

## Chapter 17

# DOCTRINAL EXPONENT, 1831–1836

*W*. W. Phelps not only assisted Joseph Smith in a major way with the Book of Abraham, but he also was one of the Prophet's greatest and most effective doctrinal advocates. This chapter will summarize Phelps's efforts to promote Mormon doctrines during the period since his joining the church in 1831 and up to his departure from Kirtland in April 1836.<sup>1</sup>

Phelps did more to chart the church's doctrinal course from 1830 to 1836 than any other figure except Joseph Smith Jr.,<sup>2</sup> Oliver Cowdery,<sup>3</sup> and Sidney Rigdon.<sup>4</sup> Cowdery and Rigdon were with the Prophet early on and were noted interpreters of the gospel through their preaching and writings. Both were also involved with Smith in various revelations, visions, heavenly visitations, and efforts to revise biblical scripture. Phelps was closely connected with each of these three men, and he too propounded the teachings of the newly found faith far and wide.

No single person, not even the Prophet Joseph Smith, desired to effect an authoritative systematization of doctrine and theology in the early church. Historian Gary James Bergera observed, "One of the distinguishing features of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the near absence of formal creeds or statements of doctrine."<sup>5</sup> As Joseph Smith explained, "The Latter-day Saints have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time."<sup>6</sup> Historian Leonard Arrington added that among nineteenth-century Mormons were "many men with many minds," each capable of contributing to the ever-expanding body of Mormon theology.<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Smith biographer Richard Lyman Bushman suggested that the Prophet's authority with doctrine relied almost entirely on "the revelations" and "the revealed commandments." Bushman asserted, "Having the word of God at his back gave [Joseph Smith] enormous confidence." Smith had spokesmen, of course. Referring to two of

Joseph's best and brightest followers, Bushman wrote, "He recognized Sidney Rigdon's talent, but Rigdon never assumed the Prophet's authority. The imaginative newspaper editor William W. Phelps, a potential rival for intellectual leadership, published the Church newspaper under Joseph's direction."<sup>8</sup>

Despite his experience, intellectual capacity, and age compared to Joseph Smith, Phelps did not prove to be a rival of Joseph. Instead he was content to consecrate his core literary talents to the printing arm of the church for several decades. In so doing, Phelps contributed immensely to the understanding of the doctrines of Mormonism in those early years. He had no greater desire than to promulgate revelations from God both in ancient and modern times, and he was especially thrilled to teach the Latter-day Saints newly discovered truths revealed through the Prophet.

### "PRINTER UNTO THE CHURCH"

Beginning in 1832, Phelps strived to do God's will as the duly called "printer unto the church" (D&C 57:11). As has been noted, he had experience as a printer and writer, having learned the trade as a printer's apprentice in his youth. Since the end of the War of 1812, he had worked nearly continuously as a printer and newspaper writer. He had also been the editor of three newspapers.

As Smith came to trust Phelps as a member of his team of closest advisers, he placed him in a number of highly responsible positions that utilized his experience and leadership abilities. After the brethren identified the land of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, a new revelation called Phelps to be "a printer unto the church" and charged him as follows: "And lo, if the world receive his writings—behold here is wisdom—let him obtain whatsoever he can obtain in righteousness, for the good of the saints."<sup>9</sup>

Because Phelps knew the printing trade like no other in the church, he was assigned to purchase a press and equipment in Cincinnati with church funds. He trained others in the printer's craft. In Independence he taught Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer the ins and outs of the trade, as well as youthful apprentices. Cowdery and Whitmer in their own right went on to become editors of church publications in Kirtland. During Phelps's eleven-month sojourn in Kirtland from 1835 to 1836, he trained other men and young apprentices to be printers.

Before they even began putting out *The Evening and the Morning Star* in 1832, Phelps, Cowdery, and Whitmer sought subscriptions for the paper. Most member households in Missouri and Ohio subscribed. Importantly, many missionaries took copies of the paper with them. Phelps enjoined these elders to gain subscriptions to the *Star*.<sup>10</sup> This publication was the only source most members had for the revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Many "disciples," as Phelps called church members, also did not possess personal copies of the Book of Mormon, so the *Star* provided them the opportunity to read from that sacred text as well.

