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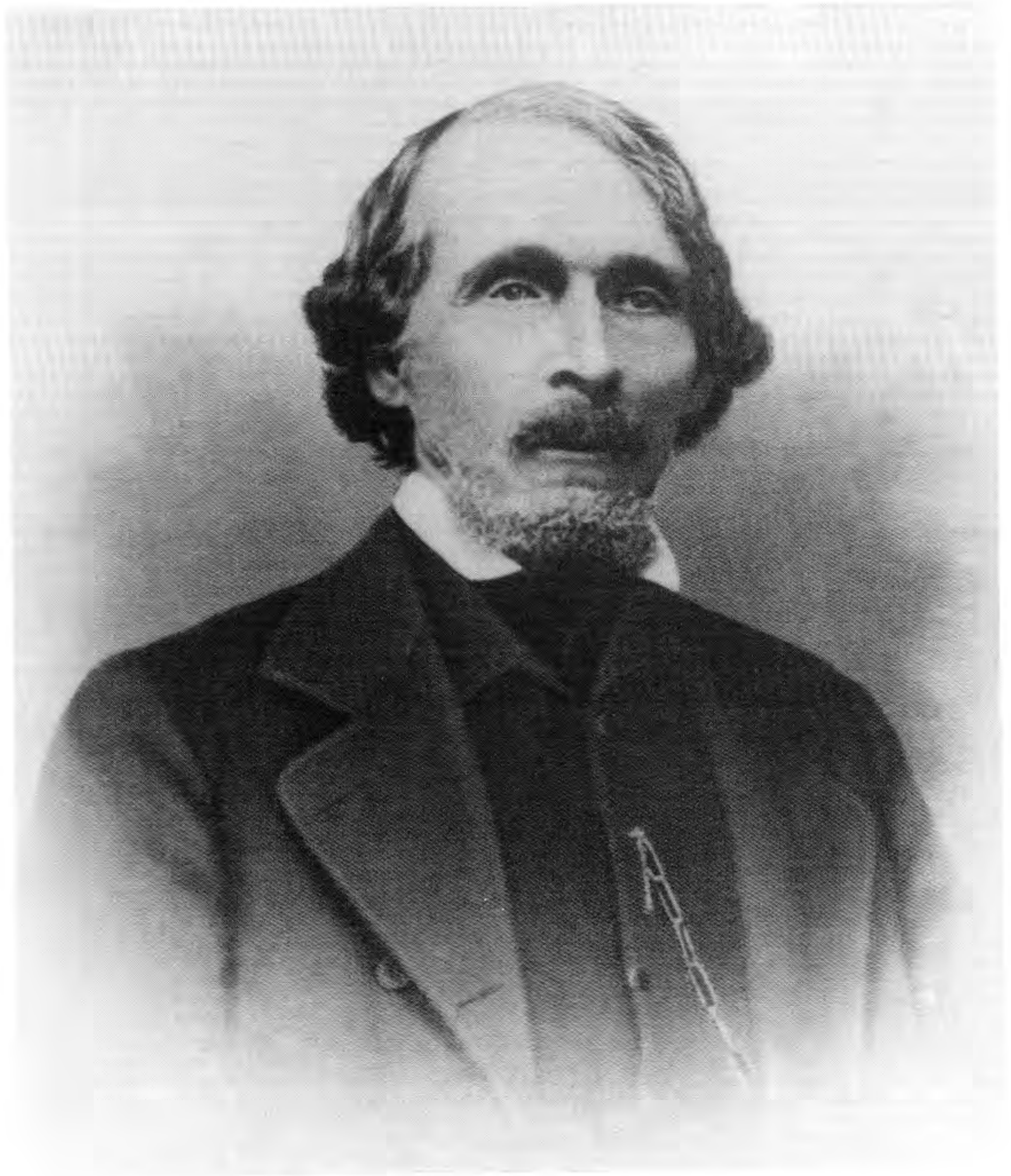
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W. W. Phelps (1792–1872). Courtesy Jeanne A. Clawson.

Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836)

These letters, many published for the first time, give important details about the lives and teachings of Latter-day Saints as the Church flourished in Kirtland, Ohio.

Edited by Bruce A. Van Orden

William Wines Phelps (1792–1872) was the LDS Church’s first editor and hymnist and was perhaps the best educated member of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s nearest associates during the 1830s.¹ He significantly affected the articulation of LDS doctrine from 1832 to 1836.² Because of his closeness to Joseph Smith, we take interest in his holographic writings, which reveal many details about the Prophet’s activities and teachings. Phelps rarely kept a journal, and when he did, it was brief.³ But while he served as Joseph Smith’s scribe and as a member of one of the groups of presidents in Kirtland, Ohio, from May 1835 to April 1836,⁴ Phelps wrote numerous letters to Saints in Missouri that he decided to designate as his journal. Most letters were addressed to his wife Sally. “I have told you once or twice to take all my letters that I have written to you and lock them up,” he wrote. “You can perceive that my letters are my private Journal” (January 1836).

Phelps, who was known as “W. W.” throughout his entire adult life, was born February 17, 1792, in Dover, Hanover Township, Morris County, New Jersey. A prominent journalist in western New York,⁵ he was also eccentric. Everywhere he went, people considered him a strange man. Plainly, he was a zealot in whatever cause that captured his attention. In New York, he helped found one of the most ardent of frontier political/religious

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causes, Anti-Masonry.⁶ With his publications, he viciously attacked society's foes as he perceived them; in exulting and ponderous tones, he also praised virtue and his concept of right.

Throughout his life, Phelps sought to excel and gain honor. He took pride in his rhetorical skills and knowledge of ancient languages. He fancied himself a poet and forever carried a notebook in which he would compose a rhyme, couplet, or a bit of poetic prose. Most of his poetry was moralistic.

Yet Phelps, a sincerely devout man of Puritan stock, sought to do God's will. He professed absolute fealty to his Savior Jesus Christ and often extolled the Lord in verse and prose. W. W. may have struggled with pride, but he also desired to be humble and to receive God's approbation. His Kirtland letters reveal these sides of his personality.

W. W. Phelps was thirty-nine years old when he approached Joseph Smith on June 15, 1831. He had known the Prophet since the previous December but had refused to join the Church because his ever increasing association with Mormons threatened to undermine his prominence in the Anti-Masonic movement. When his Anti-Masonic associates turned on him, Phelps brought his family from Canandaigua, New York, to Kirtland "to do the will of the Lord."⁷

Phelps was called by revelation (D&C 55) to accompany Joseph Smith to Missouri to locate the land of Zion. As part of the Prophet's entourage, he immediately became one of Joseph Smith's confidants, a position he retained for the next several years. Once in Missouri, another revelation (D&C 57) called Phelps to serve as "printer unto the church" in Independence.

Phelps returned to Ohio, picked up his family, purchased a printing press with Church funds in Cincinnati, and established his home in the area and the W. W. Phelps and Co. printing business in Independence in the spring of 1832. Phelps played a prominent role in both the Literary Firm and the United Firm, the communal financial institutions that oversaw the Church's printing and storehouse establishments.⁸ He published the Church's first periodical, the *Evening and the Morning Star*; printed a secular weekly, the *Upper Missouri Advertiser*; performed other

local printing jobs; and nearly completed the printing of the Book of Commandments.⁹ He often expressed his loyalty to Joseph Smith, and his newspaper extolled the young Prophet's revelations. During this time, he served as one of the Church's seven presiding high priests in the Missouri settlements.¹⁰ He wrote many letters to Joseph Smith on behalf of the Missouri Saints, and Joseph Smith in turn wrote letters addressed to Phelps for the Missouri Church leadership and members.¹¹

Jackson County mob action drove Phelps and the Mormons across the Missouri River in November 1833. W. W. labored vigorously in behalf of the Saints in seeking redress from Missouri government officials. When Joseph Smith arrived in Clay County with Zion's Camp in July 1834, the Prophet established a high council in Zion (modeled after the new one in Kirtland; see D&C 102) and installed David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer as the presidency of that council. This appointment made Brother Phelps one of the six "presidents of the church," consisting of the Ohio presidency (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, who were also the First Presidency) and the new Missouri presidency. (The number of "presidents" increased to nine in December 1834 with the addition of Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, and Joseph Smith, Sr.)¹² Soon after his appointment, Phelps, along with the other Zion presidency members and other Missouri Church officials, was chosen to go to Kirtland and receive his "endowment with power from on high" in the temple that was nearing completion.¹³

Phelps tarried in Clay County, Missouri, through the winter of 1834-35 to watch over the Church in Zion, to care for his family, and to be there for the birth of a daughter. In mid-May he traveled with his son Waterman and close friend John Whitmer to Kirtland, where they were greeted warmly by the Prophet and many other Saints. He indicated his delight in being able to stay in the home of Joseph and Emma Smith.

The arrival of Phelps and Whitmer occasioned some new assignments from Joseph Smith. The Prophet replaced Oliver Cowdery with John Whitmer as editor of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* so that Cowdery could dedicate most of



John Whitmer (1802–78) circa 1870. Whitmer and Phelps were close friends. The two served in the Missouri high council presidency. They traveled together to Kirtland to receive a temple endowment, and both were assigned by Joseph Smith to publish the *Messenger and Advocate*. Courtesy Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

his time to printing and publishing the Doctrine and Covenants. Phelps, with his extensive printing and publishing experience, was assigned to help both Whitmer with the *Messenger and Advocate* and Cowdery with the Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁴

The Phelps Kirtland letters shed considerable light upon the contemporaneous teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In one of his first letters, W. W. exulted, “President Smith preached last Sabbath and I gave him the text; ‘This is my beloved son: hear ye him!’ He preached one of the greatest sermons I ever heard; it was about 3 1/2 hours long—and unfolded more mysteries than I can write at this time” (June 2, 1835). This is one of the rare historical references to Joseph Smith’s first vision in the mid-1830s.¹⁵

Phelps was equally excited to share with his wife startling new teachings from Joseph Smith on the eternal nature of marriage. In his first letter to Sally, he wrote, “A new idea, Sally, if you and I continue faithful to the end, we are certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity; this is one of the most glorious consolations we can have in the flesh” (May 26, 1835). His letters are full of references to these new concepts. These letters, as well as other original documents from that period, reveal the extent to which the subject of marriage was a recurring theme with Joseph Smith and his associates at this time.¹⁶

Phelps’s relationship with his wife was a complex reflection of the new teachings on eternal marriage; American cultural values concerning women; his strict, puritanical nature; his zealousness; and his interpretations of the Apostle Paul’s and the Prophet’s teachings about husband-wife relations. For example, he merged American and Pauline ideas when he considered having his wife and daughters—“my women”—veil their faces when in public (September 16, 1835). In one of his frequent admonitions to his wife, Phelps again echoed Paul, “Keep your husband’s commands in all things as you do the Lord’s. Your husband is your head, and the Lord is his head.” In the letter, this instruction is followed by the report that “Br. Joseph has preached some of his greatest sermons on the duty of wives to their husbands” (September 16, 1835). (The Prophet’s diaries for 1835 to 1836 indicate he addressed the duties of husbands and wives to each

other.¹⁷) Phelps could be in turn loving and jealous, concerned and domineering, pleased and demeaning. “I love you,” he asserted, “and I want you to love me and write to me that you do. I love to please you, and I want you should love to please me, and say so in your letters” (September 11, 1835; underlining in the original).

Phelps’s letters, taken together with Oliver Cowdery’s more well-known letter (December 22, 1835) to William Frye,¹⁸ help us understand the early excitement about the Egyptian papyri that Michael Chandler brought to Kirtland. “The last of June, four Egyptian mummies were brought here,” W. W. reported. “There were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings with them.” He explained that Joseph Smith soon knew what they represented. The rolls

contained the sacred record kept of Joseph in Pharaoh’s court in Egypt, and the teachings of Father Abraham. . . . These records of old times, when we translate and print them in a book, will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed. (July 19 and 20, 1835)

The Phelps letters also give tantalizing tidbits about the Church’s ambitious publication and education projects. They reveal the excitement Phelps felt at receiving some of the initial spiritual outpourings and sacred ordinances of the promised Kirtland endowment.¹⁹ And they tell of the hustle and bustle of Kirtland as its population burgeoned in anticipation of the completion of the temple. (A subject index of the main topics mentioned in these letters is provided at the end of this article.)

After the months covered by these nineteen letters, the Missouri presidency—David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer—were advised on Friday, April 1, 1836, that they were released from their assignments in Kirtland.²⁰ They could return to their families in Zion and reassume their duties in directing the Missouri Saints. After arriving in Clay County, Phelps learned of the Clay citizens’ determination that the Mormons leave that area. With the assistance of John Whitmer and Bishop Edward Partridge, Phelps located a new gathering place for the Missouri Saints. After many negotiations and the action of the Missouri state legislature, Caldwell County was set aside for Mormon settlement. Phelps and

John Whitmer purchased government lands with Church monies, laid out the city of Far West, and sold lots to incoming Saints.

The Missouri High Council later accused Phelps and Whitmer of appropriating too much authority to themselves in establishing Far West. Because this matter was never resolved, Phelps eventually forsook his loyalty to Joseph Smith and apostatized. After the Battle of Far West, he testified in the Richmond courthouse against Joseph Smith, thus contributing to the Prophet's incarceration in Missouri jails for six months.

After Joseph Smith and the Mormons found refuge in Illinois, W. W. Phelps, as a "returning prodigal," begged forgiveness from Joseph Smith and received it. He was accepted back into the Church. In Nauvoo he once again served as a scribe to the Prophet,²¹ but he never regained the high station he once held in Missouri and Ohio. He remained faithful the rest of his life and died in full fellowship among the Saints in Salt Lake City in 1872.

