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Gathering the Lord's Words into One: Biblical Intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants

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In February 1829, Joseph Smith Sr. was visiting in Harmony, Pennsylvania, with his son Joseph Jr. and his daughter-in-law Emma. Having long sought for religious truth while resisting organized religion, Father Smith was thrilled to see the potential for his desires to be answered through the work of his son, and in the course of the visit, Joseph received the revelation now known as section 4 on his behalf.[1] It is a short and beautiful passage of encouragement and counsel. "Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men," the voice of the Lord begins. "Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day" (D&C 4:1–2).

We can only imagine how these words came as solace to the soul of Joseph Smith Sr. after a lifetime of anguish and searching. They must also have been a great comfort to his wife, Lucy Mack Smith, who had long hoped her husband would find the spiritual truths he sought and take his place as the spiritual leader of the family. And for the young prophet Joseph, this revelation

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and others to follow would assure him repeatedly that he was not alone in the momentous responsibilities that rested so heavily on his shoulders.

Section 4 has become a classic in the Latter-day Saint canon. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote that this revelation, short though it is, "contains sufficient counsel and instruction for a lifetime of study. . . . It is as broad, as high and as deep as eternity."[2] Missionaries are expected to memorize this section as part of their preparation to serve, and its counsel is readily applicable to all who serve in the Church.

Part of what makes section 4 so memorable is the beautiful language in which it is expressed, language that we readily recognize as echoing well-known passages in the Bible. This language would have been very familiar to Joseph Smith and his family in early 1829. They would have known the prophecy about a "marvelous work" from Isaiah 29:14, while the injunction to serve God "with all your heart, might, mind and strength" was familiar from several similar passages in both the Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

The rest of the revelation continues to interweave biblical verses into an impressive collage: "For behold the field is white already to harvest [John 4:35]; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle [Revelation 14:15–19, alluding to Joel 3:13] with his might, the same layeth up in store [1 Timothy 6:19] that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul" (D&C 4:4). Continuing on, we recognize "faith, hope, charity" from 1 Corinthians 13:13, an "eye single" to the glory of God from Matthew 6:22 and Luke 11:34, and the list of virtues enumerated in verse 6 from 2 Peter 1:5–7. The verse even begins with "remember," assuming the hearer has heard this list before. Finally, the closing injunction to "ask" and "knock" is repeated throughout the New Testament (see Matthew 7:7, for example).

Undoubtedly, the words of this revelation—many of which are repeated in subsequent revelations to other early believers (see, for example, D&C 6:1–5, 11; 12; 14; 15; 16)—would have resonated deeply with these people, farmers and tradesmen of the early American republic for whom the language of the Bible was thoroughly familiar and laden with meaning and authority. Indeed, the revelations of the Restoration would not have made sense, in many cases, unless the hearers already knew the Bible—and because they did know that book, the revelations reverberated with both familiar authority and new, enabling power.

The Doctrine and Covenants, then, is thoroughly interconnected with the Bible, not just in terms of doctrine and ideas but in terms of the very language in which those doctrines and ideas are expressed. This seems like an obvious point when it is stated outright, but it is one that we might easily overlook in our reading and discussion of the revelations. In our modern world, the Bible (especially the King James Version) has faded as a central and ubiquitous presence in the culture; even Latter-day Saints may be more familiar with modern revelation than with the Old or New Testaments. Therefore, we may not fully appreciate the extent to which the Doctrine and Covenants relies on the Bible.[3]

Literary scholars use the term *intertextuality* to describe the complex relationships of language, both written and spoken. Anything we write or say will be influenced by our previous experiences with language, and that experience comes primarily from our exposure to the spoken language of other people and to previously written texts. When something new is written, then, it will necessarily draw on language that has already been written (or spoken). Sometimes this occurs very consciously through direct quotes or comments on another text; sometimes it happens quite unconsciously through echoes of the words or ideas of familiar expressions. Intertextual references can be a single word or phrase, or they can consist of extended passages of shared language.

To illustrate briefly, some expressions that may be very familiar to us from the Doctrine and Covenants actually have their origin in the Bible. For example, the closing verses of section 89 outlining the Word of Wisdom are often quoted: "And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones." This verse repeats Proverbs 3:8, in which we are told that fearing the Lord and departing from evil will be "health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." Continuing on, verse 20 of section 89 gives the well-known promise that we shall "run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint"—a quotation of Isaiah 40:31. Another often-repeated expression found in the Doctrine and Covenants is found in both D&C 98:12 and D&C 128:21: "line upon line, precept upon precept." This phrase is also found in Isaiah 28, in verses 10 and 13.