Many members, such as William E. McLellin, used the *Star* in missionary service. In August 1832, McLellin included a copy of the *Star* in a letter to his relatives in their quest

for truth. As he went about his proselytizing, McLellin promoted the reading of the *Star* and the purchase of subscriptions to the paper.<sup>11</sup>

Phelps regularly published reports from numerous missionaries throughout the United States and rejoiced in the success of their efforts. Seymour Brunson wrote that Luke Johnson and he had “witnessed several instances of the Lord’s healing power” and that they baptized fifty-three souls and created a “church” in the community of Windsor, Ohio. Interestingly, Brunson noted, “The Evening and the Morning Star is doing much good here. Please send me two more papers.”<sup>12</sup> Nathaniel Holmes, an elder laboring in Massachusetts, wrote, “Brother Phelps, Feeling a desire for the prosperity of Zion, and for an increase of knowledge in the great things, which the Lord is doing in these last days, I have obtained the number of subscribers, for the Star, (herein inclosed) for the next volume. I am your brother in the new covenant.”<sup>13</sup> Other elders also reported obtaining subscriptions to the *Star*.

## PUBLISHING JOSEPH SMITH’S REVELATIONS

Nothing was highlighted more significantly in *The Evening and the Morning Star* than divine revelations received by the Prophet. Editors of *The Joseph Smith Papers* observe, “Over the course of the *Star*’s fourteen-month run in Missouri, the paper printed nineteen full and seven partial revelation texts.”<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, in the first number of the *Star*, Phelps ran on the first two pages two important revelations: “The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ” and “A Prophecy Given to the Church of Christ, March 7, 1831.”<sup>15</sup> The first corresponds to the present-day Doctrine and Covenants sections 20 and 22. The latter is D&C 45:1–67, 71. Then in subsequent months he published the full text of what are now D&C 1, 27, 29, 38, 46, 49, 50, 61, 65, 72, 76, 83, 133, and a revised version of 20. He published texts of revelations presently corresponding to portions of D&C 42 (two different portions received on separate occasions), 43, 63, and 88 (two different portions on two separate occasions).<sup>16</sup>

Phelps admonished his readers in the third number of the *Star* to “search the revelations which we publish, and ask your heavenly Father, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to his glory, nothing doubting, he will answer you by the power of his Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> In February 1833 he pronounced, “The commandments of the Lord [revelations to Smith] are sacred, and above the inventions of men.”<sup>18</sup> Editors of *The Joseph Smith Papers* observe that “Phelps and other Latter-day Saints found great comfort—even great joy—in the continuation of God’s interaction with man.”<sup>19</sup>

The *Star*’s second issue highlighted the entire text of what Phelps called the “Vision,” experienced by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon the previous February (presently D&C 76). Phelps noted, “The ‘Vision,’ which appears on the second page, is the greatest news that was ever published to man. It shows the economy of God, in preparing mansions for men: Blessed be the name of the Lord.”<sup>20</sup>

Phelps, Cowdery, and Whitmer promised readers of the *Star* that a compilation of Joseph Smith’s revelations was soon to be published. They even used the typeset versions

of some Book of Commandments texts as sources when printing revelations for the *Star*. The brethren thought that this significant volume, the Book of Commandments, would be available by late summer 1833. Of course, in this they were thwarted by enemies of the church who destroyed the printing office and most of the page proofs on July 20.<sup>21</sup>

## PROMOTING THE BOOK OF MORMON

Phelps not only wanted to print Smith's revelations in the *Star*, but he also decided to print extracts from the Book of Mormon as well. Passages from the Book of Mormon appeared in each of the first fourteen numbers of the newspaper. Most were lengthy quotations, while some were merely a verse or two. For example, in February 1833 Phelps inserted long quotations from present-day 3 Nephi 8, Alma 13, Alma 34, and 1 Nephi 13 and shorter quotations from Helaman 3, Alma 35, and 3 Nephi 12. In January 1833 Phelps penned a lengthy, expert article explaining the background to the entire Book of Mormon, wherein he outlined information about the various plates and the purpose of the book and noted that Old Testament prophecies found in Ezekiel 37, Psalm 85, and Isaiah 29 are fulfilled in the book. He also showed how the Book of Mormon comes to the aid of the Bible:

That vail which had been cast over the prophecies of the old Testament, or, at least, over the reading of many of them, since the day that Moses veiled his face before the children of Israel, was removed by the plainness of the book of Mormon. The doubtful points of doctrine, in the bible, which left one sect to immerse for baptism; a second to sprinkle; a third to pour, and a fourth to do without either, were cleared up by the book of Mormon. That embarrassment under which thousands had labored for years, to learn how the saints would know where to gather, that all nations might come to Zion, with songs of everlasting joy, and prepare a house, that the Lord might suddenly come to his temple, so that the mountain of the Lord's house might be established in the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and the law go forth out of Zion, in the last days, was obviated by the book of Mormon.<sup>22</sup>

