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Section 76 as Literature in the Doctrine and Covenants

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Section 76 as Literature in the Doctrine and Covenants

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of English
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
William H. Brugger

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This thesis by William H. Brugger is accepted in its present form by the Department of English of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

[Signed]

Steven C. Walker, Committee Chair

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[Dec 1993]
Date

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Chapter 1

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS AS LITERATURE

The Bible as Literature

It is not surprising that the Bible has been cherished for its literary value for centuries, combed over carefully for its literary insights. The Bible is an anthology of literary genres. There is poetry in the books of Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations; wisdom literature in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes; apocalyptic literature in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation; narrative as carefully wrought and psychologically engaging as modern short story in Ruth, Esther, and Jonah. Not only is the Bible literature, it is clearly great literature: heroic narrative in the stories of Deborah and Daniel and Gideon; rich saga in the histories of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses; profound tragedy in the narratives of David, Saul, and Samson.

And the Bible is as literarily fine in its details as in its larger forms. Anyone who has read them knows how powerful Jesus's parables are—how they change, like modern laser holographs, as readers alter perspectives or shift stances. In the parable of the prodigal son, for example, the same readers from different perspectives in their lives—depending on age, disposition, circumstance—can relate to the profligate prodigal, to the compassionate parent, or to
the accountant mentality of that elder son. Such biblical passages are universally recognized as classic pieces of literature, captivating audiences regardless of age, race, or gender.

That widespread literary recognition has made biblical literary studies well established and recently expansive. The 1981 publication of Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* triggered a renaissance of literary study of the Bible in such recent distinguished critical assessments as Northrop Frye's *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, Meir Sternberg's *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, Harold Bloom's audacious *The Book of J*, and a landslide of other literary studies of the Bible by such scholars as Frank Kermode, Adele Berlin, Phyllis Tribble, Geoffrey Hartman, and Robert Polzin.

**The Book of Mormon as Literature**

Another volume of ancient scripture, the Book of Mormon, has also undergone recent extensive research, including studies into its value as literature. Despite the book's comparatively short existence, an increasing amount of material has emerged treating various literary aspects of the Book of Mormon. Through such supportive channels as the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, recent literary studies have examined the Book of Mormon for Hebrew idiom, similarities to biblical patterning (such as chiasmic
and other structural forms), word usage and distribution, phrase repetition, the use of code language, and the use of such stylistic and rhetorical devices as figures of speech and imagery. Issues concerning translation and authorship have also been discussed to a considerable degree.

Such studies of the Book of Mormon tend to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon is as rich in literary content as the Bible. Readers enjoy it for the same reasons the Bible is enjoyed: it is accessible, personally adaptable, and illuminating. If Church membership projections are accurate, it may be that the literature of the Book of Mormon, whose circulation increases exponentially every year, is destined to have as great an impact in shaping thought in the future as the Bible has had in the past.

**Literary Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants**

Despite the widespread acceptance of scripture as literature, however, and the strides being made in its study, literary studies of the Doctrine and Covenants have been limited, taking a distant back seat to historical and doctrinal analyses. Despite a published history virtually as old as that of the Book of Mormon, only a handful of scholars have taken interest in literary approaches to the Doctrine and Covenants. A scant handful of sections have been examined by any kind of systematic literary analysis. Studies that treat the Doctrine and Covenants as literature
number less than a dozen, and most of these treat the topic superficially and briefly.

The earliest exploration of the Doctrine and Covenants as literature is found in T. Edgar Lyon's 1948 *Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price*. The book's fourteenth chapter, "Appreciative Interpretations of Selected Passages from Modern Revelation," presents portions of the revelations that are valuable not only for the beauty of the doctrines in them, but for their beauty of expression. Lyon classifies many passages as "inspirational readings," scriptures that are extraordinarily successful in providing emotional relief, in lifting the spirit, in offering insight and perspective, and in promoting a sense of self-worth. In the concluding pages of the chapter, devoted to "poetic utterances," Lyon provides examples of psalms and anthems from the Doctrine and Covenants.

Ellis Rasmussen's 1951 master's thesis, "Textual Parallels to the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Commandments as Found in the Bible," explores the textual relationship between the two volumes of scripture, identifying phrases and clauses that are similar in construction and meaning. Rasmussen's analysis includes statistical research into the number of textual parallels that exist between the Doctrine and Covenants and the Bible, the frequency with which they appear per revelation and verse, how closely the parallels compare to each other, the various types of parallels that exist, where the texts
parallel each other most often, and what purposes such parallels might serve. Rasmussen originally had intended to examine all the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, but stopped at Section 64. Twenty years later, in 1971, another graduate student, Lois Jean Smutz, continued the study by examining sections 65 to 133 using Rasmussen's research methods. These early efforts have proven helpful in studying the Doctrine and Covenants as literature. Patterns of repetition sometimes reveal similarities to Hebrew parallelism, an important characteristic of Hebrew poetry that is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Neither Rasmussen nor Smutz, however, directly relate their findings to literary studies of the Doctrine and Covenants.

In 1969, two significant works were published which examined the Doctrine and Covenants as literature. John A. Widtsoe's volume *The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants* includes as its seventeenth chapter "The Book as Literature." But of the chapter's eleven pages, commentary is provided on only four; the remaining pages list examples of concise sayings, other forms of prose, and poetry.

Steven C. Walker's 1969 article, "The Voice of the Prophet" in *Brigham Young University Studies*, represents the only in-depth literary analysis of the Doctrine and Covenants to date. He explains that revelation is given in different ways and forms, and that experiences so unique and personal will show marked variations in emotional intensity and language when they are recorded. To prove his point he
explicates Section 121, comparing and contrasting the two distinct literary styles which comprise it. Walker subsequently shows how Section 128, as a dictated letter to scribe William Clayton, employs a literary style quite different from that of Section 121. Other sections in the Doctrine and Covenants, he suggests, display a vast array of stylistic variations that reveal considerable insight into the nature of revelation, the literary abilities of Joseph Smith, and the beauty of scriptural language.

Richard C. Shipp's 1975 thesis, "Conceptual Patterns of Repetition in the Doctrine and Covenants and Their Implications," is an exhaustive work identifying chiasmic structures in certain sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Shipp, relying on similar studies performed on the Old and New Testaments, finds that two forms emerge: a direct repetitive structure and a reverse structure. He argues that these patterns constitute an inherent system of commentary that promotes scriptural understanding through repetition. But Shipp, like Rasmussen and Smutz, does not explore the impact his findings have on literary study of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Roger K. Petersen's dissertation, "Joseph Smith Prophet-Poet: A Literary Analysis of Writings Commonly Associated with His Name," was completed in 1981. Petersen demonstrates that the Prophet Joseph Smith was literary-minded, that his writings, "in addition to being prophetic and inspirational, are also structural and lyrical" (DAI 4450-A). Chapter nine
of his dissertation, "The Doctrine and Covenants: The Covenant Restored Through the Music of the King James Bible--Song, Lyric, and Jeremiad," illustrates, using Section 88, how the language of the King James Bible became the parent language of the Doctrine and Covenants. Petersen shows how Sacvan Bercovitch's definition of the American jeremiad applies to the development of the "new and everlasting covenant," and how the Prophet's writings concerning the new Zion establish him as a poet-prophet.

The most recent commentary on the literary value of Doctrine and Covenants is Steven Walker's article, "Doctrine and Covenants as Literature," in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, published in 1992. Although necessarily brief, Walker compares the literary quality of the Doctrine and Covenants to that of the Bible. "Like earlier scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants offers a rainbow of literary genres" (1: 427). He praises its straightforwardness, its frequent reliance on metaphor, and its "benefit of immediacy" (1: 427). That an article such as this is included in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism is encouraging for at least two reasons. First, it helps to substantiate the legitimacy of literary studies of the Doctrine and Covenants. Second, the anticipated placement of the Encyclopedia of Mormonism in libraries throughout the English-speaking world will increase awareness of this area of study.
The Doctrine and Covenants as Literature

To date, however, there are no extensive studies that exclusively treat the Doctrine and Covenants as literature—only chapters of books and articles. There seems to be some hesitation, if not lack of interest, in this area. Lyon thinks "a careful reading and study of the forms and the teachings of our more recent scriptural acquisitions" should reveal "much value as literature." But, he laments, "we have been slow to sense this fact" (181).

This neglect may be understandable. There seems to exist among its readers a limited perception as to the purpose and design of the Doctrine and Covenants. Traditionally it has not been considered particularly literary in either content or form. The Doctrine and Covenants has been understood to be—as has been explicitly defined as—a compilation of instructions for Church establishment and governance, whose purpose is to ensure order in the Church as an institution, and to encourage obedience among Church membership. That definition is suggested on the very title page of the book: "The Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of divine revelations and inspired declarations given for the establishment and regulation of the kingdom of God on the earth in the last days." There is, of course, nothing wrong with this definition: the Doctrine and Covenants is, without question,
a collection of divine revelations designed to regulate the Church.

But the Doctrine and Covenants is much more than this. Within the Doctrine and Covenants are revelations, and within the revelations is literature. Like other scriptural works, the Doctrine and Covenants includes numerous sections, or parts of sections, that qualify as literature. The Doctrine and Covenants includes a wide array of both traditional and modern literary genres. To establish a foundation for this project and to place it in perspective, it may be helpful to introduce the rich literary content of the Doctrine and Covenants by providing examples of the various literary genres represented in it from poetry, wisdom literature, and, most obviously, narrative.

**Narrative**

Narrative is story—an account, either actual or fictional, of an event or series of events. The Doctrine and Covenants in its entirety is narrative, and straightforward narrative, readily recognized as such. With the exception of sections 1, 10, 11, 99, 133, 134, 137, and Official Declaration-1, the Doctrine and Covenants follows a strict chronological order. The beginning sections correspond chronologically to the history of the early Church: the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript by Martin Harris (Section 3), Oliver Cowdery's desire to translate the Book of Mormon (8),
the Lord's counsel to Oliver concerning the translation (9), the ordaining of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic priesthood (13), and the revelation to the Three Witnesses (17) are all in order of their occurrence in early Church history. Later sections follow Church history with that same chronological exactness, as can be seen in such typical sections as the revelation concerning the Kirtland temple (95), the revelations on the persecution suffered by the Missouri saints (98, 101, and 103), the prayer of the Prophet while in Liberty Jail (121) and the Lord's answer (121 and 122), John Taylor's description of the martyrdom of the Prophet (135), and the revelation given to Brigham Young concerning Winter Quarters and the Camp of Israel (136). This chronological character emphasizes that the Doctrine and Covenants, like all scriptural and many literary works, is historical narrative. Literary approaches to historical narrative can provide important insights into the narrative, into the history, and even into the narrator.

An example of the interpretive richness generated by literary approaches can be seen in a 1980 Journal of Mormon History article by Neal Lambert and Richard Cracroft entitled "Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith's First Vision." Lambert and Cracroft's literary analysis traces a succession of significant textual alterations in four versions of Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision. They conclude that a close examination of these accounts
reveals that in these renderings of the vision, Joseph Smith, Jr., made literary, structural, and stylistic changes which not only reflect his changing understanding of the event in the Sacred Grove, but also demonstrate that, in the accounts of 1832, 1835, 1838, and the [1841] Wentworth letter, Joseph moved from writing of his transcendent experience as a young man influenced by the Protestant tradition of spiritual autobiography to writing profoundly of the event as the Leader, Restorer, and Prophet of a unique religious movement destined to growth and greatness. (32-3)

The 1832 version, Lambert and Cracroft assert, is characterized by an "elaborate, complicated syntax and a highly elevated, florid diction" set in "long, convoluted and soaring sentences" (37-8). By 1835 the Prophet had acquired a "better capacity for expressing the uniqueness of his experience to his prophetic role and the destiny of the Restored Church" as evidenced by a "simple and more confident style of the narration" (37). The 1838 version is distinguished by a "restrained, straightforward, matter-of-fact style" consisting of long sentences which lack "embellishment, affectation, and rhetorical flourish" (38).

In some ways, the Prophet's experience is not unlike that of beginning writers, who often imitate models of what
they assume to be good writing. Instead of letting their writing reveal their thoughts and feelings in a personal way, they produce material that is detached and impersonal, material that, to some extent, misrepresents them. The Prophet early in his call relied upon a style similar to that of his contemporaries, both in and outside the Church. As time passed, and the Prophet gained writing experience, his style changed accordingly. He became more comfortable with his writing ability, no longer concerned with imitating others' styles. He recognized the need for clear writing as insurance against misunderstanding and confusion—potential barriers that had to be overcome as new religious, social, economic, and political ideas were introduced. Such insights can be focused through the lens of a literary approach—in this case, a traditionally formalistic approach—to a historical narrative.

A similar approach has yet to be taken with the Doctrine and Covenants. Lambert and Cracroft used four accounts of the First Vision to trace changes in literary style. There are more than 130 revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, most of which follow a chronological order, thereby making the task of tracking textual variations easier. This is not to suggest, of course, that such an undertaking would by any means be simple. But examinations of this type could reveal much information about the nature of revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the historical situation of Doctrine and Covenants events.
The Doctrine and Covenants' firm grounding in history makes it possible to view its sections as episodes in early Church history, and the book as a whole as the larger story those episodes compose. On that larger scale, the Doctrine and Covenants is primarily the story of the rise and development of the Church from 1823 to 1847. In a sense, the Church is the protagonist, the world the antagonist. The tension or conflict necessary to every great story comes between the forces of good and evil, as a "good" institution is established in an "evil" world. Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl observe that the Doctrine and Covenants, with its inherent narrative form, "enables us to follow the tender watch care of God over the infant Church, during its days of numerical weakness and the incessant assaults of the adversary, in the form of persecution, temptations, and apostasy, and to watch the retreat of the people of God into the wilderness" (xiii).

**Short Story**

Closer up, the Doctrine and Covenants may be viewed as a collection of short stories. The Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants provides an overview of those episodic individual historical events that combine to create the larger history:
In the revelations ones sees the restoration and unfolding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times. The westward movement of the Church from New York and Pennsylvania, to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, and finally to the Great Basin of Western America, and the mighty struggles of the saints in attempting to build Zion on the earth in modern times, are also shown forth in these revelations.

Though many of the narrative revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants may be considered short stories to some degree, it should be noted that the term "short story" is used loosely here. By stricter definition, these Doctrine and Covenants events more closely parallel tales than short stories. Short stories are brief, concise, usually fictional narratives, which often include an epiphany, "some moment of insight, discovery, or revelation by which a character's life, or view of life, is greatly altered" (Kennedy 11). Although many of the revelations relate such crucial epiphanies--indeed many are epiphanies in and of themselves--many Doctrine and Covenants sections do not meet other criteria generally expected of the short story, such as the traditional reliance on details for character and plot development, the revealing of a character through a series of events, or the creation of vividly rendered scenes.
These sections tend to be closer in form to the tale, a story, true or fictitious, that "sets forth strange and wonderful events in a more or less bare summary, without detailed character-drawing." Its goal is "revelation of the marvelous rather than revelation of character" (Kennedy 5). Because many of the revelations read like tales yet relate moments of epiphany, they may be read to advantage from the complementing vantage points of both short story and tale.

