid confusion apparently, the presidency counselors became known as “assistant presidents” for a time. See below.

50. Brigham Young did not use the title, no doubt because he saw

the title as distracting from the narrative he constructed around “apostleship.” However, his successor John Taylor resuscitated it. It seems to disappear again until the mid-twentieth century. Used sparingly, Gordon B. Hinckley claimed it most recently. It’s not clear, of course, how “high priesthood” was interpreted, but with John Taylor, at least, the early meaning is quite likely. Young found various occasions to teach the high priests their place in the scheme of things. By November 1847 the apostles were acting as presiding authorities in high priest gatherings. See Robert L. Campbell journal, November 17, 1847, filed as volume 9, Church Historian’s office journal, CHL.

51. Minute Book 1, 198. The revelation is dated March 28, 1835, in Minute Book 1 and the Heber C. Kimball journal, but based on the movements of the participants in the experience, it was probably given near the end of April. See Steven C. Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 395n2. As mentioned previously, its character is different than the November 11, 1831, revelation, consisting of a fusion of different developments and revelations, roughly in lecture form, in a sense comparable to Rigdon’s “Lectures on Faith”; see Noel B. Reynolds, “The Case for Sidney Rigdon as Author of the Lectures on Faith,” *Journal of Mormon History* 31, vol. 2 (2005): 1–41.

52. Now known as D&C 107, Kimball’s reference is to what are now verses 1–57 of D&C 107. Since the original dictated text of the April revelation is not extant, it is difficult to determine how much of the text of the current edition’s first fifty-seven verses were given at that time. The patriarchal Enochian genealogy forms the mythical background to the office “patriarch” and forms a companion mythos to that of the bishop. Note its similarity in purpose to the 1832 priesthood genealogy of D&C 84. See below for more discussion. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 46–47.

53. Heber C. Kimball journal, 94B, 23, CHL (as quoted in Woodford, “Historical Development,” 3: 1399).

54. Perhaps the earliest manuscript copy is found in the Heber C. Kimball journal, Book 94C, 28–33, CHL. Variants found in the Kimball journal are essentially accidentals. Information suggests the Kimball version represents an edited version of the original.

55. As already noted, Book of Mormon language deploys a “high priesthood” (e.g., Alma 13), sometimes as part of an “order” but other times, not. Hence both the term and the identification of “high priesthood” and “high priest” have very early support in Mormon semantics and biblical usage reflects this as well. Early Latter-day Saints saw this in their Protestant traditions in both high and low church sources. Non-

Mormon religious discursion still understands the term “priesthood” in this way, and occasionally Mormons also use it this way. For example, in speeches to LDS Young Women organizations there were sometimes references to acknowledging or submitting to the “priesthood” but this didn’t refer to the Mormon category as much as it did fellow workers in either the Young Men organization or local or general Church leaders like bishoprics, etc.

56. The November 1, 1831, revelation (*JSP, MRB*: 200) makes it clear that bishops must be ordained from among the high priests. The September 1832 revelations (D&C 84) saw the bishop, like the elder, as subordinate offices to the high priesthood and this was still true in June 1833 as shown by the seating plan for the Kirtland temple MS 2568 1, CHL; the August 1833 plan confirmed this in more detail. Seating was altered by the dedication in 1836. While Partridge and Whitney were high priests in 1831, no textual imperative existed for this until the November 1 revelation. Prior to 1835, the high priesthood was seen as the eventual desired place where every male ended his believer’s journey in earthly office. See Minute Book 2, 11 (October 25, 1831).

57. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 1:134–36.

58. For example, see Orson Pratt’s address to the London Conference on March 9, 1879 (*Journal of Discourses* 22:194). In this sermon, Pratt reads the presiding bishopric into the bishop mythos of priestly descent and common council trials of a president of the high priesthood.

59. For much of the twentieth century, this was official. See Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government*, 169. In Utah, Brigham Young attempted to separate the roles of presiding priest (ward bishop) and presiding high priest (ward president). While beautifully symmetric in the Mormon sense of either the 1832 or 1835 priesthood architectures, it was unsuccessful in practice. Dale Beecher, “The Office of Bishop: Its Development through History,” Task Paper, Historical Department of the Church, CHL, 32–34; D. Gene Pace, “Changing Patterns of Mormon Financial Administration: Traveling Bishops, Regional Bishops, and Bishop’s Agents, 1851–88,” *BYU Studies* 23, vol.2 (1983): 6–7.