The Phelps letters are unfortunately not complete. From the extant sources it is clear that we do not have the entire text of several of these letters and that Phelps wrote additional letters. These 1835-36 letters are drawn from various sources, mainly the letter collections of W. W. Phelps, excerpts, LDS Church Historical Archives. There is also a microfilm copy of the more extensive collection in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City (based on a copy in possession of Lydia Varney Spry in 1942). Excerpts of some letters were also copied into the Journal History of the Church; in "Some Early Letters of William W. Phelps," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 31 (January 1940): 25-31; and in Leah Y. Phelps, "Letters of Faith from Kirtland," *Improvement Era* 45 (August 1942): 529. The letters have been arranged chronologically, with a number designation for each that corresponds to an appended index. I have included excerpts from more than one source of the same letter if the sources shed additional light on what Phelps wrote. In such cases, the additions are labeled with the corresponding number and the letter A.

Phelps's background as a printer and editor fashioned him into a remarkably good speller for his time. The few spelling variations that exist in these letters have been maintained, together with Phelps's capitalization, punctuation, and occasionally

underlined words and phrases. The same policy has been practiced in regard to those portions of the letters written by Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and W. W. and Sally's oldest child, Waterman. To distinguish between Phelps's own editorial comments and mine, his use of parentheses has been maintained, while my comments and supplied dates have been enclosed in brackets: [].

Those letters found in the Journal History of the Church are often preceded, interrupted, or followed by a series of asterisks, likely indicating that a portion of the letter (probably thought insignificant by the compilers) has been left out. The asterisks have been reproduced here. Where a word or words were impossible to decipher or even predict due to torn and taped pages or flaked-off ink, no editorial judgments have been made. Rather, the passages have been marked [*word(s) unintelligible*]. Most persons mentioned in Phelps's letters have been identified in notes.

1

Written May 26, 1835, from Kirtland, Ohio, to his wife, Sally Waterman Phelps, in Liberty, Missouri:²²

You are not aware how much sameness there is among the Saints in Kirtland. They keep the Word of Wisdom²³ in Kirtland; they drink cold water, and don't even mention tea and coffee; they pray night and morning and everything seems to say: Behold the Lord is nigh.²⁴ But it is hard living here; flour costs from \$6.00 to \$7.00 a barrel and cows from \$20.00 to \$30.00 a head. It is a happy thing that I did not move back, for everything here is so dear. Our brethren are so poor and hard for money that it would have been more than I could have done to maintain my family.*****

A new idea, Sally, if you and I continue faithful to the end, we are certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity; this is one of the most glorious consolations we can have in the flesh.²⁵

2

Written by the presiding authorities of the Church²⁶ from Kirtland, Ohio, June 1, 1835, to Elder John M. Burk²⁷ and "the Elders, Priests, teachers, deacons and members of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints" at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri; as the style

of the letter seems to be that of Phelps, he could easily have been the author:²⁸

President Burk:

You will not value the postage of a letter I presume when you learn that this part of the sheet is for the benefit of the Saints of God. According to the order of the kingdom, begun in the last days, to prepare men for the rest of the Lord, the Elders in Zion on in her immediate region, have no authority nor right to meddle with her affairs, to regulate or even hold any courts. The high council has been organized expressly to minister in all her spiritual affairs; and the Bishop and his council are set over her temporal matters; so thus the Elders acts are null and void. Now the Lord wants the tares and wheat to grow together; while in an unorganized state Zion must be redeemed with judgments and the converts by righteousness. Every Elder that can, after he has provided for his family (if any he has) and paid his debts, must go forth and clear his skirts from the blood of this generation. While they are there, instead of holding courts to stop communion, or anything else, let every one labor to bind up the broken hearted, reclaim the wanderer, and persuade back into the kingdom such as have been cut off, by encouraging them to lay to and work righteousness, and prepare with one heart and one mind to redeem Zion, that goodly land of promise, where the willing and the obedient shall be blessed. Souls are as precious in the sight of God as they ever were, and the Elders were never called to drive any down to hell, but invite and persuade men everywhere to repent. It is the acceptable year of the Lord. The Priests too, should not be idle, their duties are plain and unless they do them, they cannot expect to be approved. Righteousness must govern the Saints in all things and when the new covenants come forth the Priests will learn that great things may be expected at their hands.

The Teachers and Deacons are the standing ministers of the Church,²⁹ and in the absence of other officers, they will have great things required at their hands. They must strengthen the members; persuade such as are out of the way, to repent and meekly urge and persuade everyone to forgive each other all their trespasses, offences and sins. Bear and forbear one with another, brethren, for so God does with us. Cease to find fault and learn to do well. Pray for your enemies in the Church and curse not your foes without; for vengeance belongs to God. Know you not, that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, than there is over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance!!! Strive not about the mysteries of the kingdom; to one is given the word of wisdom; to another the power of healing difficulties. To every officer we say be merciful and you shall find mercy. Your Brethren, who leave their families

and go forth to warn the present generation of the great things to come, expect great things of those who enjoy the society of the Saints and their families. They pray that they may be very prayerful and very humble, working diligently spiritually and temporally for the redemption of Zion, when all the pure in heart can return with songs of everlasting joy, to enjoy the good of the land of Zion. Brethren, in the name of Jesus we entreat you to live worthy of the blessings which shall be heired by the faithful after Zion is redeemed.

To Elder Lyman Wight:³⁰

The Lord is not pleased with him because he did not come to Kirtland as is manifest to the council. The council fear that in consequence of self-sufficiency and self-knowledge, which heretofore at time has led our worthy brother aside from the strict principles of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, unless he goes forth into the vineyard and magnifies his calling according to the commandment, Satan will sift him as chaff. Let him be reminded that it is necessary for him to repent and humble himself before God and go about his Master's business; and let those who have been appointed: whose appointment have been sanctioned by the voice of the Church, regulate the affairs of Zion, lest he that puts his hand forth to steady the ark, be made an ensample, as was Uzzah in the days of David.³¹

Decision in Elder George Busket's³² case, appealed from the Elder's Court.

Kirtland, Ohio, May, 30, 1835: The foregoing case was reviewed by the Presidency and decided that the proceedings were illegal on the part of the Elders; they not having authority to act in that country, the Lord having appointed regular councils for the trials of transgressors—Oliver Cowdery, Clerk.

We say to Elder Busket: go to the parties and witnesses and forgive them whatever hardness you may hold against them and they must forgive you. When you have done so and sufficiently humbled yourself, prepare yourself and go forth and magnify your calling, lest Satan sift you as chaff.

We, having regard for Elder Fosdick,³³ hope and pray that he may also go forth and improve his talent, lest he lose his crown.

In the bands of the new covenant, we are,

Joseph Smith, Jr.

Oliver Cowdery³⁴

W. W. Phelps

John Whitmer.³⁵

3

June 2, 1835, to his wife, Sally, in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri:³⁶

The Elders are constantly coming and going.³⁷ Last week, Elders Simeon Carter³⁸ and Solomon Hancock³⁹ started for the East. Bishop Partridge⁴⁰ and Councillor Isaac Morley⁴¹ will start soon; Elder Amasa M. Lyman⁴² came in last week. Elders Peter Dustin⁴³ and James Emmett⁴⁴ arrived last week and Elder Oziel Stevens⁴⁵ this week.

*****President Smith preached last Sabbath and I gave him the text; "This is my beloved son: hear ye him!" He preached one of the greatest sermons I ever heard; it was about 3 1/2 hours long—and unfolded more mysteries than I can write at this time.

The congregations of the Saints at Kirtland are larger than any we used to have at Canandaigua, Ontario Co. N.Y., and when any of the world come in, we have what may well be called "a large congregation."

The Prophet Joseph Smith added the following to this letter:

Cousin Almyra Scoby⁴⁶

Bro. Wm. W. Phelps has left a little space for me to occupy and I gladly improve it. I would be glad to see the children of Zion and deliver the work of Eternal Life to them from my own mouth, but cannot this year. Nevertheless the day will come that I shall enjoy this privilege I trust; and we all shall receive an inheritance in the land of refuge, which is so much to be desired, seeing it is under the direction of the Almighty, therefore let us live faithful before the Lord and it shall be well with us. I feel for all the children of Zion and pray for them in all my prayers. Peace be multiplied unto them, redemption and favor from God, Amen.

Joseph Smith Jr.

As a further postscript Elder Phelps adds:

N.B. If I was able to bear the expense, I would write weekly, but it would cost \$12.50 both ways; I cannot afford it.

4

Extracted from a letter written at Kirtland, Ohio, to Sally at Liberty, Missouri:⁴⁷

On the 4th inst. Brothers Peter Brownell⁴⁸ and David Shibley,⁴⁹ who went up this spring from Pennsylvania to Missouri, brought tidings from the region of Zion up to June 12th by which we learned that the spirit of Satan had started the elders to do what they ought

not to do and leave undone that which they ought to do. On Sunday the 12th inst. we received news by Brother William Tippetts⁵⁰ up to the 30th of June. He came through in eleven days and 12 hours, the shortest passage known^{*****}He gave us all the intelligence we could wish which caused us all to rejoice. He stated that my letter had checked the elders in their crusade for exaltation.^{****}The weather here [Kirtland] is variable hot and cold; the lake breezes come almost as cold as winter. Haying has commenced, but harvest, I do not think, will begin until one or two weeks hence.^{***}I am much pleased to hear that Elder Peter Whitmer⁵¹ stepped forth to vindicate the cause of the Saints. God will bless him for all such noble acts. He that will do good can do it without a commandment.^{***}The Elders are mostly out preaching. Elders Corrill,⁵² Newel Knight⁵³ and Elias Higbee⁵⁴ work upon the House of the Lord. Elder Emmett goes to school, Elder Morris Phelps⁵⁵ and Priest Duncan⁵⁶ arrived last week. We have just learned that Bishop Partridge and Elder Morley are well. On the last of June four Egyptian mummies were brought here. With them were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings. As no one could translate these writings they were presented to President Smith. He soon knew what they were and said that the rolls of papyrus contained a sacred record kept by Joseph in Pharaoh's court in Egypt and the teachings of Father Abraham. God has so ordered it that these writings and mummies have been brought into the Church, and the sacred writings I had just locked up in Bro. Joseph's house, when your letter came, so I had two consolations of good things in one day. These records of old times when we translate and print them in a book will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed.^{*****} Kirtland has altered a great deal since we lived here. It is growing very fast indeed, but I do not like it as well as home (Missouri), or any other place that I have seen. Our passage from Missouri to Kirtland was not as quick as it might have been, but I thank the Lord that we got here safe.^{***}The building of the Lord's house is progressing very fast. It is a large house, I assure you. The men are now at work on the steeple.^{***}I live now at President Smith's. There are at present three stores in this town, two of which belong to the Church. Meetings are already held in the Lord's house.

4A

A different version of the previous letter, which is located in the Journal History of the Church; dated July 19-20, 1835:⁵⁷

Beloved Sally:

Last evening we received your first letter after an absence of twelve weeks and twelve hours. Our tears of joy were the witness

of its welcome reception. By these things we learn the value of each other's society and company, and friendship, and virtue. Taking the letter altogether, with all its candor and information and remembered names, it is, by all who have read it, called a very good one. Brother Joseph remarked that it was as easy to shed tears while reading that letter as it was when reading the history of Joseph in Egypt. . . .

My affection for you and my children grows very fast. I mean it grows purer and more ardent. I want you to send for Elder Calvin Beebe⁵⁸ as soon as you receive this and have Sarah⁵⁹ baptized. [He acknowledges letters from the two older girls, Sabrina and Mehitabel and then continues]: Sarah, Henry, James and Lydia—I must wait to see them a good while yet. They have my tears and mother's smiles till I come, with the blessings of the Lord. . . . I hope and pray that the children will be diligent and learn well this summer.

You say the roof of the house leaks; I have written to have another good roof put on over the one now on. You can get 12 penny nails out of the goods at Brother Corrill's; and anything else that you actually need that is among those goods, get and use and I will settle the matter. . . .

I was sorry to hear that the cupboard fell down because I forgot to nail it, but now it is so. If there is not crockery enough at Brother Corrill's, go to Liberty⁶⁰ and replenish it. . . .

I rejoice that that little branch of the Church had the Spirit of God to reject the temptations of Satan. The Lord will remember their constancy. Teacher Music [could possibly be Samuel Musick]⁶¹ is right that you need our prayers and we need yours, for by faith and prayer and every good word and work, we can enter into the joys of our Lord. . . .

I am much pleased that Elder Peter Whitmer stepped forth to vindicate the cause of the Saints; God will bless him for all such noble acts. He that will do good can do it without a commandment. The fact is, the Saints must work righteousness. . . .

The elders are mostly out a preaching. Elder Corrill, Newel Knight and Elias Higbee work upon the House of the Lord. Elder Emmett goes to school. Elder Morris Phelps and Priest Duncan arrived last week. We have just learned that Bishop Partridge and Elder Morley are back. . . .

The last of June, four Egyptian mummies were brought here; there were two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings with them. As no one could translate these writings, they were presented to President Smith. He soon knew what they were and said they, the "rolls of papyrus," contained the sacred record kept of Joseph in Pharaoh's court in Egypt, and the teachings of Father Abraham. God has so ordered it that these mummies and

writings have been brought in the Church and the sacred writing I had just locked up in Brother Joseph's house when your letter came, so I had two consolations of good things in one day. These records of old times, when we translate and print them in a book, will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon. There is nothing secret or hidden that shall not be revealed, and they come to the Saints. . . .