A good example may be found in Section 121, where Joseph Smith, while being held prisoner in Liberty jail during the winter and spring of 1838-39, pleads with the Lord for relief for the suffering Saints and revenge on those causing the suffering. ElRay L. Christiansen describes the conditions:

They were confined in one room with two small windows. No provision had been made to heat the room; there was no chimney to draw out the smoke. The brethren slept on piles of straw on the floor. Their food was of the coarsest kind. (39-40)

Dramatic as these circumstances are, details concerning the incarceration are sketchy in the revelation itself. Indeed, much of it is summary. In describing the events surrounding the incarceration, the Prophet mentions only "the wrongs of [his] people and [his] servants," and that they have cried to the Lord for help (v. 2). The account of the abuse gets no more specific than general reference to "unlawful
oppressions" (v. 3), labeling the oppressors "enemies" (v. 5), and the barest mention of "suffering saints" (v. 6). That there is considerable additional information can be seen in such volumes as Joseph Smith's History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Parley P. Pratt's Autobiography, Dean C. Jessee's The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, or even the section heading. The lack of historical details in Section 121 may serve to emphasize the answer provided by the Lord rather than the question posed by the Prophet. Certainly that answer is stressed by the structure; the first six verses comprise the plea, while the subsequent forty verses constitute the response: a ratio of almost 1:7. Characterization is slight: readers may sense the Prophet's anguish and frustration, and something of his consolation. Less is revealed about the Prophet than the Lord, who in a scathing rebuke of the Prophet's enemies, reveals much about their character and personality.

But if there are aspects of tale in Section 121, there are also illuminating short story elements. The moment of epiphany in this section is in the first verse of the Lord's response to the Prophet's plea: "thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment" (v. 7). As evidence of this epiphanal moment Walker notes a "crescendo of intensity in language, complexity in syntax, and lyricism in technique suggest[ing] a definite increase in spiritual influence throughout the prayer; it is as though, from his
simple opening question to his final rhapsodic plea, the Prophet were being filled increasingly with the Spirit" (98).

Christiansen shares Walker's respect for the language of Section 121: "[F]rom that prison came some of the most beautiful and sublime thoughts and writings ever given to the world. They will endure among sacred literature of the Church for all time" (39-40). Stephen L Richards similarly observed: "I cannot forbear to read to you those well-known verses of the conclusion of the 121st Section of the Doctrine and Covenants which express in such beautiful language, I sometimes think the most beautiful to be found in all literature" (12).

Yet Section 121, for all its impressive short story aspects, embodies enough elements of a tale that it is treated as such by Church members, many of whom consider it among the most satisfying messages from Church history concerning adversity. It is likely the most frequency consulted and referenced revelation when comfort is sought. It is, for example, included in Lyon's work as one of the Doctrine and Covenants' "inspirational readings." Readers are immediately sympathetic to the Prophet's condition in oppressive and depressing circumstances, missing family and friends. The section is circulated widely--like a tale--as a story about a righteous person, unrighteously judged and punished, who at wit's end, when he could tolerate no more abuse, sought and received divine consolation.
Saga

Saga, in the sense of a historical account of heroic adventure among members of historically important families, is also found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Adventure is prevalent in the accounts related in the Doctrine and Covenants with regard to the family of Joseph Smith and such other prominent families as the Youngs and the Taylors and the Pratts and the Richardses. The saga-like qualities of the Prophet's adventurous life are highlighted by John Henry Evans in *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet*:

Here is a man who was born in the stark hills of Vermont; who was reared in the backwoods of New York; who never looked inside a college or high school; who lived in six states, no one of which would own him during his lifetime; who spent months in the vile prisons of the period; who, even when he had his freedom, was hounded like a fugitive; who was covered once with a coat of tar and feathers, and left for dead; who, with his following, was driven by irate neighbors from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, and from Missouri to Illinois; and who, at the unripe age of thirty-eight, was shot to death by a mob with painted faces. Yet this man became mayor of the biggest town in Illinois and the state's most
prominent citizen, the commander of the largest body of trained soldiers in the nation outside the Federal army, the founder of cities and of a university, and aspired to become President of the United States. He wrote a book that has baffled the literary critics for a hundred [and sixty] years and which is today more widely read than any other volume save the Bible. He established the most nearly perfect social mechanism in the modern world, and developed a religious philosophy that challenges anything of the kind in history. . . . He set up the machinery for an economic system that would take the . . . fears out of the heart of man. . . . In [nearly every] nation are men and women who look upon him as a greater leader than Moses and a greater prophet than Isaiah; [and] his disciples now number [in the millions]. (Prologue)

While the restrained tone of the Doctrine and Covenants tends to play down these adventures, most of them are in the book: Joseph Smith performs sacred ordinances, translates and interprets and publishes scripture, preaches the gospel, utters prophecies and receives visions, entertains angelic messengers, confounds enemies, acquires land, makes plans for the building of cities and temples, organizes conferences stakes and missions, establishes a health code, and designs an economic system. And there are narratives in the Doctrine
and Covenants as tragic as any saga, when the Prophet must confront associates about false doctrines and impure practices, lose many close friends through apostasy, face persecution, endure incarceration, and suffer martyrdom.

**Biography**

Closely associated with saga is biography, a written account of an individual's life centered "on the character and career of its subject" (Holman and Harmon 56). While dozens of biographies have been written on various persons mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants, this volume is, in itself, a biography, and in many cases may be the first biography of some of the most prominent personalities of the Restoration: Reynolds Cahoon, Jared Carter, James Covill, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Orson Hyde, Luke and Lyman Johnson, William Law, Thomas Marsh, Edward Partridge, William Phelps, Orson and Parley Pratt, Sydney Rigdon, the Smith family, John Taylor, Ezra Thayre, the Whitmer family, Newel Whitney, Lyman Wight, Frederick Williams, Wilford Woodruff, and Brigham Young.

Granted, most of these people are discussed incidentally or at most sporadically. References to individuals in the Doctrine and Covenants usually constitute mere snapshots of their lives. But in the case of Joseph Smith the biography is fuller. Section 135 in itself may be considered a brief biography. Written by John Taylor, who witnessed the
martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith at Carthage in 1844, Section 135 is essentially a eulogy honoring the Prophet Joseph Smith, but it also reviews his life and evaluates his contribution to the world: "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that lived in it" (v. 3). Taylor recounts the Prophet's most significant achievements: the translation of the Book of Mormon, the spreading of the gospel, the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants, the gathering of the Saints, and the founding of Nauvoo. Though biographical details are sketchy in this section (apart from the account of the martyrdom), many more can be found throughout the Doctrine and Covenants.

Parable

Other Doctrine and covenants literary forms are more scripturally specific--apocalypse, prophecy, parable. The Doctrine and Covenants relates seven parables: the parable of the twelve sons (38:26-27); the parable of the wheat and the tares (86:1-7); the parable of the servants in the field (88:51-61); the parable of the nobleman and the olive trees (101:43-62); the parable of the woman and the unjust judge (101:81-91); and, in severely condensed versions, the parable of the fig tree from Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 (35:16); and the parable of the ten virgins from Matthew 25 (45:56).
Three of the Doctrine and Covenants parables are found elsewhere in scripture—the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13, the parable of the woman and the unjust judge in Luke 18, and the parable of the nobleman and the olive trees in both Isaiah 5 and Matthew 21 as well as Jacob 5 in the Book of Mormon. Two remaining parables—the parable of the twelve sons and the parable of the servants in the field—are unique to the Doctrine and Covenants in the form in which they are written, although their messages may be reflected in other scriptural parables.

Parables can reveal insights not only into doctrine but also into individuals, events, and circumstances. The parable of the twelve sons in Section 38, short as it is, is illuminating:

For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just? Behold this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you; be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine. (vv. 26-7)

This parable might be speaking not only of familial togetherness, but of the necessity of unity among Church
membership, as well as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (although this body would not be fully formed until 1835). By June 1829 the office and responsibilities of the apostleship had been revealed (18:26-36), and Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery ordained to the apostleship. The parable may serve to dramatize the Lord's expectation regarding the Twelve and their interactions with each other. One message is that the Lord is no respecter of persons, that the Twelve are equal in standing before him, and that they are to act as a unified body, esteeming each other as they do themselves. "What would happen in a family where some children should be clothed in rags and made to suffer want, while others live sumptuously every day? There would be discontent, revolt, perhaps crime" (Smith and Sjodahl 205-6). Using the family unit in this parable is clever: the Twelve are to be "brethren," like the twelve sons in the parable.

The carefully etched facets of Doctrine and Covenants parable refract considerable light into Church history and theology. Four of the seven parables focus on farming practices. Like the audience to whom many of the New Testament parables were aimed, the Saints to whom these parables were addressed were a farming people—a largely agrarian society—and therefore a people who could more easily extract meaning from such parables as the parable of the wheat and the tares, the parable of the servants in the field, the parable of the nobleman and the olive trees, and
the parable of the fig tree because of their first-hand experience with agriculture.

Proverbs

Wisdom literature, a "formulaic expression of moral wisdom and truth" (Holman and Harman 529), is also found in abundance in the Doctrine and Covenants. It most often takes the form of concise proverbs, aphorisms, or maxims. It is literature characterized by "reflection on life by one who has observed it at length and is passing on valuable conclusions" (Karleen 111). Walker, referring to wisdom literature, observes: "The Doctrine and Covenants . . . is impressive for a simple, condensed straightforwardness that lends itself to statements remarkably rich in implication" (427).

In relating wisdom literature's applicability to life, Roy W. Doxey writes: "The Doctrine and Covenants contains numerous teachings and pithy sayings that powerfully influence the daily lives and feelings of Latter-day Saints, which set the tone for Church service and instill vitality into the work" (407). Widtsoe, in his chapter on the Doctrine and Covenants as literature, compiled a list of some fifty-six such statements. A sampling follows:

For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance (1:31).
Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God (18:10).

He that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land (58:21).

And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments (59:21).

I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men (64:10).

I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise (82:10).

What doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift (88:33).

And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come (93:24).
Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection (130:18).

It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance (131:6).

Other typical Doctrine and Covenants proverbs are found on pages 143-7 of Widtsoe's work, The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants. Doxey lists those included here plus eleven more in his article "Doctrime and Covenants Overview" in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism (1: 407). As these examples show, the Prophet Joseph Smith had "considerable skill with the poetic language of the religious experience" (Lambert and Cracroft 41), and nowhere is this skill demonstrated more fully than in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Apocalypse

Apocalyptic literature "predicts the ultimate destiny, usually destruction, of the world, often through a kind of symbolism that is obscure, strange, or difficult" (Holman and Harmon 32). John Gabel and Charles Wheeler note five criteria of apocalyptic literature, four of which apply to apocalyptic portions of the Doctrine and Covenants: first, "the level of conflict in apocalypses is cosmic" where heaven, earth, and hell comprise the stage (132). Second,
"the drama of apocalypse presents two mighty opposites who must meet in mortal combat." These two forces, one good and the other evil, "are so closely matched that only with the greatest of difficulty will one ultimately overcome the other" (132). The forces of good will ultimately triumph, but in the meantime, evil forces appear to have the advantage.

Third, "this body of literature is less concerned with actual history than with the end of history . . . death, resurrection, judgment, reward and punishment" (132-3). Fourth, apocalyptic literature "frequently takes the form of a report of a vision experienced by the speaker in the work" (133). There is usually a heavy reliance on imagery and symbolism, and the responsibility of the seer is therefore twofold: to describe the vision and then to interpret it.

A considerable number of revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants meet these criteria, and therefore qualify as apocalyptic literature: 1, 29, 33, 45, 63, 65, 76, 77, 86, 88, 130, 133 treat this topic almost exclusively, while dozens of other sections discuss apocalyptic events to some extent. Section 1, as the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, sets the stage for coming events as a "voice of warning" (v. 4). The first twenty-eight verses of Section 29 describe the events comprising the apocalypse. Section 33 strongly encourages repentance and preparation, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 10). Section 45 emphasizes events preceding the Second Coming, while Section 63
describes the behavioral differences between the faithful and the wicked in the last days. Section 65 provides assurance that the Lord will appear and subdue his enemies. Section 76, the vision of the three degrees of glory, focuses almost exclusively on the rewards and punishments to be given to the righteous and unrighteous respectively, while Section 77, received one month later, clarifies obscure passages in the book of Revelation. Sections 86 and 88, received within three weeks of each other, both describe the processes by which the wicked will be separated from the righteous. Section 130 sheds more light on the celestial kingdom, and Section 133, as the appendix to the Doctrine and Covenants, reiterates the apocalyptic message given in the preface.

**Tragedy**

Another aspect of the literary richness of the Doctrine and Covenants is its tragic dimension. Although this term has many definitions in literature, in general tragedy "recounts the fall of persons of high degree" (Holman and Harmon 505). Tragedy in religious literature inevitably involves succumbing to sin: "Failing to appropriate the things of God, to avail oneself of . . . revelation, to accept God's offer of grace" (Karleen 110). Leland Ryken, a noted scholar in biblical literary studies, makes a distinction between biblical and non-biblical tragedy, between the "unsympathetic sinner" and the "sympathetic
victim" (106). The scriptural tragic figure triggers tragic consequences through his own actions; the secular hero's tragedy, the result of being acted upon, elicits more reader commiseration.

But the Doctrine and Covenants contains examples of both. Some of the trials heaped upon the Saints were a result of their disobedience, others were instances in which the Lord permitted them to suffer for various reasons. Following the loss of the Book of Lehi manuscript, Joseph Smith was warned:

Behold, thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall. But remember, God is merciful; therefore repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work; except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up and become as other men, and have no more gift. (3:9-11)

Martin Harris was similarly warned: "I [the Lord] foresee that if my servant Martin Harris humbleth not himself and receive a witness from my hand, that he will fall into transgression" (5:32).

Sections 39 and 40 outline the tragedy of James Covill, who "covenanted with the Lord that he would obey any command
that the Lord would give to him through Joseph the Prophet," and to whom the Lord said, "I have looked upon thy works and I know thee. And verily I say unto thee, thine heart is now right before me at this time; and, behold, I have bestowed great blessings upon thy head" (39:7-8). The Lord reminds James of his reluctance, due to pride and worldly concerns, to follow him. He is then commanded to seek the Lord's forgiveness, and to be baptized in preparation for his mission to Ohio, where he is to call people to repentance, baptize them, and give them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Within a few weeks, however, James Covill "rejected the word of the Lord, and returned to his former principles and people" because "Satan tempted him; and the fear of persecution and the cares of the world caused him to reject the word" (40:2).

The Doctrine and Covenants story of James Covill is definitively tragic. Covill was a deeply religious person, having been a Baptist minister for nearly four decades. He had, at one time, made up his mind to follow the Savior, and to help others do the same. In what can be interpreted as an attempt to promote a smooth transition between his former lifestyle and his new one, the Lord called James on a mission, giving him an opportunity to use what were undoubtedly his greatest strengths: working with people and teaching them gospel principles. He was accustomed to the demands of a Christian lifestyle, and understood something of how the Spirit could change lives. It is also probable that
he was familiar with the adversary's abilities and efforts in stifling spiritual progression. James was promised a number of gifts: power, faith, guidance, and the Lord's protection as he served. Unable to recognize the brightness of his future, and lacking faith in the Lord's promises, James turned away from the Lord, and is never mentioned again in the Doctrine and Covenants.