60. For example, there is no provision in the revelations for honorable termination of a bishop’s service. For most early officers, their ordination/setting apart and its implied service was theoretically permanent. Releasing a bishop from service seems to violate the definition of the office in the early revelations. Pulpit releases from Church assignments were not done and changes were simply announced with some explanation attached. For example, when Joseph Smith went to Far West in November 1837, “Bishop Partridge was then nominated to still act as Bishop, and was unanimously chosen. Who then nominated Isaac Mor-

ley and Titus Billings for his counsellors who were unanimously chosen.” Former counselor John Corrill was then simply assigned another duty. Emeriti Mormon bishops are currently seen as holding office but essentially with congregations of zero size. Prior to 1835, a retired bishop might have been seen as merely a member of the high priesthood, but it is difficult to rationalize such counterfactuals. See Minute Book 2, November 7, 1837, 87.

61. Note the presence of the Revelation Book 2 preamble here. The Revelation Book 2 text is from the 1834 time period. (See <http://josephsmithpapers.org/papersummary/revelation-book-2>.)

62. Joseph F. Smith saw this verse as an imperative for ordaining presidency members high priests (whether or not they were previously apostles—apostles who had not been ordained high priests should have this done as a matter of course). The presidency is identified as a separate quorum. Some distance is placed between the Presidency of the Church and other high priests by this passage perhaps, but recall that “quorum” had a less formal import at this period. Joseph F. Smith was committed to the received text more than the received tradition and part of his liking for James Talmage’s religious work was Talmage’s evident sympathy with that. See below for more on Joseph F. Smith’s thought.

63. For example, see Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 387–88.

64. The ancient reference echoes Minute Book 2, 7 (October 11, 1831).

65. D&C 128:18; *WJS*, 38–44; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 137.

66. “Solemn Assemblies” were associated with Mormonism from the revelatory commands for a school of the prophets and later a temple. See D&C 88:68–70, 117; Minute Book 1, 6; *JSP*, J1:241–48.

67. The Nauvoo and then the Salt Lake stakes (prior to 1877) might be seen as having Zion high councils.

68. The designation of the apostles as forming a traveling presiding high council suggested a role that only slowly came to fruition. Barred at first from official operations in the stakes, they nevertheless individually came to prominence there. (For example, following the fall of the New York contingent—Cowdery and the Whitmers—in 1838, apostles shored up leadership in the Far West Stake.) In Utah, apostles commonly supervised stakes and operated as local ecclesiastical leaders until 1877. The high council motif reached its zenith in the April revelation. Like seasonal change, Church polity followed suit in delayed fashion. By 1841, the traveling high council moved to the top of the pecking order, not without resistance based on tradition, but Smith’s trust had been earn-

ed. Turner, *Brigham Young*, 75–79, chap. 4. Also, Quinn, *Origins of Power*, 57–69.

69. “Evangelical ministers” was a later alteration of “patriarchs” according to Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* 19:114. Quinn, *Origins of Power*, 49.

70. On “evangelist” as “patriarch,” see *WJS*, 6. Samuel Brown reads this linkage in terms of adoption language. Brown, *In Heaven*, 213.

71. Adam-on-di-Ahman was later linked to a physical location in the Missouri Zion, further building the meaning of the area as central to the movement. The Church purchased the region in the twentieth century. The name appears in an 1832 revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants (section 78 in the 1981, 2013 editions).

72. Smith’s summary instruction to the apostles in July 1839 valorized Adam and the ancient patriarchs in the salvific scheme. Adam was seen as not just the original ancestor but “presiding over the spirits of all men” in an angelology whose breadth and uniqueness stand out in antebellum Christianity. The Mormon patriarchs took their cues of office from the “presiding” patriarch confirmed by a January 1841 revelation. Joseph Smith’s father was apparently “ordained” as a patriarch when he joined the Presidency of the High Priesthood on December 6, 1834. Quinn, *Origins of Power*, 46–57. The extant minutes of December 6 do not report the Patriarch ordination. *JSP*, J1: 47–48; *JSP*, H1:37–38.

73. Smith’s sermon of January 21, 1844, suggests a well-earned caution in delivering innovation. See *WJS*, 317–19. For examples of charges that Smith produced revelations for convenience, see the series of letters written by dissident Ezra Booth published in the *Ohio Star*.