Forever yours,

W. W. Phelps

5

First paragraph written by Waterman Phelps; W. W. Phelps took up the pen again in the subsequent paragraph, July 20, 1835:⁶²

Dear Mother and Sisters: I now take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well and thankful to God for it. Father received your letter Saturday the 18th and I was glad to hear from you and find you are all well [several words unintelligible] Kirtland has altered [word unintelligible] since we lived here it is a growing very fast indeed, but I do not like it so well as house nor any other place that I have seen. Our journey here was not as fast as it might have been but I thank the Lord that we got here safe. I have sent some paper to Henry Rollins and to you. The building of the House is going on very fast. Brother Corril and Higbee say [word unintelligible] it is a large House. I assure you they are now to work on the steeple. Give my respects to all these [word unintelligible] and to Iva⁶³ and to Henry, Sarah Young⁶⁴ and Lydia tell them I long to see the time when I shall return home to live. I mean to live faithful if I can. I live now at President Smiths. There are now at prent [present] three stores in this town, two of them belong to the church. They hold meetings in the House now. Write on the paper that we had not got any letter from home till that same we got your letter. I have your papers nearly every time to you and Henry R. I do not know when we shall return home. Tell Iva that I get along as well as I should in this world. Father has got him [several words unintelligible] but have I not got [word unintelligible] anything yet. I must now close for the present give my respects [two words unintelligible] that know me and tell them I am well to [word unintelligible] tell I see you all. From your affectionate son. William Waterman Phelps. Sally Phelps, Sabrina Phelps, Mahetable Phelps, Sarah Phelps, Henry Phelps, James Phelps, Lydia Phelps

[Writing changes to that of William W. Phelps.]

I must stop in the middle of my letter. Sally will remember that before we came into the church, we both dreamed in one night; I, that I fed a great flock of sheep in a [word unintelligible] Mill; and you, that you drew water out of a well and watered many

cattle: While I feed the sheep, and I forgot to water the cattle—and work righteousness. Be careful of your words: I dreamed the other night that Nephi said “How do you do Br. Phelps?” I answered “I do as well as I can.” To which he replied—“He doth as well as he can, that followeth the direction of the Holy Spirit and keepeth all the commandments of the Lord and his only.” By the first elder or any honest person that is coming this way, tell James H. Rollins to send me all the Rice pencils which may be among the goods &c. I hate to stop but must.

Forever yours,

W. W. Phelps

I say to the elders, priests, teachers, deacons, & members:⁶⁵ be prayerful, humble, and watchful, so that Satan may not deceive you: Let such as live in the region of Zion at least pray over their flocks and fields and for the prosperity of those with whom they tarry; and three times a day for the welfare of your selves and families. If every Saint is not very prayerful and very humble, he must feel the displeasure of his God. The three Presidents of Zion act for her good whether in Zion, Kirtland, or England⁶⁶ and have a right to spirit in regulating the affairs of her stakes. Therefore, when any one attempts to meddle with her affairs, they will be held to an account before God.

As ever,

W. W. Phelps

6

Letter addressed to Sally Phelps, Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. From Kirtland Mills, Ohio,⁶⁷ August 14, 1835. The beginning of the letter is missing.⁶⁸

. . . they may be saved with you, for they will be your joy with God, and for each that comes into the Kingdom, you shall have a star in your crown. That is if you keep them in the Kingdom, you shall have a star in your crown. Babies are always in the Kingdom until they transgress when they have come to years of accountability. Well might the Psalmist exclaim: “Lo children are the heritage of God.” How necessary, then, that every pain be taken, and every means used to keep them in the Kingdom; and to obey the requisitions of the Gospel that parents may come into the presence of God and bring all their sheaves with them; for all their pain, then, they will receive joy; for all the sorrow, pleasure; for all the tribulations, blessings; and for all their children, “stars.” Methinks Solomon knew this when he penned the third verse of the 6th chapter of Ecclesiastes: for if we should not go to heaven with our children, we should have



Lydia Phelps Varney (1835–1923). When Phelps wrote the letters reproduced in this article, Lydia was his youngest daughter. The number of times he sends special greetings to his “little innocent Lydia” seems to indicate he had a special fondness for her. Courtesy Louis D. Allen.

no joy with them; and if we should go without them we should lack that glory. Hence I entreat you with all the affection I have for you and “our” children to keep them in the way they should go, that all of us may come in to the bliss of God together, with songs of everlasting joy.

I know the task of training up children right before the Lord is too much for a woman, and was I not confident of your virtue and capability, I should feel very uneasy, but your piety and prudence is so well known to me, that I know you will do all in your power to gratify my feelings in bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: to be obedient, to be wise, to be good, and to be pure in heart. It may be supposed, and I know, and you know, that if we had nothing to do but save ourselves, we could do it pretty easy; but where much is given, much will be required, and instead of saving myself only, I must labor faithfully to save others, that I may obtain a crown of “many stars.”

This shows you that the order of heaven has great men, even principal men, who do much and have much glory; and you being my legal wife, if you continue as you have begun, and I know you will, you are next to me; are my equal, all save my power and authority, and you participate in my glory. O, then, who would not labor for the Lord? You are in a great place and if you labor to be so you will be great with me and great with God. Do so, Sally, for your sake, and for my sake, and for Jesus’ sake. Sabrina and Mehitabel are in the right age to be light, and vain, when the current of vice and folly can easily overflow, but be strict with them, even as I, and you will keep them in the Kingdom as ornaments of your love and glory.

Let others do as they may, square your conduct with the word of the Lord, and declare that as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord. If you lack wisdom or information on any point, write to me and you shall have all the knowledge I can give: freely I receive and freely I give: forget not your prayers in the season thereof, nor let the children forget theirs. Pray for me daily, for so I do for you three or four times a day. Pray for health, peace, and our dwelling together in unity. Amen.

Forever yours,

W. W. Phelps

The following notes are written on the outside of the letter:

Sally—lest anything should be wrong, I asked your forgiveness on all things passed. But you have not written a word about it. Why? Tell “little innocent Lydia” her father longs to see her, and all the rest of the children, not omitting her mother—for her “satisfaction.”

W. W. P.

Dear Sister in the Lord:

Your husband has written you of his health, etc. It is proper to say that he is doing well, and I bear this testimony concerning him, that he is humble and faithful. Next spring you may expect him, if all be well. Waterman does well. If he continues he will be loved of the Lord, and so will all who continue to keep the Lord's commandments. Great things await the earth, and great joys await the Saints. Soon the Son of Man comes, and then righteous families will no more be separated. I bless the Lord for that. The Lord bless you and all the faithful, even more than your hearts can premeditate. Thus shall it be. My family are well. My wife remembers you, Sally Phelps.

O. Cowdery

Brother Burk:

We are glad to receive intelligence from you and others concerning the affairs of the Saints, but yet we see a lack in some respects. The presidency, sometime since, dropped a word to Elder Lyman Wight. We want to know whether he will neglect us much longer without writing? There is evidently a wrong somewhere. We wonder if the elders never think to give us their proceedings, officially. We want to know from them, what they are doing, and what they are to do hereafter. Whether they are about to go forth in the spirit of meekness and preach the Gospel? A word further, Bro. Burk must be humble! We hope that the melancholy will remember that the Saints always rejoice!

O. Cowdery

7

September 9, 1835:⁶⁹

Beloved in the Lord: The letter from both the high councils to the elders and church in Clay County, Mo. addressed to Br. Hezekiah Peck,⁷⁰ contains so much good instructions, that I have supposed it to be unnecessary to write to any but Sally, and inasmuch as you submit unto my teachings and commands, as unto the Lord, others seeing your submission, your meekness, and virtuous example, if they mean to be among the saints, "will go and do likewise." The Spirit whispers me thus the instructions already given in connection with what each travelling elder will necessarily write to his wife, will be sufficient to keep every member in the way of duty till the "Doctrine and Covenants"⁷¹ arrive, when all can choose for themselves; and if they then miss their way, and are unfaithful in keeping the commandments, and living by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God, they must be chastened!

I have it in my heart to give you a little instruction, so that you may know your place, and stand in it, beloved, admired, and rewarded, in time and in eternity.⁷² But in order to do this, I must show the duty of man, in part. Man was created in the beginning to dress the earth to multiply his species; to honor God, and enjoy his presence forever. Hence it is the duty of man to labor for his living; to provide for his own household; to cultivate the land; to beautify it, to rear up habitations, and to have dominion over all animals which were made for his use and benefit. But it is not good that man should live alone, therefore it is pleasing to the Lord, that he should have an helpmeet, and multiply and replenish the earth, raising up seed, that the earth may be filled with its measure of man: Wherefore marvel not that a person without raising up seed to continue his or her name, and inheritance lacks a blessing: For the Psalmist says: "Lo children are the heritage of the Lord." In the first chapter of Romans, beginning at the 26 verse, see what abominations women and men work by changing the order of heaven. Then one reason why the generations of men have been more or less cursed, with harlots, whoremonger, adulterers, maimed children, ungodly wretches, &C. God gives them up to their own vile affections. This you know is the fact with men and women in general among the gentiles. The Lord promises to bless the fruit of the body of the Saints, if they keep his commandments: This brings to mind "our little innocent Lydia" who, I am persuaded from what I learn, is beloved and blessed of the Lord: if I were with you I could tell you why, but (suffice till I come,) to say that one of the great reasons is because her Mother did the will of the Lord without murmuring in bringing that child into the world.

In the 11th chapter of first Corinthians, you will see that the head of Christ is God; and the head of man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and that the woman was created for the man: I might refer you to many other passages which give light on this subject but you have a good concordance and you can turn to them at your leisure. God placed man upon earth to do his will and it is his will that the earth should be filled with its measure of man. Celibacy is not tolerated by the commandments, neither is fornication, nor is any device that hinders the increase of man: This you may learn by reading the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th verses of the 38 chapter of Genesis. Man was created upright but Satan has lead him to commit many abominations.

I shall next say thus, man being placed on this earth to honor God, had his agency given him so that he might choose for himself, that by obeying the laws and commandments of his Creator, he might be rewarded with honor and glory in eternity; thus he might become a Son of the Lord Jesus, for Jesus was the Only Begotten of the Father. Now you know that man was placed at the head of creations next to the Lord; and the Woman is next to the man, bone of

his bone. If man honors the Lord, he will obey his commandments; if woman honors her husband she will obey his commandments, and thus the order of heaven is followed on earth, and the man and the woman, and the children are blessed of the Lord, and peace reigns.

8

September 11, 1835:⁷³

Well Sally—On Wednesday the ninth instant, I received your fourth letter, in 19 days from Mo, by the postmark. You have no idea how much Joy your letters give me: and those who read them are pleased with them also. I mean that you write with your “own hand.” Your Spirit comes modestly in your ideas, and it gives me great consolation in my absence from you. I was sorry to learn that you thought [unintelligible] on a visit to Jerusha⁷⁴ who would take care of our children among strangers and who would take care of Sally in the midst of mobs & diseases? If you will read the 19 verse of a commandment in the little Book of Commandments, page 146,⁷⁵ you will see that you can not go by water, and to go by land would be too hard for you. O Sally, don't think of going while I am absent. Now, I know that no man on earth thinks more of his wife than I do of you. I do not conceal it, nor never did. I love you and I want you to love me and write to me that you do. I love to please you, and I want you should love to please me, and say so in your letters. I expect an endowment, I labor to forgive and be forgiven. I have said so in my letters to you and I think you have forgotten to mention it in your letters. If you and I tarry together on earth, and to go the Lord together, we “must be one.” I made an expression in one of my letters that it almost made me “mad with myself” to think I did not make you write more when I was home. You quote [two words unintelligible] sorry I made it you wrote better than I expected. I can write some [one word unintelligible] you do; but your simple, unaffected modest style does away every other lack. Just say you love to write to me and that will please me. Selah J. Griffin⁷⁶ and Elder G. M. Hinkle⁷⁷ came here [several words unintelligible] with Br. Joseph and Oliver and Sidney as they returned from Portage Conference on Tuesday evening. Selah was in a good spirit. And so was brother Hinkel. I feel as if Read Peck⁷⁸ was not very mad at me as he is a clerk in the business to Brother Whitney⁷⁹ and myself and is accountable to “me” for his good conduct and not me to him. If he does not know that I am one of the surviving partners of this little lot of goods, I will try and get Br. Whitney to write him a line so that he need have no fears nor has stress on that account. Sister Emmett⁸⁰ need not to fear, bro. Emmett will attend to his rent in time. And I hope the Lord will have mercy on his boy. If Kelly has not

paid you yet, I do not know what to say. He acts wrong and the whole world is just so. Pray to God to open his heart to pay you, and I will, and he will do it. I was truly glad to receive another letter from Sabrina. The souls of our children, Sally, are of great worth; don't let them be lost if in your power to prevent it. I love our children and love to have them brought up right. May God assist to do it. I am now revising hymns for a hymn Book.⁸¹ Nothing has been doing in the translation of the Egyptian Record for a long time, and probably will not for some time to come.⁸² Why don't you say how you like the papers I sent you? As soon as I hear from any of your folks⁸³ I shall write. Be careful as you have been to have your letters good, so that every body can read them (except you send me a private one). Br. Joseph thinks much of them, and so do I. The rest of this letter was written when yours came. Sally and children remember him whose voice you can not hear, but whose words speak to you.