James's fall is hard, as he seems to have been held in unusually high esteem by the Lord and the Prophet. His climb to the heights began forty years earlier. The revelations regarding him came in 1831, and it not unreasonable to assume that Covill had the potential to serve in the highest councils of the still young Church. He was important enough in the eyes of both the Prophet and the Lord to warrant two personal revelations concerning him. Yet James broke his covenant within one month of receiving the revelations in a fall as final as that of the once-mighty Lucifer, whose own fall from grace is perhaps the most tragic of all.

Poetry

Perhaps more than any other literary form, the Doctrine and Covenants lends itself most readily to poetry. Section 65 reads much like a biblical psalm, a portion of Section 84 like an anthem. Many passages have successfully been set to music. Arguably, poetry of some kind can be found on virtually every page of the text, and at least twenty
revelations contain distinctly poetic passages that may rival the best religious poetry ever written. Sections 18, 25, 38, 43, 46, 50, 65, 84, 85, 88, 93, 109, 110, 121, 122, 123, 128, 133, 137, and 138 include particularly poetic passages.

A small number of scholars have recognized the poetic potential of the Doctrine and Covenants. Among the first was Lyon, who in 1948 wrote: "Portions of the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants contain beautiful poetry, although the form in which the book is printed tends to obscure such expression" (199-200). Taking his admiration a step further, he suggested that some of the poetry in Doctrine and Covenants is even musical: "At times, the Prophet Joseph Smith, under the inspiration of the Lord, rose to the heights of spiritual illumination, and when so stimulated, wrote words that make edifying anthems" (202).

More recently, Cracroft and Lambert have written about Joseph Smith's poetic abilities. Using Section 110 as an example of the Prophet's skillful use of metaphor, they conclude:

Joseph had written with eloquent and poetic grandeur: His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters; even the voice of Jehovah. The metaphorical language and the elaborate figures of
speech are not only appropriate in this vision of 1836, but, as language, are remarkably successful. Only a poetic diction and a figurative language can carry the burden of the extraordinary experience being rendered here. And in that sense the metaphors and similes that Joseph uses are right: the eyes of fire, for instance, remind us of the frequent use of light and lightning to describe the face of the divine. Indeed, the heavenly pillar of Joseph's First Vision is interchangeably referred to as one of light or of fire. Furthermore, the equation of the voice with the rushing of great waters suggests not only irresistible power and volume, but a terrible beauty, and, in the end, a source of life as well. (38)

Other sections warrant consideration as poetry. Petersen asks readers to "consider particularly Sections 76 and 88, which exhibit an organicism that would satisfy the most critical of poets. . . . [or] Section 93 for that sublimity and transcendence of thought that marks the true poet" ("Joseph Smith: Poet Prophet" 269). Walker observes in Section 85 a crescendo in style from "simple journalistic reporting to one of eloquent and magnificent poetic prophesying" (105).

Clearly the Doctrine and Covenants contains poetry. The crucial literary question is how successful that poetry is.
For Petersen, who examined Joseph Smith's literary abilities, the single most important criterion of successful poetry is emotional intensity: "All great poets must depict vividly the passion and agony of the soul during life's most trying moments" (267). Ryken observes: "Poetry, like the rest of literature, is the interpretive presentation of human experience in an artistic form" (187) whose primary goal is to "raise the reader's consciousness about the issues of life" (220). Orson F. Whitney, in his treatise "Oratory, Poesy, and Prophecy," says that "the essence of poetry is in thought, sentiment, symbolism, and power of suggestion. It is the music of ideas, as well as the music of language" (531).

Using these definitions it is not difficult to find passages in the Doctrine and Covenants that can be classified as first rate poetry. Some of that poetry is buried in what at first glance appears to be pedestrian prose:

Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion.
Keep my commandments in all things.
And, if you keep my commandments
And endure to the end
You shall have eternal life,
Which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.
(14:6-7)
There is a loose pattern hidden in this passage: an alteration in line length. The longer lines (1, 3, and 5) are separated by the shorter lines (2 and 4). The resulting alternation lends a sense of rhythm to these verses which tend to focus the reader on its chiasmic internal proposition: "Keep my commandments in all things./ You shall have eternal life."

This poetic structure is deftly reinforced by sound patterns. The alliteration in the last line knits together God's gifts through the recurring "g" of gift, greatest, gifts, and God. The alliterative interweavings of establish, endure, end, and eternal similarly tie together the lastingness of those godly gifts. "Keep my commandments," the emphatic central message of the passage, is appropriately repeated twice.

These elements, simple as they are, combine to make this scripture poetic: vivid, telling, memorable, formally apt for its message. Yet the poetry of the passage is so subtly understated we might not have noticed if George H. Durham had not used these verses for a musical composition, "The Greatest Gift of God," published in the first volume of a collection entitled Festival Anthems (Lyon 205).

Often Doctrine and Covenants poems are more obvious:

O, ye nations of the earth,
How often would I have gathered you together
As a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,
But ye would not!
How oft have I called upon you
By the mouth of my servants,
And by the ministering of angels,
And by mine own voice,
And by the voice of thunderings,
And by the voice of lightnings,
And by the voice of tempests,
And by the voice of earthquakes,
And great hailstorms,
And by the voice of famines
And pestilences of every kind,
And by the great sound of a trump,
And by the voice of judgment,
And by the voice of mercy all the day long,
And by the voice of glory and honor
And the riches of eternal life
And would have saved you
With an everlasting salvation,
But ye would not!
Behold, the day has come,
When the cup of the wrath
Of mine indignation is full. (43:24-26)

The parallelistic reiterations of those "by the voices of" enact the poem's central premise of "how often" the Lord reached out to save us. The passage is impressively
orchestrated. Eight repetitions of "by the voice of" demonstrate how far the Lord is willing to go in saving his people. The Lord's compassion is implicit in the pattern of the poem; he tries spiritual approaches in warning his children before resorting to physical warnings, moving from less drastic to more drastic signs, thunderings and lightnings, then tempests, then earthquakes and hailstorms, and finally famines and pestilences. The poem's emotion, too, is reflected by poetic structure--lines are longer where the destruction is greatest. Then the lines tail off into wistful wishes of promise descending through ever shorter and quieter lines to the culminating thundering fullness of that final apocalyptic clause.

Some sections are poetic in their entirety, notably Section 65:

Hearken, and lo,
A voice as of one sent down from on high,
Who is mighty and powerful,
Whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth,
Yea, whose voice is unto men--
Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight.

The keys of the kingdom of God
Are committed unto man on the earth,
And from thence shall the gospel roll forth
Unto the ends of the earth,
As the stone which is cut out
Of the mountain without hands
Shall roll forth,
Until it has filled the whole earth.

Yea, a voice crying--
Prepare ye the way of the Lord
Prepare ye the supper of the Lamb,
Make ready for the Bridegroom.

Pray unto the Lord,
Call upon his holy name,
Make known his wonderful works among the people,

Call upon the Lord,
That his kingdom may go forth upon the earth,
That the inhabitants thereof may receive it,
And be prepared for the days to come,
In the which the Son of Man
Shall come down in heaven,
Clothed in the brightness of his glory,
To meet the kingdom of God
Which is set up on the earth.

Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth,
That the kingdom of heaven may come,
That thou, O God, mayest be glorified
In heaven so on earth,
That thine enemies may be subdued;
For thine is the honor, power and glory,
Forever and ever. Amen. (1-6)

Section 65 may constitute the closest example of a psalm in the Doctrine and Covenants: "A careful study of Section 65 . . . will indicate that it contains the literary elements of a true psalm. A comparison of this section and one of the biblical psalms will prove interesting from the point of view of literary similarity" (Lyon 200-201). If C. S. Lewis is right that the psalm is "enjoyment" that "spontaneously overflows into praise," a kind of "inner health made audible" (90-8), Section 65, with its rhapsodic praise of that stone rolling forth to fill the earth, qualifies.

Section 84:96-102 has also been extolled as a psalm (Lyon 202). This passage is unique in that verses 96-98 serve as a prelude to the following four verses (99-102), each of which forms its own stanza and is presented in verse form in the Doctrine and Covenants, requiring no additional versification. Comprising the psalm are three stanzas of five lines, followed by a four-line concluding verse. Lyon notes that Arthur Shepherd set the words of this passage to music in the form of an anthem, published under the title "The Lord Hath Brought Again Zion" (202). "This musical arrangement" he writes, "has been widely used by choirs of many Christian
denominations, as well as those of our own Church. Note the
grandeur of the thought as well as the beauty of its form" (202).

Verses 19-23 of Section 128 have been put to similar use
as the text for "Song of Praise," also an anthem, composed by
B. Cecil Gates (Lyon 203). Verse 23 is particularly fine:

Let the mountains shout for joy,
And all ye valleys cry aloud;
And all ye seas and dry lands
Tell the wonders of your Eternal King!
And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills,
Flow down with gladness.
Let the woods and all the trees
Of the field praise the Lord;
And ye solid rocks weep for joy!
And let the sun, moon
And morning stars sing together,
And let all the sons of God shout for joy!
And let the eternal creations declare his name
forever and ever!

Walker cites this passage as evidence not only of the
Prophet's rhetorical ability, but also his poetic competence:

Much of this final segment of Section 128 is not
only remarkable prose but sheer poetry. Notice,
for example, how facilely verse 23 adapts itself to poetic form. . . . The concluding passage of the revelation [verse 23] is exultant, exhilarated, and profound—a masterpiece of stylistic craftsmanship. (103-4)

Verse 23 is a nature psalm, a psalm in which nature, as the subject, is used to praise God as creator. Its inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants may be for the same reason that certain parables are included: the earliest readers of the volume were farmers, who, like the earliest readers of biblical psalms, "had both a utilitarian and aesthetic appreciation of nature" (Ryken 250). Consider how closely it parallels the King James Version of Psalm 148:

Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
Praise him in the heights.
Praise ye him, all his angels:
Praise ye him, all his hosts.
Praise ye him, sun and moon:
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that be above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord:
For he commanded, and they were created. (1-5)
Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour;
Stormy wind fulfilling his word:
Mountains, and all hills;
Fruitful trees, and all cedars:
Beasts, and all cattle;
Creeping things, and flying fowl: (7-10)

Theme

At least as important as these formal elements in the literary aspect of the Doctrine and Covenants is theme:

The literary qualities of the Bible are accounted for partly by the themes treated. . . . The themes of Biblical literature are among the greatest that literature can treat: God, humanity, the physical universe, and their interrelations. Such problems as morality, relationship of human beings to the unseen world, and ultimate human destinies are treated with an intensity and vigor seldom matched in world literature. (Holman and Harmon 51-52)

The Doctrine and Covenants, like the Bible, succeeds as literature at least partly because of the themes it explores.
Compare the catalogue above with the one from the Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants:

In the revelations the doctrines of the gospel are set forth with explanations about such fundamental matters as the nature of the Godhead, the origin of man, the reality of Satan, the purpose of mortality, the necessity for obedience, the need for repentance, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the ordinances and performances that pertain to salvation, the destiny of the earth, the future conditions of man after the resurrection and the judgment, the eternity of the marriage relationship, and the eternal nature of the family.

A single theme alone justifies the study of the Doctrine and Covenants as literature: "The testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power—makes this book of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth" (Explanatory Introduction).

**An Undervalued Text**

As long as the Doctrine and Covenants is perceived as a kind of manual rather than a collection of beautifully crafted prose and poetry worthy of literary analysis, there
may be a tendency, however unintentional, to underestimate the value of this volume not only in the governance of the Church, but in human life. "These revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people," people whose only consolation was "the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Explanatory Introduction). Stories and sayings and poems such as these demand and deserve literary explication.

It is true the revelations were received individually and intermittently and only later published as a collection. It is true that the Doctrine and Covenants is formally and thematically diverse, even fragmented. Almost every section could require a different literary approach. Add to that a general confusion concerning the nature of revelation, and the task of explicating the Doctrine and Covenants as literature becomes daunting.

But literary and scriptural studies, centuries old, have already faced these challenges, and have overcome them. Methods have already been developed which have paved the way for productive Doctrine and Covenants studies. The notion that literary approaches somehow lend themselves more readily to explications of the Bible and the Book of Mormon is inaccurate. After all, the manner in which both volumes were created is not dissimilar to the origin of the Doctrine and Covenants. All three scriptural works were created through similar methods and for similar purposes. The Bible and the
Book of Mormon are anthologies that contain the inspired religious and historical writings of individuals whose responsibility it was to teach gospel principles and encourage adherence to those principles. For all the differences of historical condition and cultural milieu, the same is true of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The time is right for more serious and more thorough research into the Doctrine and Covenants as literature. These studies should be initiated for the same reasons that other scriptural literary analyses have been performed. The King James Version of the Bible's literary greatness was originally discovered and recently resurrected mainly through scholarly explication. Literary study of the Doctrine and Covenants could yield all the benefits that such scholarship offers. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate the value of literary approaches to what seems to be an undervalued text.
Chapter 2

SECTION 76 AS POETRY

Overview

This second chapter will attempt to serve two purposes. First, it will introduce the reader to Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants as poetry. Second, it will analyze this revelation through the identification, classification, and explication of portions of Section 76 that contain traditional features characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The analysis will be predominantly formalistic in approach, and will rely on the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Vision

Section 76 is one of the best-known revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, for it presents some of the most beautiful and inspiring doctrines ever revealed. Dubbed "The Vision," Section 76 was given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on February 16, 1832, while the two were in Hiram, Ohio. Circumstances concerning the reception of the revelation are sketchy, as only a few reports have survived. In the preface to Section 76 Joseph Smith states that upon his return from a conference he continued his translation of the Bible: "[W]hile translating St. John's Gospel, myself
and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision" (136). More specifically, it was during the translation of John 5:29 that the vision was received. A written account of the vision was published in The Evening and the Morning Star in July of 1832, approximately five months after its reception, and was included in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Some sixty years after the revelation was first published Philo Dibble published his account of the experience in the May 15, 1892, issue of the Juvenile Instructor (Dahl 280). Dibble recalls that the vision occurred in the home of John Johnson, located about thirty-five miles from Kirtland. Johnson had opened his home to Joseph Smith and his family so the Prophet could work on the translation. From September 1831 to March 1832, the Johnson home functioned as the headquarters for the Church (Backman and Cowan 63).

At the time of the vision, Dibble claims that there were "other men in the room, perhaps twelve, among whom I was one." Dibble did not see the vision, but says that he "saw the glory and felt the power." Commenting on that glory, Dibble wrote a second account, entitled "Philo Dibble's Narrative," published in 1882 (also by the Juvenile Instructor). He states that "Joseph wore black clothes, but at this time seemed to be dressed in an element of glorious white, and his face shone as if it were transparent" (Dahl 281). Dibble and the others watched Joseph and Sidney, who conversed among themselves as the vision progressed:
Joseph would, at intervals, say: 'What do I see?' as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, 'I see the same.' Presently Sidney would say, 'What do I see?' and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, 'I see the same.' (Dahl 280)

The vision, according to Dibble, lasted the duration of the time he was there, which he calculated to be "over an hour." Earlier in his account he states that he was present during the event "probably two-thirds of the time." Assuming this information is accurate, Dibble would have been present for about sixty minutes, or two-thirds of a ninety-minute vision. Larry E. Dahl concludes that Dibble was probably present during the latter two-thirds of the vision (281).