74. On Smith’s Elias doctrine, see his sermons of March 10, 1844, and May 12, 1844. *WJS*, 327–36, 365–72. On Mormonism’s angelology, see Benjamin E. Park, “‘A Uniformity So Complete’: Early Mormon Angelology,” *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 2, vol. 1 (2010). Also, Brown, *In Heaven*. The Elias order finds its biblical support in the Mount of Transfiguration narrative and Joseph Smith’s expansion of that passage. (D&C 63:21; Joseph Smith’s sermon to the apostles near August 1839; *WJS*, 9; Scott H. Faulring, et al., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 201, 276.

75. One difference between the 1832 and 1835 priesthood narratives was the presence of Abel in the 1832 high priesthood genealogy and Seth in the 1835 patriarchal genealogy. This mapped the President of the High Priesthood through Abel, the Patriarch through Seth, and perhaps plays into the announcements of D&C 124.

76. Each of Smith’s scriptural additions entails some aspect of this

exercise in legitimacy. Smith's (1835) Book of Abraham texts open with the ancient patriarch hoping to join the authoritative line of high priests that Smith details in the April 1835 revelation. The 1832 genealogy already maps Abraham into the high priesthood line. The ancient father of Isaac is at the intersection of both the high priesthood and the sacerdotal chain of patriarchs, making him a central figure in temple theology, adoptive practices, patriarchal blessing "lineage," and Joseph Smith's own developing vision of the importance of his family in not only the patriarchal office but the Church presidency as well.

77. On printing the 1835 edition, see *JSP*, RT2:301–10. The 1835 edition cited Oliver Cowdery's copy of the Book of Commandments, as well as RB1 and RB2.

78. This interesting statement was certainly interpreted in light of the noninterference directive: the apostles were to stay out of stakes. By 1841 it was beginning to be taken at face value. The statement itself is a very broad one and open to a very strong construction, one not overlooked after the death of Joseph Smith.

79. Oddly, this artifact from 1831 was not edited to reflect the change in presidency of the priests.

80. The Articles and Covenants, while fundamentally important in the first few years after 1830, were superseded in many respects by later revelations and decisions. The delay in publishing the November 11, 1831, revelation led to different categories of editorial change—hence the more general "covenants and commandments," both words that historically referred to revelations, or types of revelations rather than the specific Articles.

81. The inserted text refers back to the same 1831 revelation, though the editors left this ambiguous.

82. This is simply grammatical permutation. The RB1 text has the same importance here.

83. It is duly noted that the revelation of November 1, 1831 (LDS D&C 68), was also updated with various portions from the April 1835 revelation as well as the updated text of the November 11 revelation. For what was probably very near the original text of the November 1 revelation, see *JSP*, MRB:199–201.

84. A reference to D&C 42 and its various addenda among the revelations.

85. This change is interesting because of the potential for historical misunderstanding. The verse, in its historical meaning, has nothing to do with the "President of the Aaronic Priesthood," an office and concept that didn't exist in 1831.

86. Verse 61 was not modified to reflect the change in status for

bishops in this new regulation. The subtle addition in verse 87 “of Aaron” is consistent with the 1831 priesthood architecture by itself, but verse 88 identifies the change as part of the new (April 1835) classification of bishops: they are now part of the Aaronic order. In effect, “bishop” merely means “presiding priest.”

87. The added verse here may seem redundant but possibly has reference to the Mosaic appointment of “Seventy Elders,” Num. 11:16; Church publications and private records also report an association of “elder” with “seventy.” Again, this played into the future difficulty of privileging the First Council of Seventy in local Church administration. It was not a bothersome issue in the Joseph Smith era when the seventy, despite technical standing in the revelations, had little authority in core districts of the Church where high priests typically operated administratively (an exception to this rule occurred in 1835–36). As an example of the conflict over the nature of the office, in 1840 the Nauvoo high council, expanding its purview, directed that one of the seventy become part of the high priests quorum. The seventies were put out, and the April conference of the Church took up the matter to settle it: “A letter was read from the Presidents of the Seventies, wishing for an explanation of the steps which the High Council had taken, in removing Elder Francis Gladden Bishop, from the Quorum of the seventies to that of the High Priest’s without any other ordination, than he had when in the Quorum of the Seventies, and wished to know whether, those ordained into the seventies at the time Elder Bishop was, had a right to the High Priesthood or not. Several persons spoke on the subject, after which the President gave a statement of the authority of the seventies, and said they were Elders, and not High Priests, and consequently Elder Bishop had no claim to the High Priesthood—On motion—resolved that Elder Francis Gladden Bishop be placed back into the Quorum of the Seventies.” The ruling confirmed Smith’s position of 1837.