In June 1833 Phelps even decided to start publishing the Book of Mormon in total in the pages of *The Evening and the Morning Star* and included the first chapter as it appeared in 1830. This corresponds to 1 Nephi 1–3 in today's edition. He did this to help readers everywhere, including those investigating Mormonism, to “compare the book of Mormon with the bible, and witness the great doings of the Lord in these last days, in bringing forth his everlasting covenant for the gathering of his elect, and the restoration of the tribes, and scattered remnants of Israel from the four quarters of the earth.”<sup>23</sup> In the next issue, July 1833, Phelps conceded that it would be “superfluous” to continue publishing the Book of Mormon serially because his office had plans to print the Book of Mormon and “the Testament” (Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible) in one volume.<sup>24</sup>

## SEEKING ZION

Phelps truly exulted again and again in the pages of his newspaper about what he called the “Prophecy of Enoch” (corresponding basically to Moses 5–7 presently in the Pearl of Great Price).<sup>25</sup> He loved the teachings of Enoch about Zion and how Zion was being replicated in preparation for the second coming of the Savior. Time and again he referred to Enoch. Phelps drew from a hymn originally written by John Newton, majorly “corrected” it regarding Enoch and Zion, and published it in his first issue of the *Star*:

Glorious things of thee are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He whose word cannot be broken,  
Chose thee for his own abode:

On the Rock of Enoch founded;  
What can shake thy sure repose?  
With Salvation’s walls surrounded,  
Thou may’st smile on all thy foes.

.....

Bless’d inhabitants of Zion,  
Purchas’d with the Savior’s blood!  
Jesus whom their souls rely on,  
Makes them kings and priests to God.

While in love his people raises,  
With himself to reign as kings;  
All as priests, his solemn praises,  
Each for a thank-offering brings.<sup>26</sup>

Establishing Zion was of prime importance in Phelps’s writings in the *Star*. In July 1833 he wrote, “No one that believes in the revelations of the Lord, can, or will deny the gathering of the saints to holy places, in the last days.”<sup>27</sup> Phelps emphasized four forms of gathering to Zion. First was the gathering of righteous Saints to the land of Zion in western Missouri, where they would live harmoniously together striving to keep all the commandments of God. Second was the gathering of Lamanite remnants from the “tribe of Joseph,” whom he basically identified as the Indians of North America (later he included all native tribes in the Western Hemisphere). The Indians would come to be near Zion and then would help build the New Jerusalem. Third was the return of the lost ten tribes from lands of the north to their inheritance. Fourth was the return of the Jews to the land of their inheritance in Palestine, as that region was known in the 1830s. This would be their Jerusalem, their Zion, and would correspond to the New Jerusalem and the latter-day Zion headquartered in Jackson County.

## GATHERING OF RIGHTEOUS SAINTS

In his writings, Phelps identified the gathering spot for the latter-day Zion to be in what he and others called “the far west,” that area in western Missouri that included Jackson County and was also in the center of the North American continent.<sup>28</sup> He enthusiastically exclaimed:

When we consider that the land of Missouri is the land where the saints of the living God are to be gathered together and sanctified for the second coming of the Lord Jesus, we cannot help exclaiming with the prophet, O land be glad! and O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord: For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.<sup>29</sup>

Phelps repeatedly urged “the disciples in Zion” to be pure in heart, to keep all the commandments of God, and to give an example to the world by doing so.<sup>30</sup> Thus they would prove worthy to be part of the heavenly Zion.

## GATHERING OF THE INDIANS, “THE REMNANT OF JOSEPH”

Phelps frequently brought forward his ideas regarding the gathering of the seed of Joseph as represented by the American Indians. He believed that the gathering of Indians was under the supervision of God himself. The gathering was simultaneous to the arrival of the Saints in western Missouri. Strikingly, Phelps insisted that the Indian Removal Act of 1830 promoted by President Andrew Jackson was the means of doing God's will.<sup>31</sup> All Indian tribes were at that very moment being moved to lands owned by the United States but west of the existing states of Missouri and Arkansas. These places were in present-day Kansas and Oklahoma. That these locations were so near the land of Zion in Missouri, he believed, was according to God's providence. Phelps gladly stated:

It is not only gratifying, but almost marvelous, to witness the gathering of the Indians. The work has been going on for some time, and these remnants of Joseph gather by hundreds and settle west of the Missouri, and Arkansas. And is not this scripture fulfilling: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, through the instrumentality of the government of the United States? For it is written, Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.<sup>32</sup>

Regularly, Phelps informed his readers of the latest removal of specific Indian tribes to nearby locations. The larger Cherokee nation from the southern United States would likely be the last to gather, he figured. Phelps also knew that many Indian tribes were

beyond the Rocky Mountains and that they, in God's good time, would also be gathered in. The same would be true, he surmised, for all native peoples in the Western Hemisphere, all of whom in his estimation were descended from Book of Mormon peoples.