**Literary Quality of Section 76**

That ninety-minute vision is recorded, in part, as Section 76—a revelation recognizable by virtually any definition as among the most inherently poetic revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. The poetic aspect of the section is acknowledged by several scholars who have examined the Doctrine and Covenants for its literary quality. The vision recorded in this revelation, replete with poetic elements
similar to those that comprise the finest biblical poetry (Nyman 105-6), has been compared to some of the most striking visions in the Bible, including Paul's vision of the glories. Moreover, this section was considered by the Prophet Joseph Smith to be intrinsically poetic enough in its original form to warrant his subsequent transformation of it into the poem discussed in the next chapter. Yet Section 76 has never been explicated as poetry, has never enjoyed the benefit of any sort of literary analysis.

The Prophet himself immediately recognized the revelation's literary excellence:

> That document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world. The sublimity of the ideas; the purity of the language; the scope for action; the continued duration for completion ... are so much beyond the narrow-mindedness of men that every honest man is constrained to exclaim: 'It came from God.' (1: 252-3)

B. H. Roberts, who served as editor of the six-volume Comprehensive History of the Church, thought enough of the revelation to reprint its first ten verses as a footnote to his discussion of the history surrounding its reception (2: 72). Roberts's additional commentary, as an indication of his fondness for the revelation, requires more space on the page than the main text it is footnoting. Preceding the note he
writes: "In evidence of the lofty spirit in which the revelation is pitched, and the sublimity of its style as literature, the opening paragraphs are here reproduced, which may be regarded as the preface to the noble theme in the body of the revelation" (2: 72). Following the reproduction, he offers his appraisal:

Neither the Psalmist nor Isaiah has anything more noble or sublime in their contemplation of God than this; and Paul has nothing superior in all his writings. Neither Joseph Smith nor any of his associates, uninspired of God, were equal to it. There is but one way of accounting for it--it came of the inspiration of God. (2: 72)

John A. Widtsoe similarly admired the language of the revelation--so much that he reproduced the same verses in his book, The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants, as an example of poetry, asking his readers to consider the "thought and expression" (49-50). Alfred Durham includes the first six verses of the revelation in the lyrics of his anthem, "Hear, O Ye Heavens, and Give Ear, O Earth," a hymn that Lyon claims "has won acclaim both within our Church and abroad throughout the land" (204). Steven C. Walker praises Section 76 as "without question the epitome of stylistic accomplishment in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is
preeminent among the revelations both in its stylistic majesty and in its sustained spiritual fervor" (105).

**Biblical Parallels**

There is little doubt that Section 76 is inherently poetic. The question is, how is it poetic? What poetic characteristics does Section 76 possess? Because of the circumstances under which it was produced, and because it contains numerous close textual parallels to biblical passages, Section 76 may have more in common with Hebrew poetry than it does with contemporary poetry. For this reason, analyses in this chapter will examine Section 76 as biblical rather than contemporary poetry, focusing on chiasmic and repetitive structures, parallelism, imagery, and figures of speech—characteristics commonly found in biblical poetry. Treatment of these elements will be based on models and discussions of Hebrew poetry presented in Leland Ryken's 1987 work, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, as well as Richard C. Shipp's thesis, "Conceptual Patterns of Repetition in the Doctrine and Covenants and Their Implications," which organizes certain sections of the Doctrine and Covenants into chiasmic structures commonly found in the Bible.

Excellent treatments of textual parallels between the Doctrine and Covenants and the Bible are Ellis T. Rasmussen's "Textual Parallels to the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of
Commandments as Found in the Bible" and Lois J. Smutz's thesis, "Textual Parallels to the Doctrine and Covenants (Sections 65 to 133) as Found in the Bible," a nearly exhaustive listing of clauses and phrases of the two texts that are similar in diction, syntax, or meaning. These studies are nearly identical in their approach, as Smutz's work is a continuation of Rasmussen's project. Their mutual objective was to determine the number of textual parallels that exist between the two texts, the closeness of resemblance between the parallel passages, the locations in the texts where parallels occur most frequently, and the purposes served by these textual parallels.

Both authors point out that the term "textual parallel" is a vague description requiring definition when discussing their studies. Generally, a textual parallel is a "phrase or clause . . . similar in construction and meaning (or construction and meaning only) to [another] phrase or clause" (Smutz 3). But portions of texts can parallel each other to varying degrees, depending on diction, syntax, context, and phrase length, for example. To improve accuracy, Rasmussen created a code by which to determine how and to what extent certain scriptural phrases or clauses paralleled each other (3-4). In the final computations, he classified parallels into five groups: verbatim groups, slightly changed groups, considerably changed groups, parallels in wording only, and parallels in meaning only (5). Smutz used the same classifications in her study.
Both Rasmussen and Smutz reach similar conclusions: "There is much correlation and continuity in the setting forth of gospel doctrine, laws, prophecy, and eschatological material as contained in the Bible and Doctrine and Covenants" (Smutz 255). There are "genuine relationships in terms of subjects treated as well as language employed" (Rasmussen 352). Rasmussen finds that examination of key words in about five thousand word groups yielded about 2 parallels out of every five examined, for a total of 2,123 found in the [first] 64 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Nine of the sections have 2 or more parallels per verse; 38 of them have from 1 to 2 per verse; 17 have less than 1. The range of frequency is from .33 per verse to 5.00 per verse; the median is about 1.30. (310)

Smutz found a total of 2,663 parallels. "Eighteen of the sections have two or more parallels per verse, thirty-two have between one and two parallels; eighteen have less than one. The range of parallels per verse varies from a ratio of .11 per verse to 11.1. The median is 1.33" (194).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>No. Par.</th>
<th>Range (Freq./Verse)</th>
<th>Med. Freq.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rasmussen</td>
<td>1-64</td>
<td>2,123</td>
<td>.33 - 5.00</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smutz</td>
<td>65-133</td>
<td>2,663</td>
<td>.11 - 11.1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Parallels in Sections 1-132 | 4,786

Median Frequency of Parallels per Verse | 1.315
Total Sections with 2+ Parallels per Verse | 27
Total Sections with 1-2 Parallels per Verse | 70
Total Sections with 0-1 Parallels per Verse | 35

If these figures are correct, then there are nearly 4800 identifiable textual parallels between the Doctrine and Covenants and the Bible. And Rasmussen admits that his method did not produce an exhaustive list (352)—by extension, neither did Smutz. Within the Doctrine and Covenants there are at least 97 sections whose verses contain at least one textual parallel to the Bible. Smutz adds that 62% of the verses in the latter half of the Doctrine and Covenants contain two or more parallels (254).

The analysis in this chapter is based on the premise that Section 76 has a great deal to do with biblical poetry; therefore, the results of Smutz's analysis of Section 76 become significant:
Total Number of Parallels in Section 76 256
Total Number of Old Testament Parallels 60
Total Number of New Testament Parallels 196
Ratio (Old Testament to New Testament) 1:3.3

Books in the Old Testament with the most parallels to Section 76 include (in descending order) Isaiah, Psalms, and Genesis. Twelve other books had fewer parallels. Books in the New Testament with the most parallels include (in descending order) 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, Revelation, Matthew, and John. Thirteen other books had fewer parallels. The higher proportion of New Testament parallels is consistent with the ratios found throughout the Doctrine and Covenants by both authors (Smutz 225, Rasmussen 342).

Number of New Parallels in Section 76 143
Ratio of New Parallels per Verse 1.20
Verbatim Parallels in Section 76 14

Smutz's calculations indicate, after factoring in Rasmussen's, that the section containing the greatest number of both new and verbatim parallels is Section 76 (254). Verbatim parallels, as defined by both Rasmussen and Smutz, have the "same words, used in same arrangement, and connote the same general meaning in both sources" (Smutz 3). The high number is due, in part, to references to 1 Corinthians 15:40-41, in which Paul discusses the degrees of glory. New
parallels, by their definition, are those which are located for the first time in a given revelation (194). These studies clearly demonstrate that the Doctrine and Covenants parallels the Bible to a considerable degree. These parallels underlie this chapter's approach to Section 76 as biblical poetry. Section 76, as will be shown, resembles Hebrew poetry to a considerable degree--even though it is composed of many New Testament phrases.

**Structure of Section 76**

Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants relates the vision given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon concerning the degrees of glory: the culmination and completion of the plan of salvation—a plan that was thoughtfully and intelligently conceived, and which is effectively and skillfully managed. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the revelation given and recorded in Section 76 is a reflection of the perfection of the plan, just as the plan is a reflection of the perfection of the designer.

Structurally, Section 76 consists of a series of six visions: a vision of Jesus Christ, a vision of Satan, a vision of the sons of perdition, then visions of the inheritors of the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms. The section is outlined below, with corresponding verses in parentheses:
Vision of the Son of God (vv. 1-24)

Praise of God (vv. 1-4)

Rewards of the righteous (vv. 5-10)

Power by which the vision was given (vv. 11-13, 18-19)

Testimony of Christ (vv. 14, 22-24)

John 5:29 (vv. 15-17)

Vision of Christ and worshipping angels (vv. 20-21)

Vision of Satan (vv. 25-29)

Satan's authority, rebellion, and expulsion

(vv. 25, 27-29)

Satan's other names defined (v. 26)

Vision of the sons of perdition (vv. 30-49)

Definitions and consequences (vv. 30-38)

How the resurrection is made possible through Christ

(vv. 39-43)

Punishment of the wicked (v. 44)

Limitations concerning the understanding of their
punishment (vv. 45-49)

Vision of the celestial kingdom and its inhabitants

(vv. 50-70)

Definition of the resurrection of the just, and
qualifications for attaining celestial glory (vv. 50-53)

Rewards for celestial beings (vv. 54-70)
Vision of the terrestrial kingdom and its inhabitants (vv. 71-80)

Definition of terrestrial beings, and qualifications for attaining terrestrial glory (vv. 71-75, 79)
Rewards for terrestrial beings (vv. 76-78)
End of the vision noted (v. 80)

Vision of the telestial kingdom and its inhabitants (vv. 81-88)

Definition of telestial beings, and qualifications for attaining telestial glory (vv. 81-85)
Reward for telestial beings (v. 86)
Description of the order of ministration (vv. 87-88)

Summary of the vision (vv. 89-113)

Description of the glory of the telestial kingdom (vv. 89-90)
Terrestrial kingdom compared (vv. 91, 97)
Additional information concerning the celestial kingdom (vv. 92-96)
Additional information concerning the telestial kingdom (vv. 98-106, 109-112)
End of the vision noted (v. 113)
Conclusion (vv. 114-119)

Praises to the Lord (vv. 114, 119)

Limitations concerning the understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom (vv. 115-118)

At first glance, the ordering of Section 76 seems somewhat loose. It is not obviously climactic or emphatic, with events that are least important described first, and those that are most important follow for impact. If this were the case, one would expect a sequence such as this:

vision of Satan =>
vision of the sons of perdition =>
vision of the telestial kingdom =>
vision of the terrestrial kingdom =>
vision of the celestial kingdom =>
vision of the Son

Neither is the structure obviously chronological, where events occur according to a time sequence--a technique commonly used in narrative writing. Using the chronological ordering of the resurrection, for example, would yield this order:

vision of the Son =>
vision of the celestial kingdom =>
vision of the terrestrial kingdom =>
vision of the telestial kingdom =>
vision of the sons of perdition =>
vision of Satan (who will not, of course, be
resurrected)

Upon closer inspection, however, there may be a clear
order after all. Monte Nyman in studying the structure of
Section 76 makes this observation:

In this revelation, the sons of perdition are
treated first and then the celestial, terrestrial,
and telestial kingdoms. There may be purpose for
this order. The sons of perdition had known and
experienced the principles of exaltation necessary
for the celestial kingdom and had rejected them,
choosing to follow Satan. Therefore, laws designed
for exalting God's children will result in one's
becoming a son of perdition if he meets the
requirements for exaltation and then commits the
unpardonable sin. This concept is supported by
there being a definition of the gospel (see verses
40-43) inserted within the description of the
vision concerning the sons of perdition. (110)

This interpretation adds a sense of order to the
sequence of the visions. That the vision of the sons of
perdition is described after the vision of the Son makes
sense because some of them—those who became sons of perdition in mortality—came close to exaltation. The first vision in Section 76 is that of an exalted being, the third, of those who came close. The vision of Satan, placed second, before the vision of the sons of perdition, also makes sense using Nyman’s approach. Consider Satan’s other name, Lucifer, which means "torch-bearer," or "bringer of light." "He was a 'son of the morning,' which could either mean 'son of light' or an early-born spirit child of our Father in the pre-earth life. Obviously he had great capacity and promise and influence" (Dahl 284). It is reasonable to assume that at the height of his power and authority, Satan also knew the principles of exaltation. He had, after all, beheld the exalted and glorified state of the Father, and has not forgotten what pre-earth conditions were like. The sequence of Section 76 makes sense in terms of acquired and potential exaltation:

vision of the Son =>
vision of Satan =>
vision of the sons of perdition =>
vision of the celestial kingdom =>
vision of the terrestrial kingdom =>
vision of the telestial kingdom

Something should also be said in terms of contrast in the sequence. Contrast, for literary effect, is the placing
of opposing elements next to each other for clarity or emphasis. The placing of the visions of Satan and the sons of perdition adds emphasis to the visions of the Son and the celestial kingdom. Described visually, the light appears brighter next to the darkness, similar to the noticeable difference in brilliance between the moon at midnight and at dawn, or the stars as seen from the mountains as opposed to a brightly lit city. This contrast in terms of light versus darkness is visually and symbolically appropriate to Section 76's contrasts of good with evil.

Perhaps the most thorough investigation into the structure of the Doctrine and Covenants is Shipp's work, "Conceptual Patterns of Repetition in the Doctrine and Covenants and Their Implications." Relying on similar studies performed on the Old and New Testaments, Shipp analyzes selected revelations to determine how and to what degree the revelations are structured, and finds that two pattern forms emerge: a simple, or direct, repetitive structure (A, B, C, D, A', B', C', D') and a reverse repetitive structure (A, B, C, D, D', C', B', A'), or a combination of the two. His thesis is that these structures constitute an inherent system of commentary that promotes scriptural understanding through repetition.

Shipp's study of repetitive patterning in the Doctrine and Covenants is valuable. Not only does it further understanding of the text, it also heightens appreciation for the text. Patterns incorporated into language can imply,
among other things, intelligence, harmony, balance, and direction. "All patterns demonstrate the intelligence of creation, and therefore are an evidence of their creators" (Shipp 14).

Chiasmus

Rhythm in poetry is notoriously impossible to translate. For this reason, instead of the usual superficial rhyme and meter repetitions of sound that are characteristic of English poetry, Hebrew poetry relies on conceptual repetition, repetition of ideas, to achieve its rhythm. D. G. Kehl describes the rhythm in Hebrew poetry as "dependent upon an inner pulse rather than upon external rule--ebbing and flowing, and carrying, through its powerful beat, the impelling emotion into the reader's mind" (15). As a result, biblical translators were less concerned about retaining original poetic effect through diction and syntax as the form of the thought itself retained it. "It was this simple, repetitive, rhythmic eloquence--independent of internal word or grammatical structuring--that contributed largely to . . . [Hebrew poetry's] enduring literary greatness" (Shipp 9).