88. At this point the revelation suggests that the high priests served at the pleasure of the president of the high priesthood. This neglected dynamic points to the evolution from 1832, but it is interesting that the revelation was not updated with information regarding the high council(s). Later practice in Kirtland (and then revelation) provided for a possible localized internal structure for the high priests, allowing for a distancing from the president of the Church.

89. The inclusion of the details of organization of the seventy (from an otherwise unknown vision) at this point fits with the treatment of the other quorums. Observe that the apostles get no such treatment. Their internal structure was defined in a separate revelation (D&C 112). In the

meantime, the apostles had a system of rotating leadership as per Joseph Smith's instruction. They were to be equal in everything.

90. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 338. On the Kirtland economy and banking problems, see Staker, *Hearken*, chaps. 30–34.

91. However, the presidency had a push on to create new stakes. See Mary Fielding to her sister Mercy Fielding, October 7, 1837, CHL. At the same time, the word “stake” held a broader meaning than the Church gives it today. Taken together, it is probable that the quorum of high councils are to play a role. Hence a fully organized “stake,” like the Kirtland and Far West organizations, is the likely meaning here.

92. Although, it was the case that “faithful” surviving counselors were still a loose end, perhaps because their position was in fact clouded by a lack of canonical category. At Brigham's death, the surviving counselors, if not taken in by the new presidency, and not part of the quorum of apostles previously, became “counselors to the Twelve.” For Mormons schooled in the current priesthood policies, it is an odd situation given the practice elucidated by Joseph F. Smith that the status of counselors at the death of the church president was void. Before this, these counselors continued in office until death or dishonor. The last such conundrums were Alvin R. Dyer and Thorpe B. Isaacson at the death of David O. McKay. The situation was resolved by dropping them into the “assistants to the Twelve”—not precisely parity perhaps, but a near equivalent to the nineteenth-century practice. On Cowdery, his situation could be construed as different from nearly everyone else's. Ordained by angels in the (by then) mostly well-understood incidents of ca. 1829, removing Cowdery's authority may have seemed problematic, at least to him. There is another facet to Cowdery discussed later. Like so many other latent tripwires of administration, Joseph F. Smith resolved the issue of priesthood persistence by reducing it to excommunication. Prior to this, early judicial bodies had prescribed varying sorts of penalties regarding retention of priesthood office for misbehavior.

93. Perhaps the puzzling interaction of excommunication and church office was partly settled by the January 1841 revelation (D&C 124), but it lingered on in terms of temple priesthood theology. For example, the effect of excommunication on temple sealings and anointings has always been murky, though practical policy invaded the issue.

94. This seems to have been Brigham Young's view. See Smith's sermon of April 8, 1844 (*WJS*, 362–65). The question of whether Rigdon was still a president of the high priesthood was tied to a March 1833 revelation (D&C 90). His tenure by that measurement may have been over. Rigdon was removed from the presidency in 1832 for making wild claims—how that played into 1844 thinking was important to some at

least and was mentioned at the August 1844 meetings in Nauvoo. Brigham Young expressed the idea (no doubt tongue-in-cheek) that if Rigdon wanted to be spokesman for Joseph, he would have to go where Joseph was. See *Times and Seasons* 5, vol. 16 (September 2, 1844): 638. *Times and Seasons* 5, vol. 17 (September 15, 1844): 648–49, 651, 653, 666; *Times and Seasons* 5, vol. 19 (October 15, 1844): 684, 686.

95. While technically the three revelations are canon (or were) their relevance seems dated. Utah historians of the 1850s mentioned the sustaining of the revelations in the manuscript history of the Church, but by then either no one knew the whereabouts of the texts of the revelations or no one saw them as helpful. Finally in B. H. Roberts's edited *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Roberts believed they had been lost in the travails of the Church. See *History of the Church* 3:44fn (Manuscript History of the Church, volume 2 (book B-1), 799, CHL). The revelations were rediscovered in Joseph Smith's "Scripitory Book." For the text of all the January 1838 revelations, see *JSP*, J2: 281–84.