Theorists have spilled much ink exploring the idea of intertextuality and its implications,[4] but at base, the concept of intertextuality affords a very

simple insight and provides a useful term for use in discussion of texts. In short, when applied to the Doctrine and Covenants, that insight is this: the Doctrine and Covenants is a thoroughly intertextual book. That is, in almost every revelation, the text itself draws on the language of other scripture and functions to bring the dispensations into dialogue with each other. In the very language of the texts, the Doctrine and Covenants melds dispensations. This insight can powerfully reorient our study and teaching of the scriptures. It can help us to better appreciate the richness and complexity of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and it can help us realize the great power and meaning these revelations had for Joseph Smith and the early Saints. It can also help us come to see more fully the beauty and unity of the Lord's communications with his children throughout history.[5]

In this article, I offer a broad overview of the purposes, meanings, and function of biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants. I will first consider three possible reasons for the presence of this feature in the text of the revelations. Then I will discuss several ways in which this intertextuality functions. Of necessity, this is a brief and suggestive treatment of a vast and complex subject, offered by way of making visible a feature of the Doctrine and Covenants that, for some, may be easily overlooked. In my experience, it is something that, once we have been alerted to its presence, can become a new and illuminating addition to our awareness when studying the scriptures.[6]

Reasons for Biblical Intertextuality

Why would there be so much intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants? We will consider three related answers to this question. The first reason relates to the nature of God and his perspective on revealing the gospel throughout time. The second reason is related to the complexities of "translating" revelation into language. The third reason, which is related to the second, grows out of the historical and cultural setting in which the revelations were given, a time in which biblical language was widely familiar and recognized as authoritative. These reasons are ultimately interrelated and are not mutually exclusive.

The Lord himself has declared one reason for the intertextuality of the scriptures: "I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another" (2 Nephi 29:8). While this statement is certainly true in broad terms—the Lord teaches the same truths to all men everywhere—at least in the

English-language versions of the scriptures, it is also literally true.[7] In the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord literally and extensively speaks the same words to different generations. His purpose in doing so, as he explains it, is to serve as a witness that "I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another" and to prove "that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever" (2 Nephi 29:8–9).

In this passage, the Lord also declares that in the last days his word "shall be gathered in one" (2 Nephi 29:14). While the immediate context for this statement is Nephi's prophecy of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, we should note that it is realized perhaps even more fully in the Doctrine and Covenants, as that book extensively weaves the Lord's words together. Elsewhere, in speaking of the joint role of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi lists several other reasons that the scriptures will "grow together" into one: to confound false doctrines, lay down contention, establish peace, and bring the remnants of the house of Israel to a knowledge of their fathers and of the covenants of the Lord (see 2 Nephi 3:12). Certainly the Doctrine and Covenants, in its extensive use of language from the Bible, works with the Book of Mormon to fulfill these purposes. It literally melds the dispensations into "one."

Another possible reason for the use of biblical language in modern revelations may grow out of the inherent difficulties of expressing revelation adequately in human language. The few eyewitness accounts we have of Joseph Smith receiving revelations suggest that it was essentially a process of dictation: Joseph felt or heard the words in his mind and then spoke them aloud to be written down. Parley P. Pratt, for example, described the process this way: "Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each, sufficiently long for it to be recorded by an ordinary writer, in long hand. This was the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written."[8]

There is good reason to believe, however, that for Joseph Smith, the process was not quite so easy. Joseph had to struggle with both the process of receiving revelation and with the difficulties of then "translating" that revelation into written language. We know that receiving revelation was, first and foremost, work. This was the lesson Oliver Cowdery had to learn when he desired to translate and found that he could not do it because, as the Lord explained, he "took no thought save it was to ask." Instead, he had to "study it out in [his]

mind" and then ask for confirmation from the Spirit (D&C 9:7–9). While receiving and understanding the whisperings of the Spirit undoubtedly accounted for a large proportion of the work involved, it was also a struggle to find the right words to express that inspiration, and both Joseph and the Lord recognized that there would be a complex and sometimes difficult relationship between revelation—the language of God—and the language of men.