Repetition in English and Hebrew poetry is also distinguishable in another way. In English poetry, repetition is usually found on the level of diction, where words are employed based on the sounds that comprise them, resulting in various rhyme schemes and metrical arrangements.
In Hebrew poetry, however, where repetition occurs at the level of thought, the repetition is syntactic—entire lines are organized into various patterns for emphasis.

That syntactic patterning allows for powerful rhetorical effects. By means of Hebrew parallelism, "patterns of repetition may be constructed within a text to convey additional insights to the reader through clarifications, expansions, definitions . . . by matching areas of text" (Shipp 12-13). In other words, in Hebrew poetry, lines can "rhyme"—concepts can echo or contradict or supplement related lines anywhere in the poem.

One example of this complex patterning is reverse repetition, or chiasmus (also called a "crossing structure" or "ring composition"), which presents a theme or central message through the strategic positioning of text—specifically, a particular line order followed by a subsequent reversal of that order. This poetic pattern, used extensively in biblical texts such as the psalms, has been helpful in revealing central messages within those texts that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Shipp finds many chiasmic structures in Section 76. A few visual examples of the patterns he discovered may be helpful in bringing attention to the structure within the revelation. It should be noted that the identification of repetitive patterns in Hebrew poetry is similar to the identification of rhyme schemes in English poetry, and the marking system used in determining patterns in both forms is
identical, with a letter of the alphabet assigned to either individual rhyming sounds, or, in the case of Hebrew poetry, individual thoughts or concepts. Prime marks are used to indicate repetition. The identification and marking system used by Shipp has been simplified here for simplicity and clarity.

Perhaps the single best illustration of chiasmic patterning occurs, interestingly enough, in the portion of the section that describes the vision of the celestial kingdom, verses 51-53 (placed on the next page for form retention):
And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the morning of the first resurrection of the just--

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

Within these three verses are five pairs of lines that express parallel ideas. Lines A and A' concern two phenomena related to the influence of the Holy Ghost: the gaining of a testimony and the assurance of exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Lines B and B' emphasize belief and faith in Christ's power to save. Lines C and C' treat the third and
fourth principles of the gospel: baptism and the reception of
the gift of the Holy Ghost. Lines D and D’ allude to the
symbolism behind the cleansing ordinances. Lines E and E’--
the central message of this passage--emphasize that these
principles and ordinances are commandments given by God.

The structure of this passage points to that central
theme, focusing the reader in on that doubled injunction to
keep the commandments--the peeling away of outer layers
eventually revealing a central core, seed, or heart. In this
passage, once the center is discovered everything else falls
more clearly into place and makes more sense. In terms of
application, once the commandments are understood and kept,
the ordinances discussed may be performed, and the promises
made regarding salvation and exaltation will be kept.

The sequence of this passage is also noteworthy. Even
though it has been presented as an example of reverse
repetition, simultaneously there is direct progression here:
the hearing of the gospel message leads to the exercising of
faith which in turn leads to repentance leading to baptism by
immersion as a demonstration of obedience to the
commandments. This leads to the reception of the Holy Ghost
by the laying on of hands, leading to faithful endurance to
the end, leading to the overcoming of the world, leading to,
ultimately, exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

The structure in this passage is unified and complete.
It is both linear and circular, regressive and progressive.
It is repetitive without being redundant. And it effectively
summarizes the entire gospel message into three verses containing about one hundred words. Its placement in the vision of the celestial kingdom testifies of that kingdom's order, and echoes its inherent beauty.

A second example of chiasmic patterning in Section 76 climaxes the revelation's closing verses, 114-119. As the conclusion to the revelation, this passage appropriately reiterates the section's main theme or message: the Prophet encourages readers to purify themselves to be worthy of the Spirit. This purification anticipates the promise of exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and of seeing the Savior. Thus what matters most to both the revealer and the recipient of the revelation is stressed by the carefully ordered structure of this climactic chiasmus (also placed on the next page for form retention):
But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion;

Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;

To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.

And to God and the Lamb be glory, and honor, and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Lines A and A' are praises to the Lord. Line A praises his works, and the mysteries of the kingdom, which "surpass all understanding in glory . . . and in dominion." Similarly, line A' ascribes glory and dominion to God and Jesus Christ. Lines B and B' discuss limitations concerning the understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom. These mysteries are only comprehensible by the manifestation of the Spirit. Lines C and C' emphasize God the Father as the giver of the Holy Ghost.
Here again, the sequence is as illuminating as the chiasmus. It is the Savior's atonement that makes purification possible. In turn, purification and a love for God are required before the Spirit can be bestowed by the Father. In turn, the Spirit makes further purification possible so that the Savior and the Father can be seen by man. The patterning is beautifully cyclical, as seen by the subjects of each line: Lord => Spirit => God => humankind => humankind => God => Spirit => Lord. Christ's role in setting the process in motion, then, warrants the praise he receives at both ends of the poem.

The patterns are not limited to individual lines as shown here. Rather there are a number of chiasmic patterns found at all levels of Section 76--and other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants as well. But Section 76 is unique as a "magnificent example of nearly every variety of pattern structuring found with the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants" (Shipp 93).

**Parallelism**

Closely associated with structure in biblical poetry is parallelism, "the verse form in which all biblical poetry is written" (Ryken 180). Unlike modern English poetry with its rhyme and meter, Hebrew poetry depends for its form primarily on parallelism--sentence structure in which two or more lines of similar grammatical form express similar ideas, but with
variations in diction and syntax. Unlike sound repetition, which rarely survives translation, repetition in biblical poetry occurs at the meaning level, and therefore can be translated. Leland Ryken defines parallelism as a "thought couplet"—"thought triplet" when three clauses are used instead of two (181).

An important aspect of parallelism is balance and symmetry, which promote the rhythm within poetic lines. "The parts of a parallel construction in some sense balance each other and set up a rhythm. They require each other to complete the unit of thought" (Ryken 182). In addition to balance and a rhythmic form, parallelism in Hebrew poetry increases a statement's impact by reiterating a message twice, and by resisting advancement of a subsequent idea:

Parallelism focuses attention on a thought and resists immediate shift to another idea. . . . The complimentary parts of a parallel construction reinforce an idea in our consciousness. There can be no doubt that if we read biblical poetry as slowly as it is meant to be read, it is a very affective form of discourse. The meanings sink into our consciousness with great force because of the element of repetition and retardation. The two parts of a parallel construction say more together than either would alone. (184)
Such poetry is typically found in the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel in the Old Testament. But parallelism also exists in the Doctrine and Covenants, definitively for our purposes in Section 76. We may well wonder what ancient Hebrew poetry is doing in this modern volume.

The existence of parallelism in the Bible is usually explained in terms of its beginnings as oral literature: "The very style of the Bible . . . is an oral style" (Ryken 356). Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, on the other hand, was published soon after it was received, in July of 1832, and was not intended to be related orally. Robert Woodford indicates that the Prophet actually discouraged missionaries from relating the account, instructing them for the time being that they were to "remain silent concerning the gathering, the Vision, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants" (932).

Circumstances surrounding the recording of the revelation seem to indicate its written form to have been a matter of concern. The Lord four times commanded the Prophet to write particular portions of the vision (vv. 28, 49, 80, 113), and in verse 115 he is told not to write certain things. In three of the four verses where Joseph Smith is instructed to write, he is commanded to write "while in the Spirit." Exactly how long the Prophet remained "in the Spirit" following the vision, or how soon this revelation was
recorded after its reception is indeterminable. But that the Lord commanded its documentation numerous times suggests some urgency, perhaps to assure its preservation amid the persecution, but perhaps to insure its accuracy as well.

Joseph Smith's experience with Hebrew through his translation efforts with the Bible does not seem to have had much to do with the inclusion of Hebrew poetry in the revelation. The New Testament translation was completed in February of 1833, and the Old Testament translation was finished five months after that--nearly a year and a half after Section 76 was received. Had the Prophet's Hebrew studies begun earlier, these may have had some influence, but the Prophet did not incorporate Hebrew studies into the curriculum of the School of the Prophets until the early months of 1836 (Zucker 46-7).

The clear presence of poetic parallelism in Section 76, despite the impossibility of Hebrew language influence on the Prophet and notwithstanding its definite non-oral status, seems to suggest rhetorical, even aesthetic, purposes for the poetry. The parallelism encourages the comprehension of certain messages, as suggested by the summary of the vision provided in verses 89-113. The parallelism makes the revelation memorable, and enhances the beauty of Section 76.
Synonymous Parallelism

There are four basic types of parallelism found in Hebrew poetry: synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, and climactic. Synonymous or balanced parallelism occurs when two or more consecutive lines, having similar forms in grammar or sentence structure, present the same message. Synonymous parallelism occurs throughout Section 76, but there is an unusual concentration of this form of poetry in verses 1-10:

Great shall be their reward
and eternal shall be their glory. (v. 6)

And their wisdom shall be great,
and their understanding reach to heaven; (v. 9)

and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish,
and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught. (v. 9)

Note how in these instances, as in synonymous parallelism generally, the lines are similar not only in meaning, but in syntax, grammar, and even diction. That many-layered interlocking contributes to subtle—in fact, often subliminal—ramifications of significance, even in the most straightforward verses:
HEAR, O ye heavens,
and give ear, O earth (v. 1)

To "hear" and to "give ear" both relate the same idea. Both lines employ emphatic alliteration and share the oratorical interjection "O," but the real "rhyme" of this couplet is the repetition of the concept: listen up. This is more than simpleminded repetition for the sake of repetition, much more than a kind of divine nagging that tells us exactly the same thing twice because we failed to listen the first time. This synonymous couplet is an expansion of the idea into broader perspectives.

The final line not only picks up poetic resonances but assumes additional meanings—meanings its preceding mate, though it seems to say essentially the same thing, did not include. God's speaking, suggests that second line, is meant to be heard not only in the heavens, where we would expect angels to listen, but on the less attentive earth. And there may be in that "give ear" even more demand of careful listening than in the first line's imperative to "hear." That sort of formal amplification of meaning occurs everywhere synonymous parallelism occurs, however monotonous the repetition may at first sound:
I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious
unto those who fear me,
and delight to honor those who serve me
in righteousness and in truth unto the end. (v. 5)

Fearing the Lord and righteously serving him, both forms of demonstrating respect, are clearly synonymous. The Lord is similarly synonymous in return, honoring the respectful and being "merciful and gracious" to them. The message here of mutual respect is obvious enough. But it may be less obvious how emphatically the mutuality of that reciprocal respect gets underlined by the unanimity of the parallel concepts within their parallel syntactic forms.

**Antithetic and Synthetic Parallelism**

A second type of parallelism, antithetic or contrastive parallelism, has a second line that reiterates the message of the first in an opposing manner:

let no man glory in man,
but rather let him glory in God (v. 61)

Though the first line here is negative, the second positive, antithetic parallelism usually works the other way around. Either way, it works dramatically. Note in this instance how the play upon "man" and "man" and "him" heightens the
contrast of the shift to "God," lifting us out of our usual mortal view into a transcendent perspective. In such a subtly poetic context, even the "let" of the first clause becomes something more in the second, adding to the negative senses of "forbid" or "refuse" the positive dimensions of "invite" or "provide opportunity" the second time around.

A third type of parallelism is synthetic or growing parallelism. In this type of poem subsequent lines complete or expand or advance the thought of the first line. Together they form a thought that would be semantically different were one of the lines removed. As Ryken observes, "To call this parallelism is something of a misnomer, since strictly speaking nothing in the second line parallels the first. But these units are obviously thought couplets in which the two lines together form a unit, as in the other types of parallelism" (182). Consider a Section 76 example:

For the Lord is God,
and beside him there is no Savior. (v. 1)

In this pair, the second line expands on the definition offered in the first. Not only is the Lord God; he is also Savior, and the only Savior. This type of parallelistic poem is different from synonymous parallelism not so much in kind as in degree, expanding the natural tendency of parallelism to complicate meaning through repetition to the point that
subsequent lines seem more a progression from the original line than a repetition of it.

From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail. (v. 4)

The second line extends those discrete eternities into an infinity of years: God is changeless; better yet, he is always there.

**Climactic Parallelism**

The final form of parallelism is climactic parallelism, a collection of short, repetitive phrases that lead to a climax of some kind--the climaxes in these examples are italicized. Though the pattern is sometimes difficult to detect because of statements intervening between the repeated elements (the interventions are omitted here for ease in perceiving the pattern), Section 76 thrives on this pattern:

Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame. These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone (vv. 35-6)
That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

That through him all might be saved (vv. 41-2)

Wherefore, he saves all except them--they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity . . .

And the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows;

Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man (vv. 44, 45-6)

And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.
Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, 
even the sons of God— (vv. 57-8)

And the glory of the celestial is one, 
even as the glory of the sun is one. 
And the glory of the terrestrial is one, 
even as the glory of the moon is one. 
And the glory of the telestial is one, 
even as the glory of the stars is one; 
for as one star differs from another star in glory, 
even so differs one from another in glory
in the telestial world;
For these are they who 
are of Paul, 
and of Apollos, 
and of Cephas.
These are they who say they 
are some of one 
and some of another 
—some of Christ 
and some of John, 
and some of Moses, 
and some of Elias, 
and some of Esaias, 
and some of Isaiah, 
and some of Enoch;
But received not the gospel,
neither the testimony of Jesus,
neither the prophets,
neither the everlasting covenant. (vv. 96-101)

Word Motifs

In addition to the larger syntactic patterns of parallelism and chiasmus, the Doctrine and Covenants includes considerable repetitive patterning of individual words. Section 76 features dozens of words that are repeated throughout the revelation, often incrementally, with accumulation of meaning from each additional echo.

There is, for example, an abundance of references throughout the revelation to the senses. Fifteen words relate to hearing and listening—"hear," "ear," "voice." Thirty-five words concern sight—repetitions of "eye," "seen," "saw," "vision," "beheld." That stress on perception seems thoroughly appropriate in this "vision," and a vision intent on raising reader perceptions to transcendent levels.

Those word motifs subliminally stress the most important matters in the revelation, creating patterns indicating significant themes. References to the Father and the Son, for example, collectively total ninety-six. This means that eighty percent of the verses in Section 76 include such references. The name "Jesus Christ" alone is mentioned fifty-one times—an average of almost one reference every other verse.
Figures of Speech

Section 76 features poetic elements beyond formal repetition. Perhaps the single most important characteristic of the revelation's poetry is the use of figurative language, the "intentional departure from the normal order, construction, or meaning of words to gain strength and freshness of expression, to create a pictorial effect, to describe by analogy, or to discover and illustrate similarities in otherwise dissimilar things" (Holman and Harmon 202). The poetic texture of Section 76 is enriched by figures of speech ranging from antithesis to apostrophe, from hyperbole to irony, from metaphor to personification.

Most common in the Doctrine and Covenants, as in the Bible, are similes and metaphors, forms of comparison which "establish a correspondence between two phenomena . . . secur[ing] an effect on one level and ask[ing] us to transfer that meaning to another level" (Ryken 166). A simile is an explicit comparison of two objects which often uses the words "like" or "as" to suggest that comparison. A metaphor, on the other hand, is an implicit comparison of two objects, a more direct assertion that one thing is another. Similes thus tend to refer to a single characteristic common to the objects described, while metaphors are likelier to touch upon multiple characteristics shared.