96. When the revelations were published in 1835, texts from different definitional eras were combined while some early revelations were edited using later terminology (again, D&C 20 for example), making it appear that later terms were actually used much earlier. A naive reading leads down paths of frustrating inconsistency.

97. Joseph F. Smith was seen as an important link to the Smith family. The Utah Church never bought into quasi-primogeniture like the "Reorganization" did, but there was a significant undercurrent of thought regarding Joseph's descendants and Church leadership, partly because Joseph Smith himself came to see succession in terms of his own brothers. Smith's ranking of the revelations above the early Utah praxis and theological speculation marked a tendency in his own thought about the place of revelation in Mormonism and how liturgy and belief were founded. Smith was familiar with at least some of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo corpus of discourse, but he gradually moved toward a settled position defined in part by James E. Talmage's transitional work.

98. The First Council of Seventy consisted of the seven presidents of the "first" quorum of seventy. That quorum was dispersed by the apostles after Joseph Smith's death, possibly to help ensure against the specter of further leadership confusion and dissent like that which surfaced at Smith's death. The text of the April 1835 revelation was somewhat troubling on that score. "First" distinguished the First Council from the leaders of the multiplying seventies quorums who had their own presidencies. The First Council remained however, and at least on paper had something like General Authority status, though as a group they had little ecclesiastical influence during Brigham Young's tenure. Additionally,

the expansion of seventies quorums depleted the elders in Nauvoo who owed some ecclesiastical fealty to the high council, another possible competitor for leadership. Individually, seventies sometimes held local ecclesiastical positions unrelated to their titles. The position of the First Council was unclear in terms of what they could do or not do as well as what the other authorities would allow them to do. The high priesthood was an important issue and the April 1835 revelation provided little support for seventies as ecclesiastical authorities as it did for the apostles. Finally, in the 1800s, there was simply no pressure to expand their roles. After Brigham Young's death and the beginning of the "raid" and then its resolution and statehood (and the resumption of significant missionary efforts), the First Council rose in prominence, speaking in general conferences and lobbying for increased responsibilities. These puzzles would not be resolved until the 1970s. On lobbying over insertion of material in *History of the Church* regarding the seventies (the presidency rejected Roberts's proposals as creating possible confusion), see B. H. Roberts correspondence with the First Presidency in B. H. Roberts Collection, MS 1278, CHL.

99. D&C 107 dictates that the apostles supervise the seventy. The relatively large number of seventies in Utah reflected Brigham's continuing Nauvoo policy of ordaining elders before they were sent out preaching. These men often remained in the office their whole lives, restricting their utility beyond their own quorum instruction and business.

100. Joseph F. Smith letterpress copybook, MS 1325, box 30, fd. 4, pp. 86–89, CHL.

101. George Albert Smith journal, October 8, 1903, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Joseph F. Smith's idea made for discussion during his presidency when a number of the First Council of Seventy suggested that they should be able to reorganize stakes. While submerged in later language, the principle stuck around: Was it legitimate for a seventy, who, under 1837 dictum, had never been ordained a high priest, to ordain a high priest? (On Smith's 1837 explanation, see *Messenger and Advocate* 3 [April 1837]: 486–87, note 96.) It was a troublesome question for many. When the rule was relaxed in the 1960s, the problem went away because the now natural vetting process of Church leadership took away the option of making charismatic elders into members of the First Council and filled the ranks with already-ordained high priests.

102. Loren Woolley, a supplier of authoritative tradition to twentieth-century polygamy groups, particularly the Musser-Allred and Johnson branches, combined the two names as "high priest apostles," truly the best of both worlds. On Brigham and the high priesthood, a repre-

sentative sampling is *Journal of Discourses* 1:131. On Woolley, see Daymon Mickle Smith, “The Last Shall be First and The First Shall be Last: Discourse and Mormon History” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 376–415.

103. First Presidency letter, April 1919. See Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* 5:120–21.

104. The Book of Mormon pattern was seen as appropriate at least until 1900. For example, George Q. Cannon in *The Juvenile Instructor* 31, vol. 5 (March 1, 1896): 139.