9

To Sally, September 16, 1835:⁸⁴

MY ONLY ONE: Situated as I am in the family of President Smith, with such counsel as brother Corrill, and where, too, I have the benefit of all the instruction of the heads of Israel, and the knowledge and the satisfaction of all the preaching, teaching, and information from all the elders, you must be sensible, that I have a better chance to gain knowledge for the good of you, and the saints, than I have ever before had. This is the reason why I propose to write. If what I write is heeded, I shall be glad: For the Lord will reward for every good act, and I mean to admonish for goodness and this glory that shall follow; and for nothing else. The cause we have espoused is God's; the religion we profess is Christ's and we are not of this world but of the world to come; therefore we must obey the commandments of the Lord, and please him to entitle us to an inheritance in the holy city that shall come down from heaven adorned as a bride for her husband.⁸⁵ Perhaps you may have drawn wrong conclusions from my letters, or some others may have; but verily I say unto you, they have been written for the salvation of the Saints, and I ask you in the name of Jesus to begin and read them all over again, and treasure up the truth. Mark what I have said to you, or asked of you and do it and great shall be your reward. But I must resume this subject left in my last letter. In that I spoke of men: Now I must hint of women: For the man is not without the woman neither is the woman without the man in the Lord. I wish you to read the seventh of I Corinthians and learn for yourself: In Ephesians and Colossians it says—"Wives submit yourselves unto

your own husbands as unto the Lord.”⁸⁶ That is keep your husband’s commands in all things as you do the Lord’s. Your husband is your head, and the Lord is his head. Br. Joseph has preached some of his greatest sermons on the duty of wives to their husbands and the rule of all women I ever heard. I would not have you ignorant, Sally, of the mystery of Men and Women, but I can not write all. You must wait till you see me. This much, however, I will say, that you closed your 4th letter to me in a singular manner; really it was done after the manner of the Gentiles; Says Sally “I remain yours till death.” But since you have seen my blessing I think you will conclude “if your life and years are as precious in the sight of God as mine,” thus you will be mine in this world and in the world to come; and so long as you can remain on earth as you desire, I think you may as well use the word “forever,” as “till death.” In this world we have to labor, we have to marry; we have to raise up seed; honor God, &c, but in the world to come, we praise God and the Lamb forever, and ever, and we neither marry, nor are given in marriage—do you now begin to understand: This—is the reason why I have called you at the commencement of this letter, my only one, because I have no right to any other woman in this world nor in the world to come, according to the law of the celestial kingdom. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; And what shall I say of him or her who lives till the Lord comes, and is caught up into the cloud to meet him? O Sally, Sally, be wise I beseech you, for you know not how great things must come to pass after much tribulation! I hope and pray that you give heed to what I write, and I wish you would let me know that you do and mean to: Now what I say unto you, I say unto all: women, or wives must obey their husbands in all things and then they are clear; the husband is responsible, and he being the head, as Christ is the head of the church, must do as much for his wife as Christ did for the church; lay down his life for her, if necessary. This will show that he loves her. If you read the 11th chapter of first Corinthians, you may find some good instruction: In old times honest women veiled their faces in public; especially as is mentioned in the 10th verse of this chapter “because of the angels” they probably formed veils then of their hair. I think when I return that my women will generally vail [*sic*] their faces in public and give no one a chance to gaze upon what is not his.⁸⁷ This modest way will not lead to temptation, and may be one means of promoting virtue. I have cried for joy when your letters have come, because of their seeming virtue and meekness: I should hate to have to chasten you, but as I love you, so I will chasten you, if you step aside from what I require, and what I know is the will of the Lord. You must not tattle; you must not find fault; you must not be proud; you must not be exalted; you must not speak evil of your neighbor; no; no; Sally, do none of these things, but the pure in heart, and you shall be sure

of Zion, and me. This instruction is good; I want every saint to follow it. Look around you, Sally.—who fills your husband's place in God, to talk and converse of all that is near and dear to you; and play with little Lydia? Who fill his chair by the fireside, to instruct and explain? Who fills his place at table? Who sounds his notes to praise the Lord? Yea, Sally, and how many sisters equally good as you, are in the same condition, while their husbands are away to sound the alarm of the approaching end? And what man takes time when others sleep to write to his wife and the saints weekly, except me? O, if you and the saints knew how my heart burned for your welfare, how many times I pray for you, and how many tears I shed for you; (you all, I mean) I think you would be humble and rejoice. I want to say beware of covetousness: for if there are any that hover over a little property it will canker their souls. God will have a perfect people, if he has to destroy hypocrites and his dissemble[r]s with fire, famine, pestilence and the sword. Oh the horror, the trouble, the vexations that has commenced, will increase, and shall continue to waste the wicked and ungodly till corruption is ended! I want to say to Sister Gilbert,⁸⁸ cease to be melancholy; but rejoice; cease to care so much about many things; tis the willing and obedient that will eat the good of the land of Zion; religion is the balm of God for the fatherless and widow; God is love and meekly seek the Lord, without disconsolation, and he will bless you (write this little word of consolation for her).

The news here is about as usual. Health prevails among the brethren generally. Whenever the wind is in the north it blows cold and I talk of hurrying to Missouri. From appearance, the season is about two months longer at Zion than at Kirtland.⁸⁹ A letter from the Twelve of the last week,⁹⁰ says they will return to prepare for school about the 1st of October. Br. Marsh⁹¹ was meek and in good health and spirits. The travelling elders begin to come in: Kirtland will be filled with them in a short time. Many of the Zion elders are at work on the house,⁹² which is being finished slowly. It is a great work and will take some longer, I think, than was expected to complete it. The subject of which could be most pleasing to the saints in Missouri, I have no particular knowledge of—that is, when Zion will be redeemed. Little is said or known, more than you know and is printed. To try our faith and for other purposes, the Lord says little to us about it.⁹³

Fruit is beginning to be ripe, I have eaten a few peaches and apples, but give me the society of my wife and children and the saints before anything on earth. Away with flaunting fashions; away with the luxuries of life: give me the knowledge and love of God; my meek and modest wife; our children;—the real Saints for friends, and I shall have more health and joy on earth; more glory

and intelligence in eternity than Caesar in his greatness or Solomon in his splendor. We got some of the Commandments from Cleveland last week;⁹⁴ I shall try to send one hundred copies to the Saints this fall by Br. Wm Tippetts. He starts next week. I know there will be one hundred Saints who will have their dollar ready, when he arrives, for a Book, we put them at a dollar in order to help us a little, considering how much we have lost by the Jackson mob. I would not be without one for five dollars. I have prepared one Book for Sally, one for Sabrina, one for Mehitabel, and one for Sarah, and if they arrive in Clay this fall, I pray God, that maybe made good use of for the truth's sake. I shall send a few great egg plumbs stones, which I want Ira⁹⁵ to plant near the house this fall that they may freeze. Ira will also have a Book. Daniel Stanton⁹⁶ has gone home. Peter Dustin started off last summer rather singularly, have not heard from him since. I fear Peter is not altogether right.⁹⁷ No earthly consideration is equal to celestial glory. I know I set as much store in my wife and children as any other person on earth, yet I forego the sweet enjoyment of their society for the glory that will follow and be brought to pass by faith and diligence. If my folks and the saints die faithful and pray in faith, I shall come home with Waterman the latter part of next spring and make a visit. And what next I know not for the Lord has not said. Maybe Sally's the children's another Saints' faith will be to have me stay a while—the Lord's and not my will be done. *Day before yesterday David Whitmer⁹⁸ and Samuel H. Smith⁹⁹ were appointed general agents to the Literary firm¹⁰⁰ to take and sell Books among the extensive branches of the Church, &c. I wear my same clothes that I had on when I came this way, but they are but little the worse for wear. I have got some others, but I intend to keep them to wear home. Sally, I want you should answer this letter so that I may know how you and the children will be off for clothing when what I have sent arrives: if you have received the money I sent you and whether this and what little you may have got will be enough to make you comfortable this winter. If you can get along I want you should, so thus I can begin to make my calculations for spending money by and bye. Write in your own meek and simple way just as it is, and whenever you want a "good word" to yourself and don't forget to write me "some good words" for I am flesh and blood, the very same as you, and love a little consolation once and awhile, seeing I cannot see you and the children's faces and hear you talk and pray morning and evening, nor watch "little innocent Lydia" sit and play.

Forever

W. W. Phelps

10

October 7, 1835:¹⁰¹

Sally:—This evening, after waiting patiently four weeks for a letter, I was astonished and pained, with room of getting a letter to see “these words” on the margin of the Liberty Enquirer,¹⁰² dated Sept. 15, mailed the 19th. It was written by Warren Graves,¹⁰³ thus: “We received two papers, and seem directed to the Northern Times¹⁰⁴ for you. I am well and father’s family generally. Your father’s family. You will hear the state of their health by brother Peter. Hitty and Sarah are sick; your mother had the Ague once at fathers.” Of all the news I can receive, after waiting so long, this was the saddest. What shall I say? What shall I do? Could you not have gotten some body to write, if you were all sick? I wonder if you sent a letter by Brother Peters,¹⁰⁵ or any body else? A letter by private conveyance! You might just as well put into the Missouri [*sic*]. The post office was instituted expressly to carry letters. But then, again I mourn, supposing you were all sick and not able to write: Could you not have got Henry Rollins¹⁰⁶ or someone to have written a few lines? I expected, after requesting you so much, to have received a letter every two weeks but disappointment thus heart growing [word unintelligible] has been my lot. O that it were otherwise! But what can I do?—I received a letter this evening from Brother Covey¹⁰⁷ and others, stating that Sister Stout¹⁰⁸ had been got with child in adultery by John J. Fanner. I didn’t call such a crime “adultery.” I call it fornication! which in my opinion can only be washed away by the water of baptism. The law does not say that such a sin is to be forgiven. It ought not to be—it is im- [rest of letter missing]

11

Copied from a letter written October 27, 1835, in Kirtland, Ohio:¹⁰⁹

On Sunday last we had one of the largest congregations ever convened in the House of the Lord. There were probably 1200 persons present and what added to the scene was the fact that a brother and a sister were married, according to the rules of the Church as published in the “Messenger and Advocate.” My heart felt for the Saints in Missouri. I longed for the day when the Saints in Zion could meet and partake of the sacrament of the Lord Jesus, confessing their sins according to the commandments. Peter Dustin arrived here on the 21st inst. having been greatly blessed of the Lord. He has labored in Canada in the King’s Dominion alone, and, the Lord working with him, has has [*sic*] baptized 32 souls. No single Elder has been so greatly blessed. Peter went away, as I suppose, heavy hearted and none of us knew where he was. The Elders begin to gather in for their school, which commences on the 2nd of

November next. We calculate to commence a "School of the Prophets" as soon as we can. We shall begin to study Hebrew this winter, according to our present calculations. Zion and her redemption is our greatest desire and we pray and hope that the Saints who have been smitten and driven will be faithful and sanctify their hearts for the enjoyment of the blessings in store for them.*** When I look upon the House of the Lord and recount the expense of the printing office here I marvel to think how the Lord blesses us with means to build such a great house and to carry on such a vast business. It needs patience and faith to live here; a great number of Elders are to be boarded and clothed and their schooling costs considerable besides. We are also establishing a bindery to bind our own books. We go on faith and the Lord blesses us inasmuch as we rely on Him.

12

Extracted from a letter written November 14, 1835, to Sally in Liberty, Missouri:¹¹⁰

King Follett¹¹¹ arrived from the west since my last letter to you was written. Elder Morley also returned from the east, all well. The Elders are coming in every day, almost. The school has commenced under the charge of President Sidney Rigdon¹¹² as teacher. I shall not be able to go much, if any; President Cowdery has gone to New York to purchase tools for a book bindery and to secure some Hebrew books so that we may study Hebrew this winter. My time and that of President John Witmer [*sic*] is all taken up in the printing office. We have, when all are in the office, three apprentices and four journeymen, and we shall have to employ more men, as our work is so far behind. We have 18 numbers of the old "Star" [*sic*] (Evening and Morning Star) to print yet, and the "Messenger and Advocate" has been and is yet five or six weeks behind its time; and the hymn book is not likely to progress as fast as I wish,¹¹³ but we are all kept busy and have faith that the Lord will eventually bring about all things for our own good and his name's glory. Our subscribers, in many instances, are very negligent about paying for their paper. Those in Clay County (Missouri), it was hoped, would have paid you by this time, and I hope that all will pay you for the two volumes.*** On Thursday, the 12th inst., the snow was about three inches deep in Kirtland. This hinders the mason work on the Lord's House considerably.

13

Entered in a journal on December 16, 1835:¹¹⁴

I attended a feast at the house of Bro. Zera S. Coles;¹¹⁵ about sixty guests were present, a number of whom were blessed by

Father Joseph Smith,¹¹⁶ among them being Elijah Fordham,¹¹⁷ King Follett and Jesse Hitchcock.¹¹⁸ This was the first and greatest blessing feast I have ever attended. The greatest solemnity and harmony prevailed. The victuals were good and the affair was orderly and enjoyable, though many of those present were young. We sang "There's a feast of fat things", "Adam-Ondi-Ahman", "O Behold the Lord is nigh," etc.¹¹⁹ The greatest wishes of the guest[s] were that we might soon celebrate a feast in the land of Zion. The weather was very cold.

14

Written from Kirtland Mills, Ohio, to Sally Phelps in Liberty, Missouri, on December 18, 1835:¹²⁰

Myself and Waterman, together with the Saints in general, are well, and we daily thank the Lord for it, praying constantly that he will have mercy upon you and "our little ones," and grant you the same blessing.

My anxiety for your welfare is inexpressible: fires are to be made; wood to be split; cows to feed; milking to be done; corn and potatoes to be saved for next summer; children to be taught; and many other matters that ought to be done by me, if I was only there, run through my mind by day and by night. I trust in the Lord, however, that you will do all that is needed, and so I am reconciled to be patient until I return to my family post again.

I shall begin with items. In my last letter, I said, "All that were 'honest' would pay" etc. It should have read "honest and able." Let Sabrina interline it.

If you have money to spare, Ira or Brother Burk should go to Atchison¹²¹ and get me the new statutes or Digest of Missouri. Mr. Atchison said he would save me a copy. If one is obtained, keep it safe for me.

Let me know about the wood, how it burns, and how long you think it will last. Be very careful of that Flagelett [doubtless flageolet, a small musical instrument of the flute class], don't let it be mused and played with: keep it in the chest. Keep that old Fife book choice. Did you raise any broom corn? How many chickens? How comes on the last year's and this year's calf? What for weather was November and December? I hope you have taken pains to save sweet potatoes for seed.

Don't reckon too much on my coming home in the spring! It may be a little after before you see me. Keep up your faith and pray for the endowment; as soon as that takes place the elders will anxiously speed for their families.