Metaphors and similes, like other figures of speech, permit poets to invite reader participation, placing the
burden of discovery and connection on the readers, thereby making them active rather than passive contributors to the reading process:

Because metaphor and simile are distinctive ways of speaking, they achieve freshness of expression and overcome the cliché effect of ordinary discourse. Metaphor and simile possess arresting strangeness that both captures a reader's initial attention and makes a statement memorable. They also have another built-in tendency that accords well with a lyric poet's intention: they force a reader to ponder or meditate on a statement. They contain a retarding element that resists immediate assimilation. (Ryken 168)

The heavy reliance on figurative language in Section 76 reveals much about the intentions of the author. Given the newness of this revelation's message, even to the Prophet and Rigdon, and the subsequent difficulty many of the Saints had in understanding and accepting it, the extensive use of metaphor and simile in the section, with the tendency of those figures of speech to "force a reader to ponder or meditate on a statement," may have helped readers assimilate the doctrine of multiple heavens.

And it was a challenge to assimilate. Robert Woodford notes that Section 76, while taken at face value today, was a
"departure from the common thought in Joseph's day, and so revolutionary to the accepted Christian concept of life after death, that many members of the Church were hesitant or even opposed to accept this vision as truth" (929). In his "Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," Woodford provides verification of this struggle among Church members, even such stalwarts as Brigham Young: "After all, my traditions were such, that when the Vision came first to me, it was so directly contrary and opposed to my former education, I said, wait a little; I did not reject it, but I could not understand it" (929).

We can catch a glimpse of the difficulty in absorbing this shockingly new perspective of the heavens from Philo Dibble's picture of the expression on Sidney Rigdon's face as he heard the news the first time: "Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked, smilingly, 'Sidney is not as used to it as I am'" (Woodford 927).

The use of figurative language in Section 76 may have helped, and may still be helping, readers become "used to it" in the Prophet's terms. Metaphor and simile in this revelation is effective in bringing the heavens closer to earth, within the mental grasp of readers. These figures of speech may help to reduce interference between divine communication and mortal reception, to make the unimaginable imaginable, the unfathomable fathomable. George Caird
observes that "comparison is one of our most valuable sources of knowledge, the main road leading from the known to the unknown. It comprises . . . almost all the language of theology" (144).

Section 76's numerous similes are almost exclusively comparisons among the kingdoms themselves or comparisons to astronomical objects:

And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one. And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one. And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; (vv. 96-8)

It is interesting to compare verses 71 and 78, which describe the terrestrial kingdom, and verse 81, which describes the telestial kingdom, to verse 70: "These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical." Each of the earlier verses uses a simile to compare their glories to their respective astronomical objects, but verse 70, which describes the celestial kingdom, employs a metaphor, "whose glory is that of the sun," in addition to a simile. The
ultimacy of things celestial is further suggested poetically in that the celestial is the only comparison where there may be some potential word play on "sun," as in "Son," also the "glory of God."

The similes in this revelation, while repetitive, are still highly successful, as telling and memorable as Paul's similes were to the Corinthians. These comparisons make the most of familiarity and accessibility, consistency and orderliness, simplicity and beauty. The comparisons are constantly present, able to be brought immediately to mind at any time, day or night—all the reader has to do is look upward into a clear sky. All objects used in the comparison are unmistakably related as heavenly orbs, yet they are distinct in their radiance, testifying of an established pattern or order designed by a intelligent Creator.

**Doctrine and Covenants Adaptations of Figures of Speech**

Other figures of speech are more original to Section 76. Notice, for example, the unique use of a kind of synesthesia in verse 19, with its imaginative application of the sense of touch to the function of thought:

> And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they
were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about.

The metaphor in this passage works beautifully on a number of levels. First, the touch suggests a gesture of love, the image of physical contact reinforcing the intimacy of the Lord's spiritual closeness. Second, that the Lord touched their eyes intimates that he had to reach out to them, extend his arms, hands, and fingers toward Joseph and Sidney. Finally, this image of intimate closeness recalls the historical Jesus by mirroring the manner in which Jesus healed the blind during his mortal ministry: When the two blind men begged of Jesus, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened," Jesus, very much as in this situation, "had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him" (Matthew 20:32-4). Thus the entire episode works as a buried metaphor suggesting a curative eye opening for those to whom the vision is given, and for us for whom it is given. Like the entire revelation of which it is a part, this synesthetic moment offers us the gift of seeing.

As effective as this metaphor is, the metaphoric illumination of Section 76 may be at its best not so much in creating new images as in enlivening old ones. Observe, for example, how the revelation handles the ancient symbol of Satan as serpent:
And while we were yet in the Spirit, the Lord commanded us that we should write the vision; for we beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—(v. 28)

Satan imaged as serpent is so familiar a metaphor as to approach scriptural cliché. Here the author plays upon that familiarity by pushing it to an extreme which renews the image for us: Satan in Section 76 is an "old" serpent, one who has been around a long time, longer than we would have liked. In addition to refreshing the numerous associations built up scripturally between a serpent and the devil, the added "old" connotes a devil who is frighteningly wise through long experience, threateningly imposing (old snakes get dangerously huge), and very, very tiring to us—an old story we have heard too many times. This image is not new; Revelation 12:9 also has an "old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." But in this poetic context the image is powerfully renewing.

That kind of renewing of symbolic cliché is frequent in Section 76. "Vessels" as an image of people is a common biblical metaphor, but the slant it receives in the Doctrine and Covenants tends to enliven the image, to revive its original energy:
For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity; (v. 33)

A vessel is a hollow container whose sole function is to be filled. The awful thing about this Doctrine and Covenants vessel image is that it conveys not only a sense of the ongoing interminable wrath of the sons of perdition, but that of the Lord--filled to the brim with their own anger, they will find little comfort in discovering their personal wrath has brought down upon them the wrath of God. Several passages in the Bible use the word "vessel" to describe people, collectively and individually, as easily broken or destroyed (Psalms 31:12, Jeremiah 19:11, Revelation 2:27). The closest parallel verse is Romans 9:22: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." All that accumulated poetic wrath in such fragile vessels suggests for the sons of perdition a very precarious position in the eternities.

Section 76 makes equally imaginative use of other figures of speech. Observe how deftly, for example, Section 76 uses what may be the hoariest of poetic devices, apostrophe. Verse 1 is a clear instance of the apostrophic mode--speaking to someone or something absent, invisible, or not ordinarily spoken to--an oratorical stance none too popular among us modern readers: "Hear, O ye heavens, and
give ear, *O earth*, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior." But the Doctrine and Covenants energizes this figure of speech by turning it directly on its head: In Section 76 that absent audience is present. Though the form is apostrophic, the statement is literal.

That such multivalent readings of Doctrine and Covenants metaphor are implicit in the text and not merely read in by modern readers is made clear by another Section 76 poem:

Wherefore, he saves all except them--they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment. (v. 44)

By revelation, the Lord himself interprets the metaphor presented here and in verse 105. Stating in Section 19 that the central terms "endless and eternal" have suffered misinterpretation, the Lord declares: "I will explain unto you this mystery. . . . For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore, Eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment" (vv. 8, 10-12). What was originally punishment described in terms of time, is now described in terms of the giver of the
punishment. The metaphor was permitted to operate "that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men" (v. 7) — clearly, for sons of perdition, God's punishment will seem very long indeed.

**Understatement and Overstatement**

As strong as these poetic images are in isolation, they are stronger in the context of Section 76. Often an image or set of images gets repeated with accumulating force, in a crescendo of metaphor:

These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God. (v. 79)

A crown is not in itself a particularly forceful image—its associations with coronation are so commonplace as to be banal. Nor does this image force itself upon our imaginations; this metonymy, with its technique of substituting an associated word, works by way of hint, almost by misdirection—the image is quietly understated. But the decibel level of images of kingliness is very loud indeed by the time Section 76 has added another "crown" in verse 108, "thrones" in verses 21, 92, 93, 108, and 110, and explicit mention of "kingdom" in verses 7, 28, 79, 107, and 114.
That understatement accumulating to persuasive force is typical of the rhetorical strategy of Section 76. Hyperbole, as Ryken points out, appears frequently in biblical statements (177). Section 76, by contrast, seldom indulges in hyperbole, perhaps only in the "lake of fire and brimstone" of verse 36, and the "innumerable" of verses 67 and 109. And the restraint of exaggeration in even these instances is readily apparent in that in both cases literality rather than symbolism could be argued. The literary style of the Doctrine and Covenants is exemplified by Section 76. Its poetic richness is a little like Teddy Roosevelt's presidential style: It speaks softly and carries a big message.
Chapter 3

THE POETIC VERSION OF SECTION 76

Overview

This final chapter will analyze ways Section 76's poetic dimensions are illuminated by "The Vision," a poetic version of Section 76 attributed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. It will include a line-by-line comparison of the scriptural and poetic versions, with an emphasis on the identification of textual differences between the two. Since much of the poetic version of Section 76 quotes the revelation verbatim, and the arrangement of ideas is nearly identical in both versions, this chapter will attempt to determine to what extent the poem parallels the revelation. It will also examine variations in content between the two texts, exploring whatever literary implications those differences may suggest. Since the poetic version so closely parallels the revelation, comparing the two may reveal insights into the poetry of Section 76.

"Vade Mecum"

In the fall of 1842, Joseph Smith went into hiding to avoid arrest as a purported accessory in the attempted murder of former Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs. Under the
protection of newly-elected Illinois governor Thomas Ford, the Prophet was eventually released from the custody of the Circuit Court of the United States District of Illinois by Judge Nathaniel Pope, because of a faulty requisition and warrant. The Prophet returned to Nauvoo in January 1843. As part of the city festivities celebrating his return, William W. Phelps, who was serving as a clerk for Joseph Smith, presented the Prophet with his poem "Vade Mecum":

Go with me, will you go to the saints that have died,—
To the next, better world, where the righteous reside;
Where the angels and spirits in harmony be
In the joys of a vast paradise? Go with me.

Go with me where the truth and the virtues prevail;
Where the union is one, and the years never fail;
Not a heart can conceive, nor a nat'ral eye see
What the Lord has prepar'd for the just.
Go with me.

Go with me where there is no destruction or war;
Neither tyrants, or sland'rors, or nations ajar;
Where the system is perfect, and happiness free,
And the life is eternal with God. Go with me.
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Neither tyrants, or sland'rs, or nations ajar;
Where the system is perfect, and happiness free,
And the life is eternal with God. Go with me.
Go with me, will you go to the mansions above,
Where the bliss, and the knowledge,
the light, and the love,
And the glory of God do eternally be?--
Death, the wages of sin, is not there. Go with me.

Phelps's poem, whose Latin title translates "Go with Me," is poetically interesting. Its prosody is competent. The poem's four-quatrain structure immediately stresses order and balance, as does the consistency of its anapestic tetrameter metrics--four quatrains of four lines, four feet to the line. That orderliness is emphasized by the regularity of the rhymed couplets and by the framing repetition of "Go with me" at the beginning and end of every stanza, a reiteration that focuses the entire poem on Phelps's lyric theme: longing for the Prophet's accompaniment to heaven.

Phelps's poem echoes Section 76: its ideas strongly parallel the revelation. The parallels become explicit in at least two places. The phrase "years never fail" comes directly from verse four of the revelation: "From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail." And the phrase "nor a nat'ral eye see" resembles verse ten: "yea, even those things which eye has not seen."

"Go with Me" is dated January 1843, one month shy of the tenth anniversary of the reception of Section 76. The February 1, 1843, issue of Times and Seasons, the Church's
official publication at the time, printed Phelps's poem under the heading "From W. W. Phelps to Joseph Smith: the Prophet." Below Phelps's poem is a response in the form of another, much lengthier poem, whose heading reads: "The Answer. To W. W. Phelps, Esq." This poem is entitled, in direct reference to Section 76, "A Vision."

Below the 312-line poem appears the name Joseph Smith, and its date of composition is given only as February 1843, even though the paper's date is February 1, 1843. The Prophet's entry in History of the Church suggests an earlier composition date: "In reply to W. W. Phelps's Vade Mecum, or "Go with me," of 20th of January last, I dictated an answer" (5:288). Richard N. Holzapfel, in a recent article concerning the poem, notes that "this date was chosen as the day of composition . . . [and is] the same day Phelps gave Joseph his poem" (160). These dates leave a gap of twelve or thirteen days between the reception of Phelps's poem and the printing of the Prophet's response. Whether the poem was completed or signed the same day the paper was printed, or the paper was simply antedated is virtually impossible to determine. These details are important, however, as there is some question concerning the authorship of this poem. In addition to the Prophet, another likely candidate is William W. Phelps.

In the Prophet's favor are four factors: his name is attached to the poem, and his entry in History of the Church states that he "dictated an answer" (a phrase which is open
to interpretation). Furthermore, as Holzapfel notes, *Times and Seasons* editor John Taylor seems to accept Joseph Smith as the author (judging from his introduction to the poem), and the first line of the eleventh stanza employs the first-person singular pronoun form: "I, Joseph, the prophet" (142), as do other lines.

On the other hand, Phelps wrote the catalyst poem, dedicated to the Prophet, in a nearly identical form. He was in Nauvoo at the time "A Vision" was written, serving as the Prophet's clerk. As such, Phelps wrote numerous essays concerning Church doctrine, and even gathered and prepared the Prophet's revelations for publication as the Doctrine and Covenants (Van Orden 85). Phelps's calling in the Church, as stated in Sections 55, 57, 67, and 70 had to do with printing Church materials, writing Church books, and publishing the Book of Commandments. He began writing a history of the Church in 1842, and continued writing under the direction of Willard Richards through 1844 (Van Orden 86-7). And by the time the poem was written, Phelps was an accomplished poet, having written dozens of poems and hymns.

Richard Cracroft and Neal Lambert, in their book *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints*, assert that Phelps is the likely author, based on "close textual comparisons," but offer no evidence (184). Perhaps a more plausible explanation, however, is that the two collaborated on the poem, with Joseph Smith providing the raw material, and William Phelps polishing it into poetic form. In this
way, the two could take advantage of each other's strengths. It was customary for the Prophet to request the assistance of others in the production of written materials, as Holzapfel observes:

Joseph often depended upon others to produce material under his direction. At one time, he may have simply asked someone to compose an item for him; at another time he may have given someone the main ideas; in other instances, he was involved heavily in the final literary creation. . . . Many of the editorials in the *Times and Seasons* were not Joseph's own words. . . . The Prophet indicated that only those editorials 'having my signature' were those for which he was personally responsible. (142)

Ideally, a thorough word analysis, such as a wordprint study, would likely provide more conclusive data. "A Vision" could be compared to Phelps's other poetic works, for example, to look for patterns in form, diction, syntax, style, or grammar. Comparing the poem to the Prophet's prose writings would be ineffective, of course, because of the dramatic differences in form between prose and poetry. The Prophet's revelation concerning the degrees of glory is the only text to which the poem can be compared.
The Other Poem

Joseph Smith apparently wrote poetry on one other occasion. Cracroft and Lambert write that "A Vision" is the only extant poem written by the Prophet (184). But Dean C. Jessee, in his work *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, includes a short poem, penned in Joseph Smith's handwriting, to a young woman named Barbara Matilda, who had, along with her parents, met the Prophet in Nauvoo. "During this visit, while staying in the Mansion House between May 8 and 13, 1844, twenty-two-year-old Barbara . . . collected autographs from prominent Nauvoo citizens. Among those who wrote in her book were William W. Phelps and Joseph Smith" (575-6).