105. For example, “Joseph Kingsbury, We ordain thee to be an high priest and pray that thy crown be made to shine as the stars that thou mayest always bear off the gospel triumphly in the face of all opposition, We also ordain thee to be a high counsellor at that stake at Kirtland, praying that you may have the spirit of these offices to which you are now ordained, and this shall be the case through your faithfulness.” Minute Book 1, 202. For his part, Joseph Smith apparently did not see the 1835 priesthood architecture as requiring new liturgy. In Smith’s March 10, 1844, sermon, Wilford Woodruff reports Smith as saying, “I saw an angel, and he laid his hands upon my head, and ordained me to be a priest after the order of Aaron,” *WJS*, 327.

106. John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith, Sixth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1919), 169. Widtsoe’s compilation brought Smith’s ideas to a larger audience than they enjoyed when first delivered. See, for example, *Improvement Era* 4 (March 1901): 4.

107. Probably one of the most influential Church-produced books of the twentieth century was John A. Widtsoe’s *Priesthood and Church Government*. Widtsoe quoted the Grant presidency in his 1939 book: “By authority (or in the authority) of the Holy Priesthood and by the laying on of hands, I (or we) ordain you an Elder (or Seventy, or High Priest, or Patriarch, or Apostle, as the case may be) in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and confer upon you all the rights, powers, keys and authority pertaining to this office and calling in the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen” (243–44). The Grant letter was printed in full in Widtsoe, *Gospel Doctrine*, 2nd ed., Addenda, 541. The second edition was issued the same year as the first edition, 1919.

108. Widtsoe, *Gospel Doctrine*, 219; Joseph F. Smith, *Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, October 1915, 7.

109. For example, *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 April 1841): 387–88.

110. By 1958, Bruce R. McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* (170) suggested

the Joseph F. Smith method as canonical. This private work gained cachet among Church members and leaders, despite the wish of the church presidency to suppress it.

111. The modern LDS Church handbooks had their immediate genesis in late nineteenth and early twentieth century regulation of local Church financial affairs. Gradually, these early (yearly) numbered publications gave way to more permanent and substantial rulebooks that were distributed at less frequent intervals. Up until the twenty-first century, handbooks reached twenty-five in number. When referencing these handbooks, I simply use titles of the form *Handbook, No. 19* together with the year of publication. Twenty-first-century Church handbooks are referenced in more common fashion. A survey of Church handbooks for the twentieth century shows that the Joseph F. Smith method appears for the first time in a Church handbook in 1968 (*Handbook, No. 20*, 88). Prior to that time, the official form, when one appeared in handbooks, read “By (or in) the authority of the Holy Priesthood, I (or we) lay my (or our) hands upon you head and ordain you a deacon in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and confer upon you all the rights, powers and authority pertaining to this office and calling in the Aaronic Priesthood, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

112. *General Handbook of Instructions, Book 2* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010): 20.7.1. Available online at <http://lds.org>.

113. See *JSP*, RT2:174–93, for what was likely the planned completed form of the Book of Commandments.

114. Inherited from Protestant speech, the term “branches” replaced “churches,” but not before “churches” became encoded in the printed revelations (found, for example, in D&C 20:81; 51:11). Used in this sense, it is found in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 25:22) as well as, of course, the New Testament. The revelations that invited missionaries of the 1830s to visit the “churches” on the way to their destinations were meant to take advantage of visiting with, and strengthening established congregations (much like Methodist itinerants), not the local Presbyterians. D&C 20 met Protestant theology on a number of levels. It is easy to consider D&C 20:71 as an allusion to the Westminster Catechism, for example.

115. For example, Elias Smith became president of the high priests quorum in Salt Lake City in 1870. Up until 1877, the Salt Lake Stake was seen as the “center stake of Zion.” Hence, in some respects, Smith supervised high priests everywhere. When quorums of high priests were regularized in each stake and the Salt Lake Stake was reduced to ordinary stature in 1877, Smith became president of the high priests quorum of

the Salt Lake Stake and served until his death in 1888. Andrew Jensen, *Latter-day Saints' Biographical Encyclopedia, Volume 1* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jensen History Co., 1901), 720. "History of Brigham Young," 40:820; 58:1326, CHL.

116. William G. Hartley, "Priesthood Reorganization"; James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 2:283–95.

117. See the 1963 *Handbook, No. 19*: 8. In handbooks prior to 1963, only members of the presidency, the apostles and, after 1940, Assistants to the Twelve, could install the quorum presidency.