## GATHERING OF THE TEN TRIBES AND THE JEWS

The next gathering of note to connect with the Second Coming was that of the ten tribes. Phelps figured that since they were the first to be scattered, they would be the last to be gathered. He utilized multiple passages from Deuteronomy, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Ezra in the Old Testament and from present-day Jacob 5 and 3 Nephi 15 and 16 in the Book of Mormon to make his case. Phelps conceded that he didn't know where the ten tribes were lost, but he hypothesized that it might be somewhere near the North Pole because that region had not yet been explored by man. After all, the lost tribes went northward and would be called from the north to go back to their lands of inheritance. They would come back with great rejoicing when the voice of the Lord called them.<sup>33</sup>

The final gathering would be that of the Jews. "The assembling of the Jews at Jerusalem," wrote Phelps in January 1833, is one of "the signs of the times" taking place right at that moment.<sup>34</sup> Often Phelps inserted news reports that he received through the mail that showed an increasing interest of many European Jews to remove to Jerusalem. (This interest was in advance of the Zionist movement that did not start until the 1890s.) Phelps knew that the Book of Mormon prescribed the return of the Jews to the holy land as a necessary prelude to the second coming of Christ and his millennial reign. He excitedly wrote of the hearts of the Jews turning to the true God.<sup>35</sup>

## LEARN FROM THE BIBLE, NOT FROM THE SECTARIANS

Phelps also regularly commented on numerous passages and prophecies from the Old Testament and the New Testament. Over time he quoted and commented on passages from most biblical books. He informed readers that Joseph Smith was working on an inspired "translation" of the Bible. Frequently, he printed suggestions to his readers on methods to study the scriptures.

Phelps certainly did not trust sectarians. He felt that "all men's religion is vain without charity."<sup>36</sup> He did not discriminate in his criticism of all man-made religions. In the first issue of the *Star*, he referred to the Roman Catholics and the need for an inspired rendition of the Bible:

We add an extract from the Book of Mormon.<sup>37</sup> It will be seen by this that the most plain parts of the New Testament, have been taken from it by the Mother of Harlots while it was confined in that Church,—say, from the year A. D. 460 to 1400: This is a sufficient reason for the Lord to give command to have it translated a new: Notwithstanding King James' translators did very well, all knowing that they had only the common faculties of men and literature, without the spirit of Revelation.<sup>38</sup>

## NEARNESS OF SECOND COMING

All the while that Phelps referred to the various aspects of the “gathering,” he boldly posited that the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was nigh. He laid out extensively from the biblical record what he considered to be the current “age of the world,” that is, from the creation of Adam and Eve to the particular moment in August 1832.<sup>39</sup> Based on his mathematical calculations, Phelps concluded,

Set it down so, at 1832, and, with the old and new eras, we have Five thousand nine hundred and ninety one years; leaving the world nine years from the beginning of the seven thousandth year, or sabbath of creation: But as all have the privilege of ascertaining such facts for themselves, we ask no man to take our word for the age of the world; the word of the Lord is enough, and whether it be 160, or only 9 years to the morning of the Great Day, is not so much matter, as the solemn reality—Are we ready?<sup>40</sup>

Clearly, Phelps felt that great exertions needed to be made by the missionaries and the Saints to prepare quickly for what was to come, maybe as early as 1841!

In every issue of the *Star*, Phelps laid out prospects for the Second Coming and referred to “signs of the times” that were part of the current age. He pointed out with prolixity that these signs were in fulfillment of ancient prophecies from both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. To amplify his point, Phelps quoted numerous articles from other newspapers to demonstrate how these signs in his estimation were being fulfilled. His exuberance for the subject is obvious from the following:

We live in a great time; one of the most eventful periods that has ever been: it is not only the time when the captivity of Jacob's tents will return, but it is the time when the wicked and their works shall be destroyed; when the earth shall be restored to its former beauty and goodness, and shall yield its increase; when plagues shall be sent to humble the haughty, and bring them, if they will, to a knowledge of God: yea, it is a time when the wicked can not expect to see the next generation; yea, it is that great time, when none shall live in the second generation unless they are pure in heart.<sup>41</sup>

Phelps strived to keep his readers informed that many calamities had already started to affect the earth. In this he particularly emphasized the rapid spread of “the cholera.” Month after month he included stories of how the plague was spreading from city to city, from country to country. In September 1832, he vigorously commented,