Phelps poem is presented first, followed by the Prophet's:

To Miss B[arbara] M[atilda] Neff

Two things will beautify a youth
That is: Let virtue decorate the truth
and so you know; every little helps
yours--W. W. Phelps
The truth and virtue both are good
When rightly understood
But Charity is better Miss
That takes us home to bliss
and so forthwith
Remember Joseph Smith

On page 577 of his text, Jessee includes a photograph of the page on which these lines appear. Both the handwriting and the signatures appear to be those of the respective authors. These two short poems were written more than a year after the publication of "Go with Me" and "A Vision," and there are some interesting similarities concerning the composition of the two pairs of poems. In both cases, Phelps initiates the sequence, and the Prophet follows suit. The poems are similar in form and content. For example, the poems here consist of rhyming couplets which extol the virtues of young womanhood, and employ the iamb as the metrical foot (although in varying numbers of feet per line). "Go with Me" and "A Vision" also use the same meter, and are similar in theme and content. Unfortunately, neither of Matilda's poems is long enough to make further comparisons to "A Vision."
Comparison of "A Vision" and Section 76

Traditionally, the poetic version of Section 76 has been used primarily to examine and interpret the doctrine of the revelation. But the poem may prove valuable for reasons other than doctrinal interpretation. The following comparison of "A Vision" (reproduced here as it originally appeared in *Times and Seasons*) with the revelation itself will focus on textual differences between the scriptural and poetic versions of Section 76, emphasizing textual deletions, additions, or rearrangements. Variations in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or mechanics will not be highlighted. While it could be argued that editorial changes such as these have as much impact on meaning as the textual changes, they are too numerous to comment on within the scope of this project. Differences in word usage are set off in *boldface* type. Numbers in the left margin correspond to versification in Section 76. Lines from the poem that correspond to the revelation appear below the verses, and are *italicized*. To aid in the comparison, verses from the revelation are occasionally combined to fit the lines of poem, and vice versa.

A brief commentary, noting interesting or significant variations, is offered following the linear comparison. Again, emphasis is placed only on the textual differences. Nuances in meaning and doctrinal interpretations are largely avoided here.
I will go, I will go, to the home of the Saints,
Where the virtue's the value, and life the reward;
But before I return to my former estate
I must fulfil the mission I had from the Lord.

1 HEAR, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior.

Wherefore, hear, O ye heavens, and give ear O ye earth; And rejoice ye inhabitants, truly again;
For the Lord he is God, and his life never ends,
And besides him there ne'er was a Saviour of men.

2 Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and the extent of his doings none can find out.

His ways are a wonder; his wisdom is great;
The extent of his doings, there's none can unveil;

3 His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand.

His purposes fail not;
4 From **eternity to eternity** he is the same, and his years never fail.

*from age unto age*

He *still* is the same, and his years never fail.

*His throne is the heavens, his life-time is all*

*Of eternity now, and eternity then;*

*His union is power, and none stays his hand,—*

*The Alpha, Omega, for ever: Amen.*

5 For thus saith the Lord--I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

*For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,*

*I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those*

*That fear me, and live for the life that's to come;*

*My delight is to honor the saints with repose;*

*That serve me in righteousness true to the end;*

6 Great **shall be** their reward and eternal **shall be** their glory.

*Eternal's their glory, and great their reward;*
7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them,--
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd--

From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth.
And for ages to come unto them will I show
My pleasure & will, what the kingdom will do:

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.

Great things of the future I'll show unto them,
Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.
For their wisdom and glory shall be very great,
And their pure understanding extend to the skies:

And before them the wisdom of wise men shall cease,
And the nice understanding of prudent ones fail!

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my
power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will-
-yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear
heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

For the light of my spirit shall light mine elect,
And the truth is so mighty 'twill ever prevail.

And the secrets and plans of my will I'll reveal;
The sanctified pleasures when earth is renew'd;
What the eye hath not seen, nor the ear hath yet heard;
Nor the heart of the natural man ever hath view'd.

11 We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in
the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February, in the
year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and
thirty-two--

I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,
12 By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God—

And the eyes of the inner man truly did see Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,

13 Even those things which were from the beginning before the world was, which were ordained of the Father, through his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning;

Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be. Those things which the Father ordained of old, Before the world was, or a system had run,— Through Jesus the Maker and Savior of all; The only begotten (Messiah) his son.

14 Of whom we bear record; and the record which we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision.

Of whom I bear record, as all prophets have, And the record I bear is the fulness,—yea, even The truth of the gospel of Jesus—the Christ, With whom I convers'd, in the vision of heav'n.
15 For while we were doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty-ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given unto us as follows--

For while in the act of translating his word,
Which the Lord in his grace had appointed to me,
I came to the gospel recorded by John,
Chapter fifth, and the twenty ninth verse, which you'll see.

Which was given as follows:

16 Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, concerning those who shall hear the voice of the Son of Man:

"Speaking of the resurrection of the dead,--
"Concerning those who shall hear the voice of
"the son of man--

17 And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust.

"And shall come forth:--
"They who have done good in the resurrection
"of the just.
"And they who have done evil in the resurrection of the unjust."

18 Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.

I marvel'd at these resurrections, indeed!
For it came unto me by the spirit direct:--

19 And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understanding and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about.

And while I did meditate what it all meant,
The Lord touch'd the eyes of my own intellect:--

Hosanna for ever! They open'd anon,
And the glory of God shone around where I was;

20 And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness;

And there was the Son, at the Father's right hand,
In a fulness of glory, and holy applause.
21 And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshipping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever.

I beheld round the throne, holy angels and hosts,
And sanctified beings from worlds that have been,
In holiness worshipping God and the Lamb,
Forever and ever, amen and amen!

22 And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

And now after all of the proofs made of him,
By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,
This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea he lives!

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the only Begotten of the Father--

And sits at the right hand of God, on his throne.

And I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav'n,
He's the Saviour and only begotten of God--
That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made, 
Even all that career in the heavens so broad,

Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last, 
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours; 
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons, 
By the very same truths, and the very same pow'r.

And this we saw also, and bear record, that an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father, was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son,

And I saw and bear record of warfare in heav'n; 
For an angel of light, in authority great, 
Rebell'd against Jesus, and sought for his pow'r, 
But was thrust down to woe from his Godified state.

And was called Perdition, for the heavens wept over him--he was Lucifer, a son of the morning.
And the heavens all wept, and the tears drop'd like dew, That Lucifer, son of the morning had fell!

27 And we beheld, and lo, he is fallen! is fallen, even a son of the morning!

Yea, is fallen! is fall'n, and become, Oh, alas! The son of Perdition; the devil of hell!

28 And while we were yet in the Spirit, the Lord commanded us that we should write the vision; for we beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ--

And while I was yet in the spirit of truth, The commandment was: write ye the vision all out; For Satan, old serpent,

29 Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about. the devil's for war,-- And yet will encompass the saints round about.
And we saw a vision of the sufferings of those with whom he made war and overcame, for thus came the voice of the Lord unto us:

And I saw, too, the suffering and misery of those,
(Overcome by the devil, in warfare and fight,)
In hell-fire and vengeance, the doom of the damn'd;
For the Lord said, the vision is further: so write.

Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power--

For thus saith the Lord, now concerning all those who know of my power and partake of the same;
And suffer themselves, that they be overcome
By the power of Satan; despising my name:

Defying my power, and denying the truth;--

They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;
They are they--of the world, or of men, most forlorn,
The Sons of Perdition, of whom, ah! I say,
'T were better for them had they never been born!

33 For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;

They're the vessels of wrath, and dishonour to God,
Doom'd to suffer his wrath, in the regions of woe,
Through all the terrific night of eternity's round,
With the devil and all of his angels below.

34 Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come--

Of whom it is said, no forgiveness is giv'n,
In this world, alas! nor the world that's to come;

35 Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame.

For they have deny'd the spirit of God,
After having receiv'd it: and mis'ry's their doom.

And denying the only begotten of God,--
And crucify him to themselves, as they do,
And openly put him to shame in their flesh,
By gospel they cannot repentance renew.

36 These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire
and brimstone, with the devil and his angels—

They are they, who must go to the great lake of fire,
Which burneth with brimstone, yet never consumes,
And dwell with the devil, and angels of his,
While eternity goes and eternity comes.

37 And the only ones on whom the second death shall
have any power;

These are they, who must groan through the great second
death,

38 Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed
in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his
wrath.

And are not redeemed in the time of the Lord;

39 For all the rest shall be brought forth by the
resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the
glory of the Lamb, who was slain, who was in the bosom
of the Father before the worlds were made.
While all the rest are, through the triumph of Christ,  
Made partakers of grace, by the power of his word.

The myst'ry of Godliness truly is great;--  
The past, and the present, and what is to be;

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

And this is the gospel--glad tidings to all,  
Which the voice from the heavens bore record to me:

41-46 That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be  
crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the  
world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from  
all unrighteousness; That through him all might be saved  
whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;  
Who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his  
hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son  
after the Father has revealed him. Wherefore, he saves  
all except them--they shall go away into everlasting  
punishment, which is endless punishment, which is  
 eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels  
in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not  
quenched, which is their torment--And the end thereof,  
neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man  
knows; Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will
be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof;

That he came to the world in the middle of time,
To lay down his life for his friends and his foes,
And bear away sin as a mission of love;
And sanctify earth for a blessed repose.

'Tis decreed that he'll save all the work of his hands,
And sanctify them by his own precious blood;
And purify earth for the Sabbath of rest,
By the agent of fire, as it was by the flood.

The Savior will save all his Father did give,
Even all that he gave in the regions abroad,
Save the Sons of Perdition: They're lost; ever lost,
And can never return to the presence of God.

They are they, who must reign with the devil in hell,
In eternity now, and eternity then,
Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd;--
And the punishment still is eternal. Amen.

And which is the torment apostates receive,
But the end, or the place where the torment began,
Save to them who are made to partake of the same,
Was never, nor will be, revealed unto man.
47 Nevertheless, I, the Lord, show it by vision unto many, but straightway shut it up again;

Yet God, by a vision, shows a glimpse of their fate, And straightway he closes the scene that was shown;

48 Wherefore, the end, the width, the height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except those who are ordained unto this condemnation.

So the width, or the depth, or the misery thereof, Save to those that partake, is forever unknown.

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

And while I was pondering, the vision was closed; And the voice said to me, write the vision: for lo! 'Tis the end of the scene of the sufferings of those, Who remain filthy still in their anguish and woe.

50 And again we bear record—-for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just——
And again I bear record of heavenly things,
Where virtue's the value, above all that is pric'd,
Of the truth of the gospel concerning the just,
That rise in the first resurrection of Christ.

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

Who receiv'd, and believ'd, and repented likewise, And then were baptiz'd, as a man always was, Who ask'd and receiv'd a remission of sin, And honored the kingdom by keeping its laws.

Being buried in water, as Jesus had been,

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

And keeping the whole of his holy commands, They received the gift of the spirit of truth, By the ordinance truly of laying on hands.
53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

For these overcome, by their faith and their works,
Being tried in their life-time, as purified gold,
And seal'd by the spirit of promise to life,
By men called of God, as was Aaron of old.

54 And they are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

They are they, of the church of the firstborn of God,--

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things--

And unto whose hands he committeth all things;
For they hold the keys of the kingdom of heav'n,

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

And reign with the Savior, as priests, and as kings.

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.
They're priests of the order of Melchisedek,
Like Jesus, (from whom is this highest reward,)
Receiving a fulness of glory and light;

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God--

As written: They're Gods; even sons of the Lord.

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

So all things are theirs; yea, of life, or of death;
Yea, whether things now, or to come, all are theirs,
And they are the Savior's, and he is the Lord's,

60 And they shall overcome all things.

Having overcome all, as eternity's heirs.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

'Tis wisdom that man never glory in man,
But give God the glory for all that he hath;
For the righteous will walk in the presence of God,
While the wicked are trod under foot in his wrath.

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

Yea, the righteous shall dwell in the presence of God,
And of Jesus, forever, from earth's second birth--

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

For when he comes down in the splendor of heav'n,
All these he'll bring with him to reign on the earth.

64-65 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection. These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

These are they that arise in their bodies of flesh,
When the trump of the first resurrection shall sound;

66-67 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are they who have come to an
innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

These are they that come up to Mount Zion, in life, Where the blessings and gifts of the spirit abound.

These are they that have come to the heavenly place; To the numberless courses of angels above: To the city of God, e'en the holiest of all, And the home of the blessed, the fountain of love;

To the church of old Enoch, and of the firstborn: And gen'ral assembly of the ancient renown'd,

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

Whose names are all kept in the archives of heav'n, As chosen and faithful, and fit to be crown'd.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

These are they that are perfect through Jesus' own blood,
70 **These are they** whose bodies **are** celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.

*Whose bodies celestial are mention'd by Paul,*

*Where the sun is the typical glory thereof,*

*And God, and his Christ, are the true judge of all.*

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

*Again, I beheld the terrestrial world,*

*In the order and glory of Jesus, go on;*

*’Twas not as the church of the firstborn of God,*

*But shone in its place, as the moon to the sun.*

72 **Behold, these are they** who died without law;

*Behold, these are they that have died without law;*

*The heathen of ages that never had hope,*

*And those of the region and shadow of death,*

*The spirits in prison, that light has brought up.*
73 And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh;

To spirits in prison the Savior once preach'd,
And taught them the gospel, with powers afresh;
And then were the living baptiz'd for their dead,
That they might be judg'd as if men in the flesh.

74-80 Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it. These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness. These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father. Wherefore, they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun. These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God. And now this is the end of the vision which we saw of the terrestrial, that the Lord commanded us to write while we were yet in the Spirit.

These are they that are hon'rable men of the earth;
Who were blinded and dup'd by the cunning of men;
They receiv'd not the truth of the Savior at first;
But did, when they heard it in prison, again.

Not valiant for truth, they obtain'd not the crown,
But are of that glory that's typ'd by the moon:
They are they, that come into the presence of Christ,
But not to the fulness of God, on his throne.

81-82 And again, we saw the glory of the telestial,
which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon in the firmament. These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus.

Again I beheld the telestial, as third,
The lesser, or starry world, next in its place,
For the leaven must leaven three measures of meal,
And every knee bow that is subject to grace.

These are they that receiv'd not the gospel of Christ,
Or evidence, either, that he ever was;
As the stars are all diff'rent in glory and light,
So differs the glory of these by the laws.

83 These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit.
These are they that deny not the spirit of God,

84-85 These are they who are thrust down to hell. These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.

But are thrust down to hell, with the devil, for sins, As hypocrites, liars, whoremongers, and thieves, And stay 'till the last resurrection begins.

'Till the Lamb shall have finish'd the work he begun; Shall have trodden the winepress in fury alone. And overcome all by the pow'r of his might: He conquers to conquer, and save all his own.

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

These are they that receive not a fulness of light, From Christ, in eternity's world, where they are,
The terrestrial sends them the Comforter, though;
And ministr'ing angels, to happify there.
And so the telestial is minister'd to,
By ministers from the terrestrial one,
As terrestrial is, from the celestial throne;
And the great, greater, greatest, seem's stars, moon, and sun.

89 And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding;

And thus I beheld, in the vision of heav'n,
The telestial glory, dominion and bliss,
Surpassing the great understanding of men,--

90 And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it.

Unknown, save reveal'd, in a world vain as this.