118. Long before the correlation movement of the 1960s, Church leaders struggled with the interaction between ecclesiastical units and priesthood quorums. Quorums had authority to drop or exclude members and even provide discipline relative to priesthood use. Quorums that crossed ecclesiastical unit boundaries were often split into groups that met weekly with the ward priesthood meeting. But that group had no real standing beyond group study functions and records, perhaps. See the 1944 *Handbook, No. 17*: 9, 15, 18–22.

119. For a period during the twentieth century, priesthood cosmology was written in terms of quorums. Only quorum presidents could hold "keys." This became more awkward as, from the 1940s onward, there were Church officers who held no keys, but who could confer them on others. Part of the difficulty in the terminology stems from the desire to isolate the power to direct temple activity within the highest Church leadership. The idea that keys are associated with quorum leadership fails to work in the modern apostleship narrative, where each apostle has all keys.

120. Governance literature or handbooks for Mormon leadership developed out of Church leader instruction via circular letters, financial regulation handbooks, and published sermons of general conferences, and was motivated by the desire for unified practice. John A. Widtsoe's priesthood study manual, *Priesthood and Church Government* and its precursors like Joseph B. Keeler's *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government* helped pave the way for more robust Church handbooks of the twentieth century.

121. See the notes above for Sidney Rigdon's August 1844 trial.

122. D&C 124:74–76. Vinson Knight, the designated bishop, died before the revelation was acted on. The first official presiding bishop was Newel K. Whitney, who served without counselors between 1847 and his death in 1850. Andrew Jensen, *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), xvii.

123. Nauvoo stake president William Marks's testimony at Rigdon's Nauvoo trial suggests this.

124. For example see his sermon of April 6, 1853, and his testimony at Rigdon's trial in rebuttal to Marks.

125. Turner, *Brigham Young*, 171–74.

126. George Albert was ordained a high priest and an apostle on October 8, 1903. On Joseph F. Smith's point, see George Albert Smith Journal October 8, 1903, and Joseph F. Smith Special Conference Report, October 1901, 82.

127. For example, see Smith, "The Last Shall be First," chap. 3.

128. White, op. cit. See also typed excerpt of George Q. Cannon's journal in the B. H. Roberts collection, MS 1278, CHL.

129. As observed above, President John Taylor seems to have identified the First Presidency with the Presidency of the High Priesthood. For example, see *Journal of Discourses* 21:364 and Orson Pratt in *Journal of Discourses* 22:35. Another meme became associated with the Woodruff solution and it surfaces on occasion in attempts to encourage unquestioned obedience in various Church settings. This is the idea that even if a leader is wrong in his dictates, the subject is blessed for obedience to that erring instruction. This idea is supported by occasional stories and rumors of blessed resolutions in such circumstances. A commonly cited example is the late departure and subsequent tragedy of the Martin and Willie handcart companies of 1856.

130. Age is not the complete issue. President Gordon B. Hinckley, while elderly, had great vigor. Much of the well-known headline changes and announcements over the last fifteen years have been attributed in part to that vigor. Spencer W. Kimball was a vigorous leader in his first decade (1973–81).

131. On Kimball's decline, see Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball*, Working Draft (Salt Lake City: Benchmark, 2009).

132. Manuscript history 2:691; *Deseret News* 2 (August 21, 1852), 1.

133. The use of Marsh's name may have been distracting in a succession argument. Also the "in all the world" language continued to play havoc with jurisdiction, ironically. After Joseph Smith's death, however, the apostles, particularly Brigham Young, repurposed the phrase to suggest universal authority over everything, not just Church function, away from central units (stakes). The D&C 107 text never announced that Ohio juridical restriction in any case.

134. A summary of printing history appears at the Joseph Smith Papers website: <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1844#5>.

135. *JSP*, J1:219–23.

136. *JSP*, J1:222.

137. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 319–21.

138. Consider his sermons and instructions of August 1839, October 1840, August 1843, January 1844, and March 1844. See *WJS*, 8–12, 38–44, 242–43, 317–19, 327–36.