Not since the flood, if we think right, has the Lord sent the same pestilence, or destruction, over the whole earth at once: But the Cholera, which has swept its thousands in Asia, Africa, Europe and America, gives a solemn token to a wondering world, that it will do so. Let the reader remember that all flesh is grass, but, that amidst all the judgments of the Lord, the righteous have never been forsaken. The spread of the Cholera, may be likened unto the ripple or wave, formed by casting a stone into a pond of water: ring follows ring till they meet the shore: It is said to be in nearly all the eastern cities. Well has Isaiah said, When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.—From the time that it



goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night.<sup>42</sup>

In January 1833 he published many articles from around the nation and the world that demonstrated that “plague, pestilence, famine, and the sword” were bringing grief upon the world’s inhabitants.<sup>43</sup> In June 1833 Phelps again published multiple examples of grievous events in many locations but observed, “All must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”<sup>44</sup>

## PROLIFIC HYMN WRITER

As earlier noted, Phelps penned many hymns in *The Evening and the Morning Star*. Many of these alluded in one form or another to the last days or the second coming of Christ. For example, in the first edition of the paper, Phelps inserted a lengthy hymn (adapted from a collection of hymns edited by Nancy Cram)<sup>45</sup> that included these lines:

What fair one is this, in the wilderness trav’ling,  
Looking for Christ, the belov’d of her heart?  
O this is the Church, the fair bride of the Savior,  
Which with every idol is willing to part.

.....

A blessing a blessing, the Savior is coming,  
As prophets and pilgrims of old have declar’d;  
And Israel, the favor’d of God, is beginning  
To come to the feast for the righteous prepar’d.<sup>46</sup>

In another example, Phelps looked forward to the Savior’s arrival:

My soul is full of peace and love,  
I soon shall see Christ from above;  
And angels too, the hallow’d throng,  
Shall join with me in holy song.

.....

The happy day has rolled on,  
The glorious period now has come;  
The angel sure has come again  
To introduce Messiah’s reign.<sup>47</sup>

Many present-day Latter-day Saints have noted with curiosity that a favorite Christmas carol, “Joy to the World,” by Isaac Watts, appeared in the church’s original hymnbook.<sup>48</sup> What is not normally realized is that Phelps altered the language to give it a distinct Second Coming flavor. He entitled it “The Second Coming of the Savior.” His changes or additions in the wording are noted in italics:

Joy to the world! the Lord *will* come!  
*And* earth receive her King;  
 Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,  
 And *saints* and angels sing.

Rejoice! rejoice! *when Jesus* reigns,  
*And saints* their songs employ:  
 While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,  
 Repeat the sounding joy.

No more *will* sin and sorrow grow,  
 Nor thorns infest the ground;  
 He'll come *and* make the blessing flow  
 Far as the curse was found.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! in the Most High,*  
*While Israel spreads abroad,*  
*Like stars that glitter in the sky,*  
*And ever worships God.*<sup>49</sup>

## INSTRUCTIONS TO FAMILIES

Phelps repeatedly urged his readers to rear their children in righteousness. In an article entitled "The Children," he indicated that it was praiseworthy to teach children "science and learning." However, "how much more necessary is it," he insisted, "that the disciples of Jesus Christ should teach their children, not only in common learning to transact business among men, but in the knowledge of God, which points out their way to eternal life?" He urged the Saints to keep their children free from all forms of "vice and folly." This would best be achieved, he thought, by keeping the Sabbath day holy and by the family as a whole uniting in petitioning God for his blessings. "Here [in Sabbath services] they may grow up in righteousness, and be prepared to meet their Lord in peace, when he comes in his glory."<sup>50</sup>

Notably, W. W. Phelps produced a number of "short sentences" in the October 1832 issue that would prove fruitful if followed by adults and children alike:

- ♦ Love the Lord and keep his commandments, without being reminded of it every day.
- ♦ Love your neighbor as yourself, and make his welfare your welfare, and the Lord will reward you for it.
- ♦ Love labor, and whatever you do, remember the poor and needy.
- ♦ Love goodness because it is good, not because philosophers praise it.
- ♦ Thank the Lord for the blessings you daily enjoy from his holy hand.
- ♦ Thank the Lord for the light of revelation, whereby men can know his will.
- ♦ Thank the Lord for all things for his goodness is endless.

- Ask the Lord for what you want to sustain life, and not for wealth, for the love of money is the root of all evil.
- Ask the Lord to bless your enemies as well as yourself, for they are the workmanship of his hand as well as yourself.
- Remember you were born to die, and to live again.
- Remember that God requires you to be holy to him, and just to man continually, to be in his favor.
- Put away light conversation, and vanity and lies.
- Put away every habit that might make a spot on a good name.
- And finally: Be wise; be humble; be industrious; be sober-minded; be prudent, patient, and charitable.<sup>51</sup>