Everything is dear with us: fresh pork is from five to six cents a pound; beef 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 cents; wheat is one dollar twelve and a half cents per bushel and rising; corn 75 cents a bushel; cheese 9 cents by wholesale; butter 25 cents a pound; and hay and oats high. Without great business or plenty of money, a family fares coarse in this part of the country. We have not had any butter for six or eight weeks past.

Great exertions are making in schools; besides the Elders school, there are two evening grammar schools, and one writing school; and as soon as the attic rooms are completed in the Lord's house as much as one or two more will commence.

We have had some hindrance. A large board kiln has recently been partly burnt, which, besides the loss, occasions some delay. Brother Corrill will drive the work as fast as he can in order that he and his brethren may be enabled to visit their families.

You must give my desires to the brethren and sisters for their spiritual welfare. To Brother Burk and Sister Burk say, "God bless them!" To Sister Gilbert, "May the Lord have compassion upon her in her loneliness." Say to Sister Partridge and Sister Corrill and Brother Graves and his family, "Keep with the Lord and you shall be blessed." Brother Musick and family, "I hope they continue in the right way." I pray for all the pure in heart. Sister Haist (?)¹²² has been greatly afflicted. I am sorry for her. She seems to think I meant to chastise her in one of my letters, but I did not. I only gave her a friendly hint, and when I see her face to face, I will explain it so satisfactorily.

I am, since winter commenced, getting back to my common heft. I guess I am not more than 3 or 4 pounds more than 135 pounds. Brother Corrill begins to be quite pussy,¹²³ and so do a number of the brethren.

We must be patient. Read CV [105] Psalm.

[Four pages missing here.] solemnized in Kirtland, and if, with an eye single to the glory of God, well.

When you receive this letter you will learn by the date that I have stopped writing so often. I mean to do as I am done to; and hereafter, if the Lord is pleased, I shall write to Sally just as often as she writes to me, for I hope and pray that the time may be short till I shall see my family. I have been absent so long now that I cannot tell how pretty, little, precious Lydia looks, and the rest of the children are strangers to my eyes; but as I dream of you so often I fancy you have not altered much—nothing for the worse. I hardly know what I should do, if it were not that Waterman, as he fleshes up, shows his mother's looks. He has been a good boy lately.

I want you should send me your height; and bigness round the waist, so that, if I should feel disposed to get you a new mantle,

I could have it made as they make them here. You can write in . . . many feet high, and so many inches round . . . in your next letter. Let me know when Lydia***alone.

I want Brother Graves to inform Mr. Rees¹²⁴ that*** Depositions taken in Kirtland, were forwarded to George Woodward, Esq.,¹²⁵ Richmond. Mr. Rees can take them out of the office and charge the postage to me.

The Zion Elders, except S. J. Griffin, A. Gifford,¹²⁶ G. M. Hinkle and E. H. Groves¹²⁷ are going to school and all well. The four above named are out a preaching.*** attend to Brother Child's¹²⁸ request as soon as I have a chance.

Now may the blessings, love and grace of our Lord and Savior be and abide with the Saints, and my only one, and little ones, forever,

W. W. Phelps.

14A

Extracts from the previous letter, dated December 18, 1835, but printed somewhat differently from the version published in the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly*:¹²⁹

Everything is dear with us in Kirtland: fresh pork costs from 5 to 6 cents per lb. and beef from 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 cents per lb.; [sic] wheat is \$1.12 1/2 per bushel and rising, corn 75 cents per bushel, cheese 9 cents per lb. by wholesale, butter 25 cents per lb, and hay and oats are also high. . . .

Martin Harris¹³⁰ has just arrived from Palmyra, New York; he states that the winter in that State is severe and has been for about four weeks. The sleighs fly merrily and the people are ten times as wicked as they ever have been. Martin says: "Everything is dear, all are proud and ugly, mobbing common, quite common, even in Palmyra." So the world waxes fat in iniquity and multitudes are hastening on to ruin. The work on the Lord's House goes on quite rapidly again. Bros. Elijah Fordham, Bro. Durfee,¹³¹ Rathburn,¹³² Morey,¹³³ Hitchcock and Elder Calvin Beebe have commenced working upon it. The committee has made a contract with a man to warm the house until the 1st of April. Four stoves are placed in the cellar and they heat twelve cylanders, four on the court for the sacrament, four in the court for the school of the Apostles and four in the attic school rooms. If this plan works well, it will save wood and save trouble as to fires. Again it will be of great service to warm the house for the men who work on it this winter and for the Hebrew School when it commences. Weddings are very frequent here; about half a dozen have been solemnized here in Kirtland, and if, with an eye single to the glory of God, well.

15

To Sally Phelps, from Kirtland Mills, Tuesday, 2 P.M., January 5, 1836:¹³⁴

They bring persecution upon us, but we have to suffer many straight things because there are "foolish virgins" among the wise. I hope the children of Zion will learn wisdom by experience after a while, and please God rather than gratify the whims of such Philistine heifers, as Samson's. The elders wives, in the regions of Zion, if pray for one another, and assist one another, and teach one another [word unintelligible] according to the scriptures, will soon come (and justly too) Mothers in Israel, indeed! Yea, and [unintelligible] the Kingdom of the Lord, with a race of Just men made perfect by righteousness; loving the truth because their deeds are good; and walking in light because it shines from heaven. I am not finding fault with the Elders' wives to whom blessings have been sent, but I wish to caution those that are forever grabbing little and great things and writing them to, they know not who! forsake trouble, such practices should cease. I want Little Lydia should be honored in my absence with a birthday family feast: The best you can get. Therefore on Monday the 14th day of March treat her and make a feast to the Lord for her good, and pass the day in a sacred prayerful manner. I am not making a precedent but I want our youngest child honored before God, that she may grow up without sin; and whenever the Lord shall grant my return then all our children shall be honored with a feast before the Lord. Mark my advice and be wise and holy for Christ's sake. Br. Child's wife will write to him what she will do. Elder Palmer¹³⁵ of New Portage, saw her and says there is no danger she will do anything, but her friends are violent. The New Portage church are calculating to remove to Zion next season and they will bring her if requested, means sent, and she is willing.

The High Council directs a president of the teachers to be chosen [*sic*]. Bishop Partridge will advise on the subject.

The Hebrew school has commenced in one of the attic school rooms in the Lord's House. These rooms are nearly all completed. The whole work continually progresses, though but slowly. I can not tell when the endowment will take place. Therefore I can not say anything about the Redemption of Zion or bring you new tidings for her children: you all know Zion must be redeemed with judgment, (that is, wisdom and prudence) "and her converts with righteousness." We must be very humble prayerful and watchful: you know what the Savior said to the Seventy, Luke 10th Chapter 17, 18, 19, & 20 verses. So likewise, let us not rejoice in the goods of this world, nor boast of our faith and works, but rather that our names are written in heaven. If we could see each other's faces now and converse about heaven and divine things, it would seem like the

meeting of angels and we would hate to part in one short hour.— but the Lord has not said when we shall see him again, in order that we may be proved and found faithful: which may God grant. The western mail brought a number of letters from Clay this morning. Among them one for me, dated Dec. 10th. I immediately called the bishop and his counsellors [*sic*] on the subject, and we shall write on the subject again this week. My great anxiety for my family and friends causes me to answer this day. Tell Peter H. Burnett¹³⁶ that I sold the other keg of printing ink at one dollar a pound. The kegs contained 50 lbs each; though some of the ink in this may have run out. It can be weighed. With your letter came one that brought the melancholy death of Elder Christian Whitmer.¹³⁷ It made a deep impression upon his relatives and the brethren. We are solemn. God have mercy upon the Saints in Zion. Prepare the living for life and dying for eternity. The letters accompanying yours from Elder Harris: Br. Childs & Cleminson¹³⁸ are gratefully received and duly appreciated. Br. Childs is answered on another page. On the subject of writing letters to the Saints if I had ever so much a mind to, I could not write oftener than once in 2 or 3 weeks for want of time. I want to study Hebrew, and I have not as yet been able to begin. Oliver is gone to a state convention at Columbus. One thing and another keeps me back.— You want to know what made me write concerning letters. I told you in my next [?].

I am not jealous of you, Sally, but I am jealous that Br. Fosdick is not right before the Lord. Your letter of Nov. 20 contained some things which were wrong and I forgive you as I wrote. What you wrote of Chloe was contrary to the covenant. See said Book page 125, sec. 13 paragraph 238. When you said she had influenced or [word unintelligible] Br. Corrill's mind, you stated a falsehood, as you will see by Br. Corrill's letter. You say to me "don't praise you"—and then you praise Br. Littlefield.¹³⁹ A virtuous wife should not praise other men in the absence of her husband. All I want is that you should do so no more. And write to me that you was mistaken, and "that you are sorry you have offended and will do so no more." Now, Sally, in the name of the Lord Jesus, be admonished to let alone other folks business; forgive them if they are where you can not see them face to face. Don't praise other men to your own hurt. Don't undertake to write explanations: you can not make any satisfaction. When you write to me, write as you did at first: simply about our own concerns and the general welfare of the brethren and sisters. If any slander you or our children, and do not make amends, let them alone till the authority of Zion return. Don't be so studiously careful in your letters to avoid saying anything in my favor or of showing a little more love for me than the rest of the world. When I read your November letter, I was almost tempted not to write any more letters—but I don't believe you meant any hurt, and I can not say that I think any less of you than I ever did. And you

know how much that is. The high council and elders of Zion meet tomorrow evening to fill the vacant place of councilors. It will be a good meeting to see all the Elders of Zion together. They are all well. I need not name them. Give my best wishes to all the Saints. And so I am forever thine, W. W. Phelps

16

January 1836 (the beginning of the following letter is lost):¹⁴⁰

noon, the congregations became so large, that after the 3 weddings, which I noticed, were solemnized, and the sacrament administered, the meeting was dismissed, I then went with a number of the church, to Elder Cahoon's¹⁴¹ to partake of the wedding supper. It was a solemn time, singing and solemnity—Sister Whiting,¹⁴² President Rigdon, and [three words unintelligible] others [one word unintelligible] me. "If it did not make me think of my wife to be in such good company! My tears answered and "I cried to think I might rest in the day of trouble!" Our meeting will grow more and more solemn, and will continue till the great solemn assembly when the house is finished! We are preparing to make ourselves clean, by first cleansing our hearts, forsaking our sins, forgiving every body, all we ever had against them; anointing washing the body; putting on clean decent clothes, by anointing our heads and by keeping all the commandments. As we come nearer to God we see our imperfections and nothingness plainer and plainer. I can not write my thoughts to you. I can only say in the name of the Lord Jesus, Sally, Sally! Children, Children! Saints, Saints! if you ever mean to see me in the flesh, be holy, be humble, and solemn. O Sally! O children! hear the voice of him who loves you, and let your tears tell [word unintelligible]. Dear Sally, if you have any money by you that you get for covenants or anything else, do not lend it out; for I may give orders for it you know not when; and besides you might not know who to trust, and who not. I feel sensible that you will be careful. If you have bank bills get them changed into hard money. The charter of the United States Bank expires on the 4th of March next.¹⁴⁵ One month has passed without sleighing. It has been mud and mire, and cold and warm

[The above page ends and the next page starts as recorded. Obviously some information has been lost.]

in righteousness, will do so. Is it because a woman is all talk, that her husband values her? "A continual dropping will wear away stones." Is it because a woman is handsome, that her husband loves her? "Handsome is she, that handsome does." But enough on this head for the present. I have heretofore cautioned you against letting any one copy of certain documents and blessings. [About three

words covered up by tape] things are not written to you because there may be a "Philistine heifer" like Samson's, to copy it and send it to the four winds, and innocent saints must suffer the consequence. I want to give you an idea of the ordination of those who are sent as especial witnesses to all the world: Don't let any one copy it, Sally; read it to the pure in heart: and none else. "Kirtland Jan. 3, 1836

"The ordination and blessing of E_____ F_____ ¹⁴⁴

"Brother:—We lay our hands upon thy head in the name of the Lord Jesus, and we ordain thee an elder in the church of the Latter day Saints, praying our heavenly Father, that he will bless thee with all the blessings of this ministry; that thou mayest be a messenger of righteousness to the nations; and that thy heart may be prepared for this high calling of God. Thy Heavenly Father loves thee and delights in thee, because thou wast of that number that offered to lay down their lives for their brethren; and because thou hast done this thing there are many and great blessings laid up for thee if thou art faithful. Thou shalt go forth and proclaim the gospel. Thy tongue shalt be unloosed so that thou canst declare the things of God to those to whom it is the will of thy heavenly Father to send thee. And it is not only his will to send thee to the people of this continent, but to nations afar off, even to the Islands of the Sea, and to nations thou knowest not of, that the word of the Lord may be fulfilled. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of Good; that publisheth salvation; that sayeth unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!"

And because thou wast willing to give thy life unto thy heavenly Father, and regarded it not unto the death: Therefore thy life shall be bound up in the bundle of life with his life; and God, even thy God will give his angels charge over thee lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt go and return as may seem good unto thy heavenly Father, and nothing shall have power over thee to prevent thee from fulfilling the ministry, which we this day bestow upon thee in the name of the Lord Jesus: For the heavens are disposed to be very propitious unto thee. The Lord will make thee swift messenger unto the nations: And thou shalt bear his name to people afar off: Thou shalt testify unto them of the things which thou dost know; for thine eyes shall see the glory of the Savior in the visions of heaven; and holy angels shall minister unto thee, and make known unto thee, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; and thou shalt testify of it to many nations and peoples, and that in other than our own languages, for thou shalt have power to speak in many languages, that thou mayest do a great work in this day and generation, and have many stars in thy crown, in the day of suffering. For notwithstanding thine enemies will seek thy life and art

brought into many trials and tribulations, still thou shalt have many seasons of great rejoicing for the Lord will pour out his spirit upon thee, and give thee exceeding Joy in the midst of all thy tribulations. And if thou art faithful thou shalt fulfil thy ministry and return to the land of Zion with songs of everlasting Joy upon thy head,—to go no more out: yea, to take part in the [there appears to be one more line that is cut off at the end of page] reign when Christ shall reign on the earth a thousand years. All these blessings we seal upon thy head, if thou art faithful, to gather with many others, (for the heavens are full of blessings for thee) which it is not wisdom at this time to mention, but none shall deprive thee of them: Even so. Amen.” Thus you have the substance, Sally, and do be wise, for when I learn that you are careful to do as I write to have you do, then will I be encouraged to let you have “things precious.”