139. Important in this matter: polygamy. But its relationship to D&C 110 is obscure. I've left D&C 124 and 132 out of this discussion, though they clearly form part of the Elijah mystique in Mormonism and their role in succession was and is fundamental. D&C 124's lionization of the Church patriarch fashioned a problematic text for succession pathways. Seth vs. Abel? Consider Joseph F. Smith's request that the Church Patriarch ordain him Church president or his exploration of the possibility that the Patriarch succeed him, all apparently in reference to the text of D&C 124. This illustrates a point previously made about Smith's praxis and theology: the scripture texts founded those things rather than the words or policies of previous Church leaders, Joseph Smith not excepted. Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Urbana.: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 123–73.

140. On Elias, see Samuel Brown, "The Prophet Elias Puzzle," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 39, vol. 3 (Fall 2006): 15–31.

141. Orson Pratt in "History of Brigham Young," 40:805, CHL. Andrew F. Ehat's master's thesis, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," Brigham Young University, 1982, points to this idea. Dated and perhaps too narrow (and tainted a bit by the forgeries of Mark Hofmann), it still forms an important part of the succession narrative. William Marks, a blip on the succession radar for an 1844 moment, never had a chance. Like Rigdon, he was a part of the "anointed quorum" and the Council of Fifty, but he missed the other leg of the stool: polygamy. After D&C 124, stake presidents seem weakened as possible succession candidates in any case. Elijah came to be the foundation of all LDS priesthood sacraments in the view of Joseph Fielding Smith: Elijah transferred the factor that made the salvific acts of priesthood permanent. This vision of the breadth of Elijah's power pressed him into service as a designated delegate of Christ, founding all LDS ordinances, not just the rites of Nauvoo. In this reading, without Elijah, the effects of baptism and other sacraments, trembled on an existential abyss. See, for example, Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955): 2:117, 3:129–30. Compare one of Joseph Smith's few written sermons, October 5, 1840. Some of Joseph Smith's later preaching suggests a more narrow view.

142. Brown, *In Heaven*, 164–69. It is somewhat remarkable that Elijah makes no textual appearance in the July 12, 1843 revelation on sealing.

143. As found in *JSP*, MRB:585–90.

144. Observe the reference to *presidency of the church*. This represents a reading back into the manuscript a development several years in the future. The date of RB2 (1834) allows this, and it was not an unusual practice for early editions of the revelations. I will consider this in more detail below.

145. A homeoteleuton by Williams accounts for the seemingly strange regulation of elders presiding over priests. One sees the same sort of errors represented in the Revelation Book 1 text in deleted (stricken) text not evident in the proto-text given here.

146. The variation between the two texts here represents an editorial change evident in the RB1 text, which is not visible in the proto-text reconstruction here.

147. In editing Joseph Smith's revelations for publication, it was not terribly uncommon to see revelations combined into a single text or divided into multiple texts. The current LDS D&C contains a number of important examples of this, D&C 107 being the most interesting perhaps.

148. Smith deployed the term very broadly. As usage became more fixed after his death, the early editions of the revelations came to be seen as the only acceptable use of the term.

149. Compare *JSP*, MRB, 51, 355 (D&C 28, 103).

150. On the Disciples, see Richard T. Hughes and Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 170–87; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 242–44.

151. Recall that the meaning here of “president over the priesthood” is *president of the priests*. The language does not require the existence of the later policy of a bishop functioning as president of the priests. The nature of “presidencies” in this revelation (a term not actually used there) is a solitary president. Somewhat ironically perhaps, this situation would change for everyone but the priests. Mormon usage gradually translated this in a rather curious way to the idea of a President of the Aaronic Priesthood, a concept and office whose seed sprouted in Nauvoo.

152. As mentioned previously, these were not “local” quorums in the sense of modern practice, but they were “located.” Kirtland and Nauvoo set a partial precedence so that LDS practice confined the deacons,

teachers, priests, and elders as “stake” quorums in Utah. Bishops in the stake would select men but gradually, boys, to fill the ranks of deacons with perhaps a number of quorums of each rank, but the quorums would not be affected by “ward” boundaries. Boys finally filled the teachers and priests quorums as well; but as teachers were deployed in Church discipline in nineteenth-century Utah Mormonism, boys generally did not invade their ranks at first. On bishops and early Utah organization see, D. Gene Pace, “Community Leadership on the Mormon Frontier: Mormon Bishops and the Political, Economic and Social Development of Utah before Statehood” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1983). Also see, William G. Hartley, *My Fellow Servants: Essays on the History of the Priesthood* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2010); Dale Beecher, “The Office of Bishop,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, vol. 4 (Winter 1982): 103–15.