91 And thus we saw the glory of the terrestrial which excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory, and in power, and in might, and in dominion.

And lo! I beheld the terrestrial, too,
Which excels the telestial in glory and light,
In splendour and knowledge, and wisdom, and joy,
In blessings, and graces, dominion and might.

92 And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things--where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

I beheld the celestial, in glory sublime;
Which is the most excellent kingdom that is,—
Where God, e'en the Father, in harmony reigns;
Almighty, supreme, and eternal, in bliss.

93-95 Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever. They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and his grace; And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.

Where the church of the firstborn in union reside,
And they see as they're seen, and they know as they're known,
Being equal in power, dominion and might,
With a fulness of glory and grace, round his throne.
96 And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.
The glory celestial is one like the sun;

97 And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one.
The glory terrestrial is one like the moon;

98 And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world;
The glory telestial is one like the stars,
And all harmonize like the parts of a tune.

As the stars are all different in lustre and size,
So the telestial region, is mingled in bliss;
From the least unto greatest, and greatest to least,
The reward is exactly as promis'd in this.

99-100 For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another--some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch;
These are they that came out for Apollos and Paul; 
For Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;

For Enoch and Moses, and Peter and John; 
For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.

101 But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of 
Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting 
covenant.

For they never received the gospel of Christ, 
Nor the prophetic spirit that came from the Lord; 
Nor the covenant neither, which Jacob once had; 
They went their own way, and they have their reward.

102 Last of all, these all are they who will not be 
gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church 
of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud.

By the order of God, last of all, these are they, 
That will not be gather'd with saints here below, 
To be caught up to Jesus, and meet in the cloud:-- 
In darkness they worshipp'd; to darkness they go.

103 These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and 
adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and 
makes a lie.
These are they that are sinful, the wicked at large,  
That glutted their passion by meanness or worth;  
All liars, adulterers, sorc'rors, and proud;

104 These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth.

And suffer, as promis'd, God's wrath on the earth.

105-108 These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fulness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work; When he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the winepress alone, even the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. Then shall he be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign forever and ever.

These are they that must suffer the vengeance of hell,  
'Till Christ shall have trodden all enemies down,  
And perfected his work, in the fulness of time,  
And is crowned on his throne with his glorious crown.

109 But behold, and lo, we saw the glory and the inhabitants of the telestial world, that they were as
innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore;

The vast multitude of the telestial world--
As the stars of the skies, or the sands of the sea;--

110 And heard the voice of the Lord saying: These all shall bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess to him who sits upon the throne forever and ever;

The voice of Jehovah echo'd far and wide,
Ev'ry tongue shall confess, and they all bow the knee.

111-112 For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared; And they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end.

Ev'ry man shall be judg'd by the works of his life, And receive a reward in the mansions prepar'd; For his judgments are just, and his works never end, As his prophets and servants have always declar'd.

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

But the great things of God, which he show’d unto me,
Unlawful to utter, I dare not declare;
They surpass all the wisdom and greatness of men,
And are only seen, as has Paul, where they are.

I will go, I will go, while the secret of life,
Is blooming in heaven, and blasting in hell;
Is leaving on earth, and abudding in space:--
I will go, I will go, with you, brother, farewell.
Evaluation of "A Vision"

John Taylor, as editor of the Times and Seasons, wrote an introduction to "A Vision," entitled "Ancient Poetry." He compares it to poetry found in the Old Testament, but in a somewhat mixed review. On the positive side, he praises the poem as "both novel and interesting . . . dignified and exalted," written in a style that exhibits a "native simplicity, a brilliance of thought, and an originality of composition" (81). While he is generous in his praise of the poem, Taylor does raise a couple of mild criticisms. He comments that in the poem "the common landmarks of modern poetry are entirely disregarded," but cushions that hesitation between additional comments of praise.

His other negative reaction to the poem is even more qualified. Taylor discusses the poetry of ancient prophets who "paid little or no attention to the rules of poetic composition," but whose poetry nevertheless excels because they "were moved by the Holy Ghost, whose influence ensured a "a richness[,] a dignity and a brilliancy of ideas; and an exuberance of thought that ran through all their productions" (81). By extension, Taylor evaluates Joseph's poem similarly: it succeeds much more than it fails. The poem's disregard for standard convention, a relatively minor flaw, may not be a flaw at all in Taylor's estimation. To the person who has seen the "glories of the eternal world," the "dry forms and simple jingling of rhyme alone" will seem
"insipid" (81). If the poem is as literarily valuable as Taylor thought it to be, comparison with its original, Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, could be illuminating.

Contrary to Taylor's assessment, however, "A Vision" adheres to many standard poetic conventions. Like Phelps's poetically successful "Go with Me", "A Vision" is likewise arranged in quatrains, and has a metrical foot pattern of anapestic tetrameter. In the first line of the second quatrain, "Wherefore, hear 0 ye heavens, and give ear 0 ye earth," the stress falls on the words "hear," "heavens," "ear," and "earth"--the two verbs and the two nouns of the line. As a pair, "hear" and "heavens" is alliterative, that is, initial consonant sounds are the same. The pair "ear" and "earth" constitute assonance (which occurs when initial vowel sounds are the same). Each pair of words is also strongly similar in spelling. More importantly, however, the structure and the syntax of this line combine to reiterate the message of the prologue of the revelation.

The rhyme scheme of "A Vision" is A B C B' throughout, that is, only the second and fourth lines employ end rhyme--a slight variation from the scheme of "Go with Me." The refrain, "Go with me," has been replaced with "I will go," repeated six times--twice in the beginning stanza and four times in the concluding stanza--and emphasizes the Prophet's willingness to accompany Phelps, hence, his "answer." Whereas Phelps's poem echoes Section 76 in only two places,
"A Vision" echoes the entire section, often quoting it verbatim. And while the content of "Go with Me" hints at the doctrines presented in the revelation, the Prophet's poem recasts virtually every significant concept in Section 76. Larry Dahl considers the Prophet's piece a "poetic rephrasing of D&C 76, with some interpretive commentary" (294).

**Parallels Between the Two Texts**

The connections of "A Vision" with Section 76 extend from the title through every line. The poem runs into seventy-eight quatrains. Excluding the first and last stanzas, a frame responding to Phelps's poem, leaves exactly seventy-six stanzas--an intriguingly appropriate number, even if the revelation now known as Section 76 was formerly known as Section 91 in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

It is obvious that the poem relies a great deal on the revelation. The structure is the same; the ordering of the visions in the poem follows the same sequence found in the revelation. Only minor deviations in arrangement are found between the verses of the revelation and the lines of the poem--notably in vv. 41-6, 64-7, 74-88, 105-8, and 111-9, and their corresponding stanzas.

The poem and the revelation are nearly the same length: Section 76 consists of approximately 2,880 words, while "A Vision" consists of approximately 2,750: a difference of
roughly 130 words. Including the introductory and concluding stanzas, however, narrows the gap even more—to a mere 50 words.) Of the words comprising the poem, nearly 1,300 of them are found in the revelation, either as individual words standing alone or as phrases. The poem, then, quotes the revelation approximately 46% of the time.

The extent of shared wording between the poem and the revelation is striking—nearly 100 phrases from the revelation appear in the poem. The poetic version has some of these phrases slightly rearranged, but most of them are identical. And they are crucial phrases, such central statements as:

hear O ye heavens, and give ear O earth
he is the same, and his years never fail
external's their glory and great their reward
worshipping God and the Lamb, for ever and ever
Lucifer, son of the morning, is fallen! is fallen!
defying my power, and denying the truth
which the voice [of] the heavens bore record
where the worm dieth not,
and the fire is not quenched
the width, the depth, the misery thereof
who received, and believed, and were baptized
[those] he'll bring with him to reign on the earth
to the church of Enoch, and of the first-born
these are they [who] are perfect
through Jesus' own blood
behold, these are they that died without law
that they might be judged men in the flesh
these are they are [who are]
honorable men of the earth
these are they who received not
the gospel of Christ
and they see as they're seen,
and know as they're known
and suffer as promised, God's wrath on the earth
these are they [who] suffer the vengeance of hell
[until] Christ shall have trodden all enemies down
crowned on his throne with his glorious crown
every tongue shall confess and all bow the knee
but the great things of God,
which he showed unto [us]

This heavy dependence on the revelation for wording—so extensive as to qualify as plagiarism by modern standards—says something for the poetic nature of Section 76. With only minor adjustments, these phrases have been made into lines of poetry. Many of them are inherently rhythmic, even prosodic. On the principle that imitation is the highest form of flattery, the deliberate borrowing from the revelation is convincing evidence that Section 76 is poetic. Apparently, it was considered intrinsically poetic enough in its original form to warrant Joseph Smith's and/or W. W.
Phelps's subsequent transformation of it into a poem with a little alteration.

**Differences Between "A Vision" and Section 76**

But there are differences between the two texts, and the differences can be illuminating. For example, there is in the poem a disproportionate amount of material dedicated to the first half the revelation—the poem seems to emphasize the most startling visions more than their comparatively tamer counterparts. Of the 76 stanzas which directly parallel the revelation, 46 of them, or 61%, parallel the first 50% of the revelation. The remaining 30 stanzas, or 39%, parallel the last 50% of the revelation. Three-fifths of the poem, therefore, is dedicated to the visions concerning the Son, Satan, sons of perdition, and the celestial kingdom; two-fifths of the poem recounts the visions of the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, the summary, and conclusion.

Besides that difference in structural emphasis, there is one characteristic in the poetic version which is altogether absent from the scriptural version, one which may lead some to favor the style of the section over that of the poem. The poetic version employs numerous contractions. Contractions are used in the poem for maintaining meter and rhythm, and they are one way the poet condenses text—certain letters are strategically removed to reduce the number of syllables
comprising the word. In "A Vision" many contractions are used this way: diff' rent, e'en, ev' ry, gen' ral, hon' rable, minist' ring, mis' ries, myst' ry, ne' er, suff' ring. The omission of letters reduces the number of syllables comprising the word, insuring that the meter is maintained.

But more often than not, the poem contains contractions that seem unnecessary to conform to meter: ask'd, baptiz'd, convers'd, deny'd, drop'd, echo'd, finish'd, gather'd, heav'n, judg'd, marvel'd, obtain'd, preach'd, quench'd, rebell'd, touch'd, view'd, worshipp'd--and about twenty others. Functionally useless, these contractions might have been added for variety or consistency, but they ultimately detract from the poem's beauty rather than enhance it. No contractions are found in the revelation.

There is a significant grammatical distinction between the two versions--the use of the personal pronoun. In stanza 11, the first person plural form we, used exclusively in the revelation, becomes the first person singular form I in the poem. This alteration, in which the composer seemingly disregards Rigdon's participation in the vision and becomes the sole receiver, continues throughout the poem; not once does the poem employ we. According to the poem, the Prophet is the only mortal to have seen the vision recorded as Section 76.

This referential mishap may serve as evidence of Phelps's involvement in the writing of the poem. Bruce Van Orden notes that "Phelps was so used to representing Joseph
[as his clerk] that he employed his favorite literary device, poetry, to promote the Prophet's image" (90). Phelps may be attempting this by listing the Prophet as the sole receiver of the vision. And it seems unlikely that the Prophet would think to exclude Rigdon, who fulfilled the law of witnesses by seeing the vision himself.

There are in addition some noteworthy differences in diction between the two versions. Generally the poem's changes are clear comedowns from the revelation, as in the addition of "happify" in stanza 62. In a more typical example, the third stanza of the poem, which corresponds to the fourth verse of the revelation, inserts the phrase "age unto age" in place of "eternity to eternity." While the monosyllabic "age" fits the meter, it connotes a limit, a finite period of time, whereas the word "eternity" implies an inclusiveness of time without beginning or end.

Often the relative effectiveness of the revelation's diction vis-a-vis the poem's diction is more subtle. In stanza four of the poetic version the addition of "now" to the first "eternity" places God in a "present" eternity, or the eternity in which we now exist. But "eternity then" can refer to either a "past" eternity or a "future" eternity, or even both, depending on how it is read. The scriptural version, "from eternity to eternity," is more effective in suggesting one unbroken stretch ranging across all time, from one end of the chronological continuum to the other.
The poem emphasizes neither Jesus Christ nor God the Father to the same extent as the revelation. Nor does it focus on their relationship as much as the revelation. One of the most endearing moments in the revelation is the description of Christ "in the bosom of the Father" as mentioned in verses 13, 25, and 39. Through these verses, the revelation emphasizes the emotional and spiritual closeness of the relationship between the Father and the Son, the Son being in the immediate intimate presence of the Father. This descriptive image is not included in the poem.

In a similar vein, verse 53 highlights the Father's role in sealing blessings via the Holy Ghost, while the poem's corresponding stanza highlights man's involvement in the process. God is not referred to, except as the one who calls a man to perform the ordinance. In other words, the revelation is God-centered, the poem man-centered. That emphasis is seen graphically in that references to deity are more abundant in the revelation than they are in the poem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference to Deity</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savio(u)r</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firstborn</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A final distinction: the poem repeats less than the revelation. That could make the revelation more redundant, but it might make it more educational. Important repetitive forms are missing in the poem. For example, the phrase "having denied," used in an instance of climactic parallelism describing the qualifications for becoming a son of perdition (vv. 35-6), is absent in the poem. The Lord's use of multiple adjectives to describe his punishment (vv. 44-6) are likewise omitted, as is the phrase "after the order of," used in emphasizing the authority of the Melchizedek priesthood (vv. 57-8). If one purpose of Section 76 is to instruct through repetition, then the revelation serves that end better than does the poem.

Conclusion

"Oh, Lord," the Prophet lamented in 1832, "deliver us in due time from the little, narrow prison, almost as it were, total darkness of paper, pen, and ink;--and a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language" (1: 299). Section 76, with its impressive literary credentials, may in some measure represent that delivery from the imperfectness of language.

The purpose of this thesis is to promote recognition of the Doctrine and Covenants as profound literature by exposing its rich literary content. It is meant to encourage further literary and religious studies of the Doctrine and Covenants,
and to foster a greater appreciation for scripture through literary explication. It is hoped that this literary analysis of Section 76 will result in the examination of other sections. Other types of literary analysis could further add to this formalist approach.

With literary studies of the Doctrine and Covenants "the field is white already to harvest" (D&C 4:4). It is the author's desire that this project will promote the growth of scholarship in the field of literary scriptural studies--a field that needs only a little attention in order to flourish.
Works Cited


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Section 76 as Literature in the Doctrine and Covenants

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ABSTRACT

This project attempts to demonstrate the value of literary approaches to the Doctrine and Covenants, using a predominantly formalistic approach. To establish a foundation, the first chapter discusses the rich literary content of the Doctrine and Covenants, providing examples of the various literary genres represented in it, such as narrative, saga, parable, and poetry. The second chapter presents portions of Section 76 that contain features characteristic of Hebrew poetry, such as figures of speech and parallelism. The third chapter analyzes ways in which Section 76's poetic dimensions are illuminated by "The Vision," a 312-line poem attributed to Joseph Smith. The poetic version closely parallels the revelation, and reveals insights into the poetic quality of Section 76. This study includes a line-by-line comparison of both the scriptural and poetic versions, and notes both textual similarities and differences between them.

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