Jan. 18 [1836]. A Grand Council¹⁴⁵ was held last Wednesday, [Jan. 13]—consisting of the High Councils of Zion and Kirtland together with the “Twelve,” [sic] the Seven presidents of the Seventy; and the two bishops and their counsellors, besides others. It was one of the most interesting meetings I ever saw. The next day [Jan. 14] I sat in council with the presidency to Draft Rules for the Lord’s house. The next day [Jan. 15] we held another Grand Council much more interesting than the first. On Sunday [Jan. 17] at an early hour all authorities of the church regularly organized met in the school room under our printing office, and the presidents commenced the meeting by confessing their sins and forgiving their brethren and the world. You know the Lord’s prayer reads: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass us?” The Lord poured out his Spirit in such a manner as you never witnessed. When I was speaking, which was but few words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me so that I could not speak, and I cried as little children cry in earnest and the tears from my eyes ran in streams; the audience, which was the largest ever convened in the said room, sobbed and wept aloud. The presidency and the “Twelve” occupied the forenoon. There was speaking and singing in tongues, and prophesying, as on the day of Pentacost. In the af [end of page]

17

This is a continuation of the letter above:¹⁴⁶

In the afternoon [Jan. 17, 1836], the congregation became so large that after the three weddings, which I noticed were solemnized, and the sacrament administered, the meeting was dismissed. I then went with a number of the Church to Elder Cahoon’s to partake of the wedding supper. It was a solemn time, singing and solemnity.

18

January 1836 (the first page or pages are missing):¹⁴⁷

year's and the one we have commenced. All reasonable men will suppose, that we cannot print papers without means, and in my absence you may want some of the Atchison to live upon. At any rate, if the saints would pay you these, I should not have to send you any money from here. If you can send this news among the brethren, I think the honest ones would try to pay you. I want you should buy one piece of common cotton shirting such as you need for the children and your own wear. And perhaps you will want some "Jeans" for Henry and James, such articles can be bought cheap for cash at [?]. You will want some tallow, or bees wax and lard for candles, &c. On Saturday the 7th I heard from Lydia. Elder Coons¹⁴⁸ gave me the information. He labored in the south part of Smyrna, as you will learn by the Messenger. He says Lydia¹⁴⁹ accounted herself a Mormon, but he did not learn whether she had been baptized or not he understood she meant to get ready, if possible and come to Kirtland next Spring. I have written a letter to her and when I get the answer, I will write you the particulars. I feel confident that I shall get her into the church thus Sally can rejoice that she has some own blood besides her own in the Kingdom. I shall try hard to have all your brothers and sisters brought in.

By the letters which Sister Marsh sends to Thomas I perceive, that she is training to be a Rhymestress. I wonder if you cannot pray to the Lord for the Spirit of poetry, and "Singing," and give me a little specimen of a "poetess" in my absence, and a fine sample of "sweet singer" when I return. Pray for these endowments in faith and I will and the Lord will grant them to you. No good gift will the Lord withhold if the Saints are only faithful. Brother Whitney's father and mother came to Kirtland from Vermont in October and have both been since baptized. There have come to Kirtland, in a short time, a great number of brethren—the saints seem to "keep all things in motion." Matthias, the false prophet has made Kirtland a visit, and found that the Saints know such men to be influenced by the wicked one. Very great exertions have been made to finish the House of the Lord this winter. I suppose for the last fortnight, that nearly 50 men, as carpenters and Joiners, masons, mortar makers, burnus, &c, have been laboring on the house. The hard finish is about half on the outside, and the scaffolds cut down halfway so that this monument of the Latter day saints liberality begins to show itself. The lower part of the inner court is nearly plastered and will soon be finished. See book of "Doctrine and Covenants" page 233: paragraph 3. You can read that revelation for it will show you that whom the Lord loves he chastens.¹⁵⁰ A great effort is now about to be made to procure a "bell" for the Lord's house. I must relate the

marvelous works here. There have been built during the past years nearly 20 houses, mostly very small. Only one of note called the "Boston House." It is 53 feet by 32 feet—three stories high, it is not yet enclosed. It is almost a miracle how such a large number of people live, but the Lord is merciful. All the lawsuits commenced against our folks, or which our people have commenced against the world's people, have turned in our favor but one and [about seven words covered by tape]. Sally, you have never mentioned a word about our suits. Don't you hear anything about them? It is quite natural to see Bishop Partridge, Elder Morley, Corril, Beebe, and many other Zion elders every day—I sometimes think if it were not for our being together, where we can exchange our feelings that time would hang heavy. Elder Marsh and I generally see each other every day, and comfort one another by chatting on what is to be! What is to be when the Lord permits us to come home, and what will be when Zion is redeemed. Brother Marsh is as corpulent as an Alderman, and I remain just the same in body, in mind, and in health, and I thank and praise the Lord for keeping me just so poor: just so common minded, and just so healthy. I want you to be careful and do just as I [covered by tape] you do. I have told you once or twice to take all my letters that I have written to you and lock them up. I want to make a book of them. If you, or Sabrina, or any one, has copied anything, get them all in—do as I tell you for my sake. The reason is, by the time you get this letter, the "covenants" will arrive, and the Saints must learn their duty from the Revelations. We must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and not by what is written by man or is spoken by man. The high Council and the Bishop's Council, are the proper authority to give advice to the Saints, and in time of need they will do what the Lord requires. Therefore you can perceive that my letters are my private Journal—and you must take good care of them and see that no copies are out. I shall continue to write to you all the news and new things that is expedient for you, or the Saints, but keep my letters at home. It is a great thing to give advice—I am a weak man—subject to the like vanities and passions of others, and rather than offend one of the children of God wrongfully—I would beg—I pray the Lord to forgive me of all my iniquities and I want my brethren to forgive me and even my wife must have nothing against me. How can I receive an endowment if my skirts are not clean from the blood of this generation? My own family is of the blood of this generation, and so are my brethren and sisters: Let us be wise, then, and forgive others as the Lord forgives us, that we may be clean I forgive all, all their trespasses, or hardness towards me. My letters are my property. I direct them to my wife, because she and I are one, and she will keep them safe for me whatever news they contain. She is at liberty to read [them] to the Saints, for their consolations, in their loneliness. The Book of Doctrine & Covenants is an excel- [end of page]¹⁵¹

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NOTES

¹ Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were two other inner circle members of the 1830s who were learned men. Not one of the three had attended a college or university. Each was self-educated. I arrive at my conclusion because of Phelps's better command of the classics, history, and politics.

² Bruce A. Van Orden, "W. W. Phelps's Impact on Mormon Doctrine" (Paper delivered at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, Claremont, California, May 31, 1991).

³ A brief William W. Phelps journal for January 1835–June 1835 is located in the Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

⁴ Bruce A. Van Orden, "W. W. Phelps: His Ohio Contributions, 1835–36," in *Regional Studies of Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio*, ed. Milton V. Backman, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 45–62.

⁵ Bruce A. Van Orden, "By That Book I Learned the Right Way to God': The Conversion of William W. Phelps," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: New York*, ed. Larry C. Proter, Milton V. Backman, Jr., and Susan Easton Black (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1992), 203–14; and Bruce A. Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith's Political Clerk," *BYU Studies* 32 (Winter–Spring 1992): 81–94.

⁶ The best source on the Anti-Masonic movement is William Preston Vaughn, *The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States, 1826–1843* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983). Phelps's ties with the Anti-Masonic movement are discussed in Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo," 81–84.

⁷ Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92), 1:355 (hereafter cited as *PJS*). See also Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:184–85 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

⁸ Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1985), 43–70.

⁹ Peter L. Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 465–537.

¹⁰ *History of the Church* 1:335–36.

¹¹ Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 243-50, 258-68, 282-92, 307-20; and *History of the Church* 1:259, 273-84, 297-99, 316-21, 327, 335-36, 340-42, 362-70.

¹² *PJS* 1:24-25, 189n; and *History of the Church* 2:364.

¹³ *History of the Church* 2:112-13.

¹⁴ *History of the Church* 2:227.

¹⁵ Dean C. Jessee, "Priceless Words and Fallible Memories: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Effort to Preserve His Discourses," *BYU Studies* 31 (Spring 1991): 19-40.

¹⁶ *PJS* 2:94, 103-4, 138, 149, 153-54. See also Leonard J. Arrington, ed., "Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, 'Sketch Book,'" *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 414, 417-18.

¹⁷ See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 92, 103, 132.

¹⁸ *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (December 1835): 233-37; and *History of the Church* 2:350.

¹⁹ The fullness of the "endowment of the holy priesthood" as now practiced by the Latter-day Saints in their temples was not administered by Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple or anywhere else in Ohio. Nevertheless, the "Kirtland endowment" was fulfilling to its recipients. It consisted of various visions, solemn assemblies, and testimony meetings experienced by the leading priesthood quorums in the House of the Lord from January to March 1836. These culminated with the "Pentecostal" spiritual experiences at the temple's dedication on March 27, 1836. Certain ordinances called washings, anointings, and the washing of feet performed during this period are also associated with the Kirtland endowment. The more complete endowment was revealed to Joseph Smith after he left Ohio and was first administered by him in 1842 in Nauvoo, Illinois.

²⁰ *History of the Church* 2:434.

²¹ Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Service in Nauvoo," 81-94.

²² In the Journal History of the Church, May 26, 1835, 1, LDS Church Archives; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

Sally Phelps, wife to W. W. Phelps, was born Stella Waterman on July 24, 1797, in Franklin, Delaware County, New York. As far as we can tell, she went by the nickname "Sally" all her life. W. W. Phelps and Sally were married in her hometown of Smyrna, Chenango County, New York, on April 28, 1815. He was twenty-three and she not yet eighteen. Smyrna was thirty miles northeast of W. W.'s hometown of Homer, but both towns were on the major turnpike running from Ithaca to Albany, the state capital. Likely W. W. met Sally after serving in the War of 1812. Sally's family came from strong Puritan stock similar to that of Phelps. W. W. and Sally lived for brief periods with both his and her parents. In 1820 they established their own home in Homer, where W. W. went into the printing and newspaper businesses. Sally and W. W. had a total of twelve children. Sally died January 2, 1874, in Salt Lake City, a year and a half after the death of W. W.

²³ Doctrine and Covenants 89 is the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom. It was received at a meeting of the School of the Prophets in the upper level of the Whitney Store in Kirtland, Ohio. The Word of Wisdom was not

always practiced the same in the nineteenth century as it has been in most of the twentieth century. See Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972); and Leonard J. Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom," *BYU Studies* 1 (Winter 1959): 37-49. Phelps was impressed that the basic principles of the Word of Wisdom *were* being applied in Kirtland, perhaps a contrast to the struggles to have the Missouri Saints follow the Word of Wisdom.

²⁴ Phelps's writings in the *Evening and the Morning Star* and the *Messenger and Advocate* as well as many of his hymns show that he believed the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. He once hypothesized from biblical evidence that the "Great Day of the Lord" would occur within nine years. See *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (August 1832): 6. Phelps was not alone among early Mormon leaders in his millennialism. See Grant R. Underwood, "The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1988); and Van Orden, "William W. Phelps's Impact on Mormon Doctrine."

²⁵ This informative quotation is probably the first reference in Mormon documents of the idea of the eternal relationship between a man and wife.

²⁶ The four authorities who wrote this letter were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. Oliver was at this time the Assistant President of the Church, next in authority to Joseph Smith. Phelps and Whitmer were members of the Zion presidency. The other presidency member, David Whitmer, was not in Kirtland when this letter was written.

²⁷ John Matthias Burk, born February 4, 1793, in Fairfield, New York, was baptized in October 1830. An early inhabitant of Jackson County, Missouri, Burk was one of the few elders in Clay County, Missouri, after the presiding high priests returned to Kirtland in 1835. A fondness between Phelps and Burk is evident from these letters and other papers. Burk died in Utah in 1853. Most biographical notes in this article are based on data found in Susan Easton Black, *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1830-1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989); and Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901-36).

²⁸ In the Journal History of the Church, June 1, 1835, 1-3.

²⁹ These concepts are taught in Doctrine and Covenants 20:46-60. Aaronic Priesthood offices were given almost exclusively to adult men in the 1830s.

³⁰ Lyman Wight was born May 9, 1796, in Fairfield, New York. He was instrumental in the rise of the Campbellites. Baptized November 14, 1830, in Ohio by Oliver Cowdery, he was a devout Saint in Jackson County, later settling at Adam-ondi-Ahman. During the Missouri-Mormon War of 1838 he served as a military leader. He was called as one of the Twelve Apostles in 1841. After Joseph Smith's death, he led a group to Texas, where he founded at least five colonies. Wight's propensity to follow his own counsel is evident in the next paragraph of this letter and in the nickname given him years later by Phelps—"Wild Ram of the Mountains." Wight died in Texas in 1858.

³¹ See 2 Samuel 6:3-8; and 1 Chronicles 13:7-11.

³² Nothing more is known about George Busket.

³³ Nothing more is known about Brother Fosdick.

³⁴ Oliver Cowdery had been serving as Assistant President to Joseph Smith since the previous December. Probably this calling is why he signed the letter along with Phelps and John Whitmer, two of the Presidents of Zion. Cowdery was born October 3, 1806, in Wells, Vermont. He was one of Joseph Smith's chief scribes, one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses, Second Elder in the infant Church, and a printer, publisher, justice of the peace, teacher, and lawyer.