## TEACHING IN THE *MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE*

After the W. W. Phelps & Co. press in Independence was destroyed by enemies in July 1833, Phelps's doctrinal writings would have to wait until the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* began its run in the fall of 1834 in Kirtland. He wrote twelve "letters" in his own name for the paper, six of them starting in November 1834 while he was still in Missouri and six more that he wrote in Kirtland. These were nominally addressed to Oliver Cowdery, but he clearly desired to instruct the Saints in Ohio and Missouri and in "churches" or branches wherever they were in the United States and Canada. Phelps referred to Cowdery and himself as "co-servants from the beginning."<sup>52</sup>

Phelps did not skip a beat in these letters. He pursued his common themes: Enoch's Zion and its latter-day counterpart, the gathering, Indian tribes belonging to the house of Joseph, preparing for the imminent Second Coming, shunning the evils of the modern world, the Saints' need to become a pure and holy people, missionaries preaching the gospel, and the importance of all ancient and modern scripture. The enthusiasm and pedantry displayed in these letters echoed the tone of his previous writings in the *Star*.

In Kirtland Phelps became imbued with Joseph Smith's concepts of premortal existence, the purposes of this life including union between man and woman, and the prospects of eternal glory hereafter. "New light is occasionally bursting in to our minds," he wrote in his eighth letter to Cowdery. "We shall by and bye [*sic*] learn that we were with God in another world, . . . that we came into this world and have our agency, in order that we may prepare ourselves for a kingdom of glory; become archangels, even the sons of God where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord." He indicated that all this would consummate in "glory, and happiness, and perfection."<sup>53</sup>

Phelps expanded on his teachings about the Indians. He aimed to convince Latter-day Saint readers that the Indians' future was of importance to the church. Before he left Missouri in 1835, Phelps visited Fort Leavenworth, located west of the Missouri River in present-day Kansas. The garrison was established both to protect arriving Indian tribes and to guard against a possible Indian uprising. It also protected the lucrative fur trade

with the Rocky Mountain Indians. Phelps was definitely emotionally moved: "I saw a noble looking, portly Indian, dressed and harnessed in fine style for hunting, and for the life of me, I could not help composing the following lines," which he entitled "The Red Man." The poem later became a hymn.

O stop and tell me, Red Man,  
Who are ye? why you roam?  
And how you get your living?  
Have you no God;—no home?

With stature straight and portly,  
And decked in native pride,  
With feathers, paints, and broaches,  
He willingly replied:—

*"I once was pleasant Ephraim,  
When Jacob for me pray'd;  
But oh! how blessings vanish,  
When man from God has stray'd;"*

"Before your nation knew us,  
Some thousand moons ago,  
Our fathers fell in darkness,  
And wander'd to and fro.

"And long they've liv'd by hunting,  
Instead of work and arts,  
And so our race has dwindled  
To idle Indian hearts.

"Yet hope within us lingers,  
As if the Spirit spoke:—  
*He'll come for your redemption,*  
And break your Gentile yoke:

*And all your captive brothers,*  
From every clime shall come,  
And quit their savage customs,  
To live with God at home.

"Then joy will fill our bosoms,  
And blessings crown our days,  
*To live in pure religion,*  
And sing our Maker's praise."<sup>54</sup>

Phelps was certain that the Indian races would be redeemed, and likely in short order. Months later Phelps declared emphatically: "The Indians are the people of the Lord; they are of the tribes of Israel; the blood of Joseph, with a small mixture of the royal blood of

Judah, and the hour is nigh when they will come flocking into the kingdom of God, like doves to their windows; yea, as the book of Mormon foretells—they will soon become a white and delightsome people.”<sup>55</sup> This latter point, that Lamanites would become “white and delightsome” once converted to the true gospel, would persist as perceived Mormon doctrine for at least another century and a half.

Indeed, Phelps interpreted a darker skin color to be a curse:

God causes the saints, or people that fall away from his church to be cursed in time, with a black skin? Was or was not Cain, being marked, obliged to inherit the curse, he and his children, forever? And if so, as Ham, like other sons of God, might break the rule of God, by marrying out of the church, did or did he not, have a Canaanite wife, whereby some of the black seed was preserved through the flood, and his son, Canaan, after he laughed at his grand father’s nakedness, heired three curses: one from Cain for killing Abel; one from Ham for marrying a black wife, and one from Noah for ridiculing what God had respect for? Are or are not the Indians a sample of marking with blackness for rebellion against God’s holy word and holy order? And can or can we not observe in the countenances of almost all nations, except the Gentile, a dark, sallow hue, which tells the sons of God, without a line of history, that they have fallen or changed from the original beauty and grace of father Adam?<sup>56</sup>

In this piece, Phelps exhibited biases against the Negroid race that were common to that era.<sup>57</sup> By articulating these views, Phelps helped define a doctrine about a curse of a black or dark skin that has continued in many parts of Mormonism even to the present time.

## SUMMARY OF KIRTLAND DOCTRINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

During his eleven-month sojourn in Kirtland, from May 1835 to April 1836, Phelps focused most of all on publishing the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Sacred Hymns*. These two contributions are surely significant in constructing a doctrinal model for the church. Phelps’s multiple hymns accomplished more than anything else he ever did, especially in the long run, in developing a doctrinal understanding among Latter-day Saints. Also in Kirtland, Phelps was frequently called on to speak in Sabbath meetings wherein he would have borne frequent testimony of newly revealed truths.

In summary, from 1831 to 1836, Phelps distinctly helped formulate a doctrinal construct for the restored church and gospel that he had come to love with all his heart. He achieved this through his position as a publisher of scriptural works, his voluminous writings in early church publications, and his role as a priesthood leader. A large number of his points made in doctrinal essays and hymns have stood the test of time as ongoing revelation and adaptation have taken place in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some others, while being accepted by most members at the time, have been eliminated or changed.

## NOTES

1. Chapter 27 details Phelps's interpretations of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo teachings.
2. Joseph Smith Jr. was acknowledged at the church's founding in 1830 as a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator (see D&C 21:1). Revelation states that "no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses" (D&C 28:2). All sections of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants came through Joseph Smith except the last two—the statement on marriage and the statement on government. Other revelatory material received through Joseph Smith included the Book of Mormon, portions of biblical revisions that were published (eventually as the Book of Moses), the rest of the inspired translation of the Bible, and the Book of Abraham. Furthermore, Smith became a noted orator in his own right, and as such he elaborated various new truths that had been revealed to him.
3. For Oliver Cowdery's doctrinal impact upon Mormonism, see three articles from *Days Never to Be Forgotten*, ed. Alexander L. Baugh (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009): Susan Easton Black, "Oliver Cowdery in the Doctrine and Covenants," 90–102; Grant Underwood, "Oliver Cowdery's Correspondence with Joseph Smith," 103–21; and John W. Welch, "Oliver Cowdery as Editor, Defender, and Justice of the Peace in Kirtland," 254–77.
4. Grant Underwood demonstrated Sidney Rigdon's dynamic impact on early Mormon doctrine in his book *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 24–29, 40, 42, 50, 68.
5. Gary James Bergera, editor's introduction to *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), vii.
6. MHC, vol. D-1, 1433; HC, 5:215.
7. As cited by Grant Underwood, "The New England Origins of Mormonism Revisited," *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 20.
8. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 173.
9. D&C 57:11–12.
10. "The Elders in the Land of Zion to the Church of Christ Scattered Abroad," *EMS* 1, no. 2 (July 1832): [5].
11. Jan Shippis and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin: 1831–1836* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1994), 84, 99, 103, 118, 119, 138.
12. "The Progress of the Church of Christ," *EMS* 2, no. 13 (June 1833): 100.
13. "The Progress of the Church of Christ," *EMS* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 108.
14. The editors of *The Joseph Smith Papers* included an entire section entitled "Revelations Printed in *The Evening and the Morning Star*" in volume 2 of the "Revelations and Translations" series. The full texts of the revelations printed in the newspaper are placed in a parallel column with the similar texts in the reprinted *Evening and Morning Star*, published by Oliver Cowdery in the F. G. Williams & Co. printing office in Kirtland. The latter version had some significant changes as Cowdery and others prepared the revelations for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. See *JSP*, R2:194–299. The quotation is from p. 197.
15. "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ," *EMS* 1, no. 1 (June 1832): [1]–[2]; *JSP*, R2:202–16.
16. See *JSP*, R2:201.
17. "To the Honorable Men of the World," *EMS* 1, no. 3 (August 1832): [6].
18. "Commandments," *EMS* 1, no. 9 (February 1833): [4].
19. *JSP*, R2:ix.

20. "Items for the Public," *EMS* 1, no. 2 (July 1832): [6].
21. For a discussion of the interaction between *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the Book of Commandments, see *JSP*, R2:xxvii–xxviii. For a discussion of the publication of the Book of Commandments along with photographic reproductions of its known contents, see *JSP*, R2:2–172. For a discussion about the revelations that likely were to be printed and included in the Book of Commandments but were not because of the destruction of the press, see *JSP*, R2:173–93.
22. "The Book of Mormon," *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [1].
23. "The Book of Mormon," *EMS* 2, no. 13 (June 1833): 98.
24. "The Book of Mormon," *EMS* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 109. Joseph Smith wrote Phelps that he wanted the Book of Mormon and the "New Translation" (another name for Smith's inspired translation of the Bible) to be published in one volume. *JSP*, D3:68.
25. An article entitled "Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch" is found in *EMS* 1, no. 3 (August 1832): [2]–[3].
26. "Hymns," *EMS* 1, no. 1 (June 1832): [8]. The poem has yet other stanzas. This same hymn was edited in its wordy form by Phelps for *Sacred Hymns*, 9–11. In edited form it appears in the modern *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 46.
27. "The Gathering, &c," *EMS* 2, no. 14 (July 1833): 106.
28. Phelps entitled an article on the gathering "The Far West," *EMS* 1, no. 5 (October 1832): [5].
29. "Far West," [5]. When Phelps used the words of the "prophet," curiously he combined the teachings of various Old Testament prophetic verses, especially from Psalms and Isaiah. No such actual verse as quoted in this piece exists anywhere in holy writ.
30. An example of such an admonition is found on the same page as Phelps's description cited above: "To the Saints in the Land of Zion, and Abroad," *EMS* 1, no. 5 (October 1832): [5]. Other prime examples are found in "Zion," *EMS* 1, no. 7 (December 1832): [6], and in "Let Every Man Learn His Duty," *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [5].
31. Specifically, he said this in the article "The New-Year," *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [7]. On many other occasions he referred to this phenomenon of gathering the Indians by the government to such a providential location. Present-day historians, including Mormon historians, tend to hold different views concerning the Indian Removal Act.
32. "The Indians," *EMS* 1, no. 7 (December 1832): [6].
33. "The Ten Tribes," *EMS* 1, no. 5 (October 1832): [1]–[2].
34. "Signs of the Times," *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [6].
35. For examples of articles on the Jews, see "Restoration of the Jews," *EMS* 1, no. 3 (August 1832): [5]; "The West," *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [3]; "The Jews:—Again," *EMS* 1, no. 9 (February 1833): [3]; and "The Gathering, &c," 106–7.
36. "To Man," *EMS* 1, no. 1 (June 1832): [6].
37. Following the quotation, Phelps inserted numerous paragraphs from Nephi's writings that addressed the "great and abominable church" and the Bible. These paragraphs correspond to 2 Nephi 13:24–37.
38. "Selected," *EMS* 1, no. 1 (June 1832): [3].
39. "Present Age of the World," *EMS* 1, no. 3 (August 1832): [5]–[6].
40. "Present Age of the World," [6].
41. "The Last Days," *EMS* 1, no. 9 (February 1833): [1].
42. "The Cholera," *EMS* 1, no. 4 (September 1832): [1]. Patricia Rushton outlined the serious threats of cholera and their impact on later Latter-day Saints in her article "Cholera and Its Impact on Nineteenth-Century Mormon Migration," *BYU Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 123–44.

43. "In These Last Days!," *EMS* 1, no. 8 (January 1833): [8].
44. "All Must Come to Pass, but the End Is Not Yet," *EMS* 2, no. 13 (June 1833): 103–4.
45. Nancy Gove Cram, *A Collection of Hymns and Poems. Designed to Instruct the Inquirer, and Furnish the Public with a Small Variety* (Schenectady, NY: n.p., 1815).
46. "Hymns," [8]. The poem continues for several more verses. Phelps edited the wording of this same hymn for inclusion in *Sacred Hymns*, 7–9. This hymn is no longer sung by Latter-day Saints.
47. "Songs of Zion," *EMS* 2, no. 13 (June 1833): 104; *Sacred Hymns*, 27. This hymn is no longer sung by Latter-day Saints.
48. *Hymns* (1985), no. 201. A note therein acknowledges that Phelps altered this hymn.
49. "The Second Coming of the Savior," *EMS* 1, no. 7 (December 1832): [8]; emphasis added. "Joy to the World" as published in *Hymns* (1985), no. 201, coincides in most instances with Phelps's 1832 version, but not entirely.
50. "Children," *EMS* 1, no. 12 (May 1833): [6].
51. "Short Sentences," *EMS* 1, no. 5 (October 1832): [5].
52. Phelps's letters appear in every issue of the *Messenger and Advocate* from November 1834 to November 1835 except September 1835. The quotation is in "Letter No. 6," *M&A* 1 (April 1835): 97.
53. "Letter No. 8," *M&A* 1 (June 1835): 130.
54. "The Red Man," *M&A* 1 (December 1834): 34; emphasis added. See *Sacred Hymns*, 83–84.
55. "Letter No. 11," *M&A* 2 (October 1835): 194.
56. "Letter No. V," *M&A* 1 (March 1835): 82.
57. This contemporaneous concept was fervently iterated by Josiah Priest in his *Slavery, as It Relates to the Negro, Or African Race: Examined in the Light of Circumstances, History and the Holy Scriptures; with an Account of the Origin of the Black Man's Color, Causes of His State of Servitude and Traces of His Character as Well in Ancient as in Modern Times: with Strictures on Abolitionism* (Albany: C. Van Benthuysen, 1843).