The Lord himself acknowledged this issue, declaring that the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants "were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24), implying that the Lord considers our language a necessary but "weak" vehicle for his communications to us. Undoubtedly, as Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon—perhaps the formative experience through which he learned how to receive and record revelation—he had sympathized with Moroni, who spoke poignantly of the difficulties he and his fellow Nephite prophets had encountered in putting their inspired words into writing. "When we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words," Moroni lamented (Ether 12:25). While Moroni's difficulties may have been compounded by the physical realities of engraving on metal plates, certainly the primary problem was the disparity between inspiration and human language: "Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them" (Ether 12:25). Joseph Smith himself poignantly expressed his frustration with this disparity, pleading for deliverance from "the little, narrow prison, almost as it were, total darkness of paper, pen and ink;—and a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language."[9]

Getting from revelation to text, then, was a complex process that involved rendering the still, small voice of the Spirit into English words that would be coherent and meaningful to Joseph and his nineteenth-century American associates. While it is true that the language of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants is comprehensible to us as modern English, it is also clear that, in expressing the revelations in modern English, Joseph Smith held definite ideas about what sacred, scriptural language should sound like. In short, it should sound like the Bible—and in Joseph Smith's day, the Bible meant the King James Version, that magnificent accomplishment of English prose that had stood for two centuries as the apex of the English language. As one recent assessment puts it, "The translators of the King James Bible attuned the ears of English speakers everywhere as to how the Bible is supposed to sound."[10]

Indeed, it may be that the language of the Bible provided a vital escape from that "narrow prison" of "scattered and imperfect language."

As I have already discussed, we do not know the exact relationship between the ideas or words the Lord spoke or placed in Joseph's mind and heart and the words and phrases that were recorded as the textual form of those revelations. But whether we attribute the words of the revelations as we now have them more to the Lord or to Joseph Smith, it seems clear that the language of the Bible was equally useful to each "author" in expressing himself. For the Lord, it offered a means of communicating with his people in language that was already familiar and authoritative. It brought the dispensations together and served as a further witness of his word. For Joseph Smith, struggling to write his way out of that narrow prison of language, the Bible offered both a model and a storehouse of words and phrases that enabled him to express his revelations in meaningful terms.

The same was true for Joseph's listeners, and this brings us to the third reason for the extensive biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants: the language of the Bible was thoroughly familiar and authoritative to Americans of the early nineteenth century and therefore provided an important point of reference for the new revelations. The early Saints recognized in the revelations a blend of familiar words and new doctrines that mutually illuminated and validated each other. It is probably impossible for us today to fully appreciate just how central and fundamental an element the Bible was in the culture of English-speaking people in the early nineteenth century. The historian Perry Miller famously remarked that "the Old Testament is truly so omnipresent in the American culture of 1800 or 1820 that historians have as much difficulty taking cognizance of it as of the air people breathed."[11] Through centuries of use and repetition, the language of the King James Version had become part of the cultural DNA. People owned and read Bibles, to be sure, but we should remember that the culture was much more organized around face-to-face interaction and that the spoken word (sermons, dramatic readings, storytelling) provided the most common and fundamental forms of entertainment and education. Joseph Smith and his contemporaries knew the language of the Bible not only because they read it but because they *heard* it all around them—directly from the book, but also as part of the deeply embedded idioms of everyday speech.

This fact should make us even more sensitive to the many uses of "hear" or similar terms in the Doctrine and Covenants. The first word of the book, indeed, is "hearken," and the word "hear" appears in the revelations over eighty times, usually in imperative form as the Lord instructs us to listen to his words (see D&C 18:36; 41:1; 133:16). For many of the early Saints, undoubtedly, *hearing* was a primary means by which they learned the word of the Lord, and it is likely that Joseph and his contemporaries retained an auditory orientation to the scriptures that we have largely lost. In other words, the revelations *sounded* familiar to them because they had *heard* such language repeatedly throughout their lives.

It is important to stress, I think, that we cannot know for certain which intertextual expressions in the revelations would have been previously familiar to Joseph Smith himself or to his listeners; certainly we cannot assume that any given person had essentially memorized the Bible. Therefore, it would be a highly variable matter to account for the biblical resonances in any given verse. Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that, on the whole, the biblical language used in the Doctrine and Covenants circulated widely in early-nineteenth-century America, and when Joseph Smith's listeners did recognize it as such, the use of that language in these texts communicated more than words alone. Joseph Smith and his contemporaries would have heard not only the words of the modern revelation but also those words in the context of the biblical passages to which they refer, often expanding or enriching their meaning in ways that we miss if we are not aware of the original.

Moreover, we should also acknowledge that the intertextuality of the Bible with both the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon has been cited by some observers as evidence that Joseph Smith simply composed the revelations himself by patching together biblical phrases and pseudo-scriptural language. In my view, this explanation is much too easy. Looking at section 4, for example, we find in just seven short verses a complex and beautiful text that draws on over eight different biblical sources with little self-conscious marking of itself as quotation or allusion. It is a text that simultaneously stands on its own while resonating with the meanings and music of its sources. In order to have "composed" this passage, Joseph Smith would have had to be a literary mind of no small proportion. Yet Emma, his wife, describing him during the same period in which section 4 was received, adamantly asserted that Joseph "could neither write nor dictate a coherent

and well-worded letter."[12] Critics have long tied themselves in knots trying to explain away Joseph Smith's revelations, but the texts themselves provide the best evidence for their own validity. For those of us who accept the veracity of those revelations, the biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants provides yet another witness of their authenticity.

Functions of Biblical Intertextuality

Having considered the *why* of biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants, we can now turn to the *how*: How does this intertextuality function in the texts of the revelations? We can discuss only a few examples here, but I would like to identify three general patterns. First, biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants works to reaffirm and reframe prophecy. Second, it serves to amplify previous scripture, adding new insight or information. Third, it functions to motivate and help develop the identity of the recipients.

Sometimes we find all of these functions simultaneously. I have already mentioned the phrase "a marvelous work," which first appears in section 4. Throughout the scriptures, God's works are referred to as "marvelous," as in Psalm 9:1 ("I will shew forth all thy marvellous works") or Revelation 15:3 ("Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty"). In section 4, however, this language echoes a specific prophecy in Isaiah 29 where the Lord declares that he will "proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14), referring to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days. This revelation simultaneously places the work of Joseph Smith within that larger framework, affirming and reframing prophecy, and clarifies the older biblical passage, making clear that it would be fulfilled through the Book of Mormon and the work of Joseph Smith.

The intertextuality in this revelation also functioned to powerfully reorient the lives and identities of those who heard it. Joseph Smith Sr. was confirmed in his faith that his son had been called of God and was informed that he, too, had a role to play. Likewise, the reference to "a marvelous work" is repeated in early revelations given to several other individuals who had asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord regarding their standing and duties. Through this language Oliver Cowdery (see D&C 6:1), Hyrum Smith (see D&C 11:1), Joseph Knight (see D&C 12:1), and David Whitmer (see D&C 14:1) were

each invited to recognize, accept, and become part of the "marvelous work," with the intertextual relationship of the modern revelation and the biblical passage mutually illuminating one another. In this simple phrase first found in section 4, we find all three functions of biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants: it affirms prophecy, expands the meaning of a previous scripture, and invites actual people, then and now, to identify with and participate in the work of God.

Considering the functions of intertextuality separately, we first find that the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants often invoke biblical language in reference to prophecy. One powerful example is the poignant declaration of the Lord that he will "gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (D&C 29:2; see also D&C 10:65 and 43:24). This promise echoes the lament of the Savior not long before his death: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matthew 23:37; see also Luke 13:34). It takes an expression from the Bible that could refer to one particular historical moment and transforms it into a prophecy that applies to all. It tells us something about the Savior and his eagerness to watch over and bless his people, those who "will" as opposed to those who "would not." I find it significant that Christ himself speaks these words in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, spanning dispensations and cultures. He seems to feel that it is a particularly apt metaphor for helping us understand his love for and watchcare over us.

Prophecy of the last days occurs frequently in the Doctrine and Covenants. Sections 29, 45, 88, and 133 contain some of the better known millennial prophecies. In these sections, the biblical intertextuality is especially dense, and Isaiah figures heavily as a point of reference. Consider, for example, the first five verses of section 133 (see table 1). This passage introduces an extended revelation in which the Lord imparts much information about the "preaching of the Gospel to the inhabitants of the earth, and concerning the gathering" (section heading). Some of the phrases used seem to be direct references to the prophecies invoked ("shall suddenly come to his temple" and "make bare his holy arm"), while others simply speak in language familiar from the Bible ("all the nations that forget God" and "sanctify yourselves"). All come together to create a new, unified text.

This pattern continues throughout the revelation. In D&C 133:42–53, to take another example, the text quotes extensively from or alludes directly to Isaiah 64:2–5 and Isaiah 63:1–9, weaving together many phrases from the original but also omitting some and adding new language. Taken together, the intertextuality in section 