³⁵ John Whitmer, one of the Zion Presidency and one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses, was born in Pennsylvania, August 27, 1802. He served briefly as a scribe to Joseph Smith in 1829 and as Church historian from 1831 to 1838. He was a close associate and friend to Phelps.

³⁶ In the Journal History of the Church, June 2, 1835, 1.

³⁷ Davis Bitton demonstrates the significance of Kirtland as a busy missionary hub in his "Kirtland as a Center of Missionary Activity, 1830-1838," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 497-516.

³⁸ Simeon Carter was born June 7, 1794. Baptized February 14, 1831, he was ordained a deacon, elder, and high priest that same year. He served missions in New England and the Midwest, established a branch in Indiana, and marched with Zion's Camp in 1834. He died in Brigham City, Utah, in 1869. Those named in this paragraph all departed for short-term missions.

³⁹ Solomon Hancock was born August 15, 1794, in Springfield, Massachusetts. He served missions in New York and Indiana. He gathered to Zion in 1831. He served on the high council in Clay County and Far West. Hancock died in Council Bluffs, Iowa, en route to the Rocky Mountains.

⁴⁰ Edward Partridge was born August 27, 1793, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. He apprenticed as a hatter and eventually established a prosperous hatting business in Painesville, Ohio. He united with the Campbellites in 1828 and became a friend of Sidney Rigdon. He traveled with Rigdon to Fayette, New York, in early December 1830 to become acquainted with the Prophet. He was baptized December 11, after reading the revelation addressed to him (D&C 36). He was called as the Church's first bishop (D&C 41), went by assignment with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to Missouri to identify the land of Zion (D&C 52:2-4, 24), and was called to direct the temporal affairs in Zion (D&C 57:7; 58:14, 24). He performed his bishop's calling in Independence until mob action drove the Saints out of Jackson County, where he was tarred and feathered at the courthouse square July 20, 1833. Partridge, along with many Church leaders, went by assignment to Kirtland in 1835. The mission alluded to in this letter was in the eastern states and lasted until early November. After participating in the Kirtland Temple dedication in March 1836, Partridge went back to Missouri, where he and Phelps located a new gathering place for the Saints in what became Caldwell County. Partridge and Phelps worked harmoniously together as the two most significant Church leaders in Missouri from 1832 to early 1838. Partridge died in May 1840 in Nauvoo. Phelps wrote a moving obituary which appeared in the *Times and Seasons* 1 (October 1840): 190.

⁴¹ Isaac Morley was born March 11, 1786, in Montague, Massachusetts. Instrumental in introducing agriculture to the Western Reserve, he operated a large farm in the Kirtland area and was in Sidney Rigdon's congregation. Baptized in November 1830, he was set apart as a counselor to Bishop Partridge in June

1831. He served in Missouri from 1832 to 1838. By appointment he left Missouri in 1835 to participate in the temple dedication. He returned to Missouri and helped the Saints relocate in Caldwell County, being ordained a patriarch in 1837. He died in Sanpete County, Utah, in 1865.

⁴² Amasa M. Lyman was born March 30, 1813, in Grafton County, New Hampshire. He was baptized there on August 23, 1832, and moved to Kirtland. As a single young man he served two missions and marched with Zion's Camp. He married only eight days after Phelps wrote this letter. Lyman became a premier missionary. He was ordained to the apostleship in 1842, serving until he was excommunicated in 1870.

⁴³ Peter Dustin was born April 19, 1781. He was baptized June 9, 1830, in New York. Peter served as branch president and high councilor in Missouri. His 1835 mission, alluded to here, was in Upper Canada. He later migrated with the Saints to Utah.

⁴⁴ James Emmett was born February 22, 1803. He was baptized in 1831 in the Kirtland area and served missions in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri. He resided in Kirtland during the 1830s. Emmett went west with the Saints and died in San Bernardino in 1852.

⁴⁵ Nothing more is known about Oziel Stevens.

⁴⁶ This is Almira Mack Scoby, who was born April 28, 1805, in Tunbridge, Vermont. She was a first cousin to Joseph Smith and the daughter of Stephen Mack, Lucy Mack Smith's brother. Almira was baptized in May 1830. She married William Scoby, who later died while visiting relatives in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1833. Almira died in 1886 in Salt Lake City.

⁴⁷ In the *Journal History of the Church*, July 20, 1835, 1-2; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

⁴⁸ Nothing more is known about Peter Brownell.

⁴⁹ Possibly Henry Shibley who marched with Zion's Camp in 1834 and who was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1835.

⁵⁰ William P. Tippetts was born June 26, 1812, in Groton, New Hampshire. He was baptized in 1832. Little is known about his life before he came to Utah in 1850. He died in Brigham City in 1877.

⁵¹ Peter Whitmer, Jr., was born September 27, 1809, in Fayette, New York. He was one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and one of the six original members of the Church. Peter was called by revelation (D&C 30:5) to accompany Oliver Cowdery on the 1830 mission to the Lamanites. He was called to the Missouri High Council to replace his deceased brother Christian. He died of tuberculosis near Liberty, Missouri, in September 1836.

⁵² John Corrill was born September 17, 1794, in Worcester County, Massachusetts. He was residing in Ashtabula, Ohio, when missionaries came through, baptized him, and ordained him an elder. In 1831 he moved his family to Jackson County, where he served as a counselor to Bishop Partridge. He was one of seven leading high priests in Jackson County. He came to Ohio in 1835 with other leaders. He helped settle Far West in 1836 and was elected state representative for Caldwell County in 1838. He left the Church when he became disenchanted with Joseph Smith during the Missouri-Mormon War and published a brief, but valuable, history of the Church.

⁵³ Newell Knight was born September 13, 1800, in Marlborough, Vermont. He was a close friend of Joseph Smith and joined the Church in May 1830. In one of the Church's first miracles, the Prophet cast an evil spirit out of him. As branch president of the Colesville Saints, Knight led the group to Thompson, Ohio, and then to Jackson County, Missouri. He served on high councils in Clay County, Far West, and Nauvoo. He came to Kirtland in 1835. He died en route to the West in January 1847.

⁵⁴ Elias Higbee was born October 23, 1795, in Galloway, New Jersey. He was baptized in Ohio in the spring of 1832. He settled in Jackson County in 1833, but he came by appointment to Kirtland in 1835. He became part of the Missouri High Council in 1836 and helped settle Caldwell County, where he became the senior county judge and devoted his life to seeking redress of Missouri grievances until he died in Nauvoo of cholera in June 1843.

⁵⁵ Morris C. Phelps was born December 20, 1805, in Northampton, Massachusetts. He was not closely related to W. W. Phelps. He was baptized in 1831 in northern Illinois and moved to Jackson County, where he was driven out in 1833. He was imprisoned with Church leaders after the fall of Far West in 1838. He became a patriarch. In 1876 he died in Montpelier, Idaho.

⁵⁶ Nothing more is known about John Duncan.

⁵⁷ In Leah Y. Phelps, "Letters of Faith from Kirtland," *Improvement Era* 45 (August 1942): 529.

⁵⁸ Calvin Beebe was born July 1, 1800, in Paris, New York. He filled a mission to Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio in 1832. He was one of the elders who presided over the Saints in Missouri while other leaders were absent. He later served on the Far West High Council.

⁵⁹ This refers to W. W. Phelps's daughter Sarah. The Phelps children in 1835 were Sabrina (born August 30, 1816, age eighteen at time of the letter), Mehitable (July 3, 1819, age sixteen), William Waterman (January 23, 1823, age twelve; Waterman accompanied his father to Ohio), Sarah (January 19, 1825, age ten), Henry (October 21, 1828, age six), James (September 22, 1832, age two), and Lydia (March 15, 1835, age four months).

⁶⁰ Evidently the Phelps family did not live directly in Liberty. Clay County records do not reveal any property owned by Phelps at this time; most Mormons did not own property in Clay County or Liberty. They were living off the temporary good will of the Clay County citizens.

⁶¹ Samuel Musick was born March 23, 1804, in Virginia. He often served as a teacher among the Saints in Clay County, Caldwell County, and Nauvoo. He also was a store owner in Far West.

⁶² LDS Church Archives.

⁶³ Nothing is known about how this Iva fits into the story.

⁶⁴ This may be Sarah Young, who was born February 1, 1830, in Salem, Massachusetts. Perhaps Sarah knew the Phelps children mentioned in the letter.

⁶⁵ Acting in the office of his calling as a member of the Zion presidency, Phelps sent along words of admonition to the Missouri Saints.

⁶⁶ Ever since the call of the Twelve Apostles in February 1835 (see D&C 107), there had been considerable talk in the leading councils about sending a missionary team to England. It was perhaps even contemplated that David Whitmer,

W. W. Phelps, or John Whitmer (the Missouri presidency) would be among the elders sent to preach in England.

⁶⁷ In the 1830s, Kirtland was often referred to as Kirtland Mills.

⁶⁸ In "Letters," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly* 31 (January 1940): 27-28.

⁶⁹ LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁰ Hezekiah Peck was born January 19, 1782, in Windham, Vermont. Oliver Cowdery baptized him June 28, 1830. He was a member of the Colesville Branch that settled in Jackson County, Missouri. He was one of the elders handling Church business while the Missouri presidency was absent. He died in 1850 in St. Joseph, Missouri.

⁷¹ The Doctrine and Covenants had been sustained as scripture by the body of the Church in a conference held on August 17, 1835, in Kirtland. Phelps took a prominent role in the book's publication and in that conference. Now in September printed copies of the book were coming out of a Cleveland bindery.

⁷² This is perhaps the earliest known use in Mormon sources of the phrase *time and eternity* pertaining to the marriage relationship.

⁷³ LDS Church Archives.

⁷⁴ Jerusha was a sister to Sally Waterman Phelps. The Waterman family was from Ohio and may have still been living there. Evidently Sally was contemplating making a visit to the East to visit Jerusha as well as her husband. But W. W. chastised her for this wish.

⁷⁵ This admonition is now found in Doctrine and Covenants 61:18-19.

⁷⁶ Selah J. Griffin was born March 17, 1789, in Redding, Connecticut. He joined the Church in Kirtland before June 1831. A revelation (D&C 52:32) appointed him to serve a mission en route to Missouri in 1831. He later moved with his family to Independence. Later he located in Clay and Caldwell Counties. He did not migrate west with the Saints.

⁷⁷ George M. Hinckle was born November 13, 1801, in Jefferson, Kentucky. He was baptized in 1832 and served missions in many states. He commanded the Caldwell County militia forces in the 1838 Missouri-Mormon War. Hinckle was accused of treason against Joseph Smith for handing the Prophet over to Missouri officials at the siege of Far West. Later in Nauvoo, Phelps, who had come back to the Church, corresponded with Hinckle and tried to persuade him to return to the fold.

⁷⁸ Reed Peck was born in 1814 (location unknown) and was a son of Hezekiah Peck. He apostatized during the 1838 Missouri-Mormon War and wrote a long anti-Mormon manuscript. He died in 1894 in New York.

⁷⁹ Newell K. Whitney was born February 5, 1795, in Marlborough, Vermont. He was a junior partner in the Gilbert-Whitney Store in Kirtland when missionaries came in the fall of 1830 and converted him and his family. A revelation (D&C 72:8) called him to be a bishop in Ohio in December 1831. As such, he helped administer the Lord's storehouses and Church businesses. He often traveled with Joseph Smith to accomplish important tasks. He died in Salt Lake City in 1850.

⁸⁰ Phebe Emmett married James Emmett in 1823. They had eleven children.

⁸¹ Revising and collecting hymns for the Church's first hymnbook was not a new assignment for Phelps. Back in Independence, Missouri, in 1832, Joseph

Smith directed Phelps to “correct and print the hymns” selected by Emma Smith in fulfillment of Doctrine and Covenants 25:11. Phelps proceeded to compose many pieces for the book. Missouri persecutions halted the hymnbook’s publication in Independence, but Phelps continued to compose numerous hymns through 1836. Although *A Collection of Sacred Hymns* bears the date of 1835, the book actually was printed in March or April 1836. Phelps authored over a third of the book’s ninety hymns. Some of his better-known hymns that appeared in the hymnal are “Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation,” “Redeemer of Israel,” “O God, th’ Eternal Father,” “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain,” “Adam-on-di-Ahman,” and “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning.”

⁸² This comment shows how eager Phelps was to work on the eschatological subjects contained in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham. Later Phelps wrote the hymn “If You Could Hie to Kolob” that illustrates his enthusiasm.

⁸³ These would probably be Sally’s Waterman family members whom she thought she might want to visit in 1835 or 1836.

⁸⁴ LDS Church Archives.

⁸⁵ Phelps was clearly imbued with excitement about the doctrines coming through Joseph Smith about the establishment of Zion in the latter days and the coming of Enoch’s Zion down from heaven. See Doctrine and Covenants 84: 2-5, 99-102; and Moses 7:18-21, 62.

⁸⁶ Ephesians 5:22; and Colossians 3:18.

⁸⁷ Phelps’s views on this subject were more strict and Puritanical than those of most Latter-day Saints of that era, including Joseph Smith.

⁸⁸ This is Elizabeth Van Benthusen Gilbert, the wife of Algernon Sidney Gilbert. Although her husband died of cholera when Zion’s Camp arrived in Missouri in 1834, she continued to live in Missouri with the Saints. Elizabeth died in Utah.

⁸⁹ Phelps was always interested in the weather. Apparently he had made a study of the emerging science of meteorology when he was younger. When the Saints reached the Salt Lake Valley, Phelps was Utah Territory’s weatherman, providing weather information in almanacs and the *Deseret News*. Evidently northern Ohio was experiencing frosty weather earlier than usual in the fall of 1835.

⁹⁰ The original Twelve Apostles of this dispensation had first received their callings in February 1835. Excitedly they prepared for their first mission together. By late March, the Twelve had completed plans for a series of proselytizing activities in New York, New England, and Upper Canada. They departed Kirtland on May 4 and returned on September 26, having served a total of five months. The Twelve traveled both individually and in pairs. About every two weeks they met for a two-day preaching “conference.” See James B. Allen and others, *Men with a Mission, 1837-1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

⁹¹ Thomas B. Marsh was born November 1, 1799, in Acton, Massachusetts. A dissatisfied Methodist, he joined the Church in New York in September 1830. Doctrine and Covenants 31 was directed to him and designated him “physician to the Church.” He was called in Doctrine and Covenants 52:22 to do missionary work en route to Missouri. He led a group of Saints to Jackson County, Missouri,

in the fall of 1832. Marsh became a member of the Missouri High Council in July 1834. He was one of the original Twelve Apostles and, as the oldest, was designated the quorum's president. As such, he wrote the letter referred to in Phelps's letter. He became disaffected from his brethren during the Missouri-Mormon War of 1838 but returned to the Church in 1857. He died in Ogden, Utah, in 1866.

⁹² The Kirtland Temple was almost always referred to as the House of the Lord or simply as "the house" during its construction and early use.

⁹³ Concern for the redemption of Zion continued to occupy the minds of Joseph Smith and the other "presidents" of the Church in the fall of 1835. The Missouri Saints had been driven from their inheritances in Jackson County two years earlier. Phelps's letter indicates the council of presidents obviously had petitioned the Lord for revelation on the matter. It finally came on September 24, about two weeks after this letter.

It was the voice of the spirit of the Lord, that a petition be sent to the governor of the state of Missouri, praying for his assistance in his official capacity, in restoring those to their possessions in Jackson County, who had previously been driven from them by a lawless mob. The brethren had a good time, and covenanted to struggle for this, their favorite object, until death dissolve this union; and if one falls, the rest are not to abandon the pursuit, but struggle on, until the ultimate object is attained, which, they prayed that God would grant unto them, in the name of Jesus Christ. (*PJS* 1:99-100; see also *History of the Church* 2:281-82)

⁹⁴ From this reference, we learn when the bound copies of the Doctrine and Covenants were completed.

⁹⁵ The name "Ira" cannot be located in any of the existing Phelps or Waterman family records. Perhaps Ira was a foster son of W. W. and Sally Phelps.

⁹⁶ Daniel Stanton was born May 28, 1795, in Manlius, New York. He was baptized in Ohio in November 1830 by Parley P. Pratt. He was called in Doctrine and Covenants 75:33 to do missionary work. He served as a branch president in Jackson County and later held high-council positions in Missouri and Illinois. He went west with the Saints and died in 1872.

⁹⁷ As it turned out, all was right with Peter Dustin. He was out doing missionary work. See letter herein dated October 27, 1835.

⁹⁸ David Whitmer was born January 7, 1805, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses and as such received a call as President of the Church in Missouri in July 1834 (Phelps and John Whitmer were in the presidency) and assisted in choosing the Twelve Apostles in February 1835. He partook of the spirit of apostasy in Kirtland in 1837 and was excommunicated in Missouri in 1838. After leaving the Church, he became a prominent citizen in Richmond, Missouri, where he lived until his death in 1888.

⁹⁹ Samuel Harrison Smith, the next child after Joseph Smith, Jr., in the Smith family, was born March 13, 1808, in Tunbridge, Vermont. He was the first baptized after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. He became one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses and the Church's first full-time missionary, serving

many missions. He was called to the Ohio High Council in 1834. He lived in Daviess County, Missouri, during the Missouri-Mormon War. Samuel died July 30, 1844, from a sickness he contracted while escaping the mobocrats who killed his two brothers in Carthage.

¹⁰⁰ The Literary Firm was organized in November 1831 and was concerned with the printing of official Church literature. Early members of the Literary Firm were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, John Whitmer, Martin Harris, W. W. Phelps, and Frederick G. Williams. According to principles of the Law of Consecration, these men consecrated their time, skills, and money for the purpose of printing Church literature, especially the revelations to Joseph Smith. See Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration*, 43-55. Phelps's explanation in this letter shows additions to the Firm and something of how the Firm operated.

¹⁰¹ LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰² The *Liberty Enquirer* was a newspaper founded in Clay County, Missouri, following the destruction of the W. W. Phelps and Co. printing office in 1833. Enemies of the Church actually gave Phelps's press to the *Liberty Enquirer* to use. The *Enquirer* had an anti-Mormon editorial stance.

¹⁰³ Nothing more is known about Warren Graves.

¹⁰⁴ The *Northern Times* was a political newspaper started by the Church in February 1835. It reflected the Democratic Party inclination of the Mormons at the time. Its first editor was Oliver Cowdery, who was replaced by Frederick G. Williams in May 1835. Cowdery and Phelps performed much of the editorial work also at this time. The length of the newspaper's life is unknown. See Peter Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 465-537.

¹⁰⁵ Nothing more is known about Brother Peters.

¹⁰⁶ This may be James H. Rollins, who was born May 27, 1816, in Lima, New York. He worked for the Gilbert-Whitney Store in Kirtland and was baptized soon after meeting Joseph Smith. He marched with Zion's Camp and clerked for Joseph Smith's store in Nauvoo.

¹⁰⁷ This may be Benjamin Covey, who was born March 9, 1792, in Fredricksburg, New York. He was baptized in November 1830.

¹⁰⁸ Nothing more is known about Sister Stout or Brother Fanner.

¹⁰⁹ In the Journal History of the Church, October 27, 1835, 1; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

¹¹⁰ In the Journal History of the Church, November 14, 1835, 1-2.

¹¹¹ King Follett was born July 26, 1788. He was baptized in Ohio in 1831. He was a close friend of Joseph Smith and was incarcerated with the Prophet in Missouri during the winter of 1838-39. He died in an accident in Nauvoo on March 9, 1844.

¹¹² Sidney Rigdon was born February 19, 1793, in St. Clair, Pennsylvania. Before founding his own independent congregation in Mentor (near Kirtland), Ohio, Rigdon had associated with Alexander Campbell and the Campbellites. He was baptized in November 1830 after reading the Book of Mormon. He sought out Joseph Smith in Fayette, New York, and became the Prophet's scribe and chief advisor. He served as first counselor in the original First Presidency. Following Joseph's 1844 martyrdom, Rigdon claimed to be "guardian of the Church,"

but he was rejected in favor of the Twelve. He persisted in his claims and was excommunicated in August 1844. He founded his own church, which did not prosper. He died in New York in 1876.

¹¹³ Phelps's work on the hymnbook did indeed extend for some time before it was published in 1836. See Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 504.

¹¹⁴ In the *Journal History of the Church*, December 16, 1835, 1.

¹¹⁵ Nothing more is known about Zera S. Coles.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Smith, Sr., was born July 12, 1771, in Topsfield, Massachusetts. He married Lucy Mack on January 24, 1796. They were baptized the day the Church was organized, April 6, 1830. They and their eleven children played key roles in the Restoration, including Joseph Sr.'s ordination as Church Patriarch under the hands of the First Presidency, December 18, 1833. The senior Smith often held blessing meetings in Kirtland members' homes. The intense persecution to which he was subjected in Missouri led to his physical demise and death in Nauvoo in 1840.

¹¹⁷ Elijah Fordham was born April 12, 1798, in New York City. He assisted in building both the Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples, where his skill as a carpenter and knowledge as a lumber dealer proved valuable assets to the Church. He was miraculously healed by Joseph Smith on the "Day of God's Power" in 1839. He died in Wellsville, Utah, in 1879.

¹¹⁸ Jesse Hitchcock was born August 10, 1801, in Ash, North Carolina. He was baptized in 1831 and was called to the Missouri High Council in 1834. He performed much missionary service.

¹¹⁹ Phelps wrote these hymns and thoroughly enjoyed introducing his compositions to other Latter-day Saints. The first two of these mentioned were part of the ninety hymns published not long thereafter in *Sacred Hymns*. According to my research aided by Professor Michael Hicks of Brigham Young University, Phelps wrote or adapted from other writers forty-one of these ninety hymns.

¹²⁰ In "Letters," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly* 31 (January 1940): 29-31. Ellipses are reprinted here as they appear in the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly*.

¹²¹ David R. Atchison was born in 1807 in Frogtown, Kentucky. He was a lawyer who had extensive college training. He moved to the Missouri frontier and established a law office in Liberty, Clay County. Among his early clients were the Mormons in 1833, when they were being persecuted and driven from Jackson County. He and Alexander Doniphan, who was part of the same law office, became the Church's best friends during the Missouri period.

¹²² The question mark has probably been supplied by the editors of the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Quarterly* to indicate either that they did not know of a Sister Haist, or they were unsure of Phelps's writing.

¹²³ A variant of *pursy* 'fat or obese'.

¹²⁴ Amos Rees was another lawyer associated with the law office of David Atchison and Alexander Doniphan. He represented the Church for many years.

¹²⁵ Nothing more is known about Woodward.

¹²⁶ Alpheus Gifford was born August 28, 1793, in Adams, Massachusetts. He was baptized in 1830. He was a settler of Jackson County. He died in 1841.

¹²⁷ Elisha H. Groves was born November 5, 1797, in Madison County, Kentucky. He was baptized by Samuel H. Smith. After his baptism, his wife

divorced him. He marched with Zion's Camp. After the Kirtland Temple dedication, he played a key role in Missouri, including serving on the Far West High Council. He was also a high councilor in Illinois. He died in 1867 in Toquerville, Utah.

¹²⁸ This may be Nathaniel Childs, who was born March 7, 1787, in New Ashford, Massachusetts. He marched with Zion's Camp. Nathaniel and his wife filed for redress in the Missouri petitions.

¹²⁹ In the Journal History of the Church, December 18, 1835, 4; this journal entry was copied from the original letter in possession of W. W. Phelps, a grandson of W. W. Phelps.

¹³⁰ Martin Harris was born May 18, 1783, in Easttown, New York. He owned 240 acres in Palmyra and was relatively wealthy when he heard of Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Prophet's claims to having seen an angel and the gold plates. He was one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses. He was a member of the Ohio High Council in 1834. A significant financial benefactor of the Prophet, he was also known as an eccentric. As evidenced in this letter, he went back to Palmyra to do missionary work in 1835. He fell away from the Church during the apostasy of 1837. He reconciled with the Saints in Utah in 1870 and died in Clarkston, Utah, in 1875.

¹³¹ Edmund Durfee was born October 3, 1788, in Tiverton, Rhode Island. He was baptized in 1831. He worked on the temple as a millwright and a carpenter. He served various missions. He was killed by mobbers in Illinois in 1845 while trying to stop them from burning his haystack.

¹³² This may be Robert Rathburn, who labored with Luke S. Johnson as a missionary in southern Ohio and preached as he traveled from Missouri to Ohio.

¹³³ This is probably George Morey, born November 15, 1803, who preached along the way from Missouri to Ohio in 1835.

¹³⁴ LDS Church Archives.

¹³⁵ Nothing more is known of Elder Palmer.

¹³⁶ Peter H. Burnett was a lawyer and resident of Liberty, Missouri. He probably was part of the same law office as David Atchison, Alexander Doniphan, and Amos Rees. At the 1838 siege of Far West and as part of Doniphan's brigade, he defended Doniphan's decision not to execute Joseph Smith. He migrated to California and became California's first elected governor in 1849.

¹³⁷ Christian Whitmer was born September 27, 1809, in Pennsylvania. He was a younger brother to the more famous Whitmer brothers. He was one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses. He was appointed to preside over the elders in Jackson County in 1832. He died in 1835 of complications caused by a sore on his leg.

¹³⁸ This is probably John Cleminson. He served in a number of positions in Far West, including clerk of the circuit court and official recorder. He sympathized with the Missourians in the Missouri-Mormon War and was granted free passage out of Far West. He was subsequently excommunicated.

¹³⁹ This is probably Waldo Littlefield, who was born May 24, 1797, in Petersburg, New York. He named his third child Sarah Phelps Littlefield. He died in 1879 in Cannonville, Utah.

¹⁴⁰ LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴¹ Reynolds Cahoon was born April 30, 1790, in Cambridge, New York. He was baptized by Parley P. Pratt in Ohio in October 1830. A revelation (D&C 52:30) called him to travel to Missouri to do missionary work. He served as a counselor to Bishop Newell K. Whitney in Ohio. He was a major worker during the construction of the Kirtland Temple. He was appointed a counselor in the Adam-ondi-Ahman stake presidency in 1838 and in the Zarahemla stake presidency in 1839. He died in Utah in 1861.

¹⁴² This may be the wife of Elisha Whiting. Elisha was born in 1785 and baptized in 1830. He filed for redress in the Missouri petitions.

¹⁴³ Interestingly, Phelps accurately foresaw that people would experience financial difficulties when the Bank of the United States charter was not renewed.

¹⁴⁴ This is Elijah Fordham, one of the missionary elders called in 1836.

¹⁴⁵ The pentecostal events that Phelps describes here and in subsequent lines are very significant to Kirtland church history leading up to the dedication of the temple. Phelps's references to these activities help us understand the intensity of spiritual manifestations to Church leaders. Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 284-309.

¹⁴⁶ In Journal History of the Church, January 17, 1836, 2.

¹⁴⁷ LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴⁸ Libbeus Thadeus Coons was born May 13, 1811, in Plymouth, New York, and baptized in 1832. As a doctor, he was set apart by Joseph Smith to nurse the sick. He was appointed to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1835. He was a subject of intense persecution in Missouri and Illinois.

¹⁴⁹ This refers to Sally Phelps's sister Lydia.

¹⁵⁰ The verse cited is now Doctrine and Covenants 95:1.

¹⁵¹ Since Phelps did not leave Kirtland until the second week of April, this was undoubtedly not his last letter to Sally. Unfortunately, no more letters have been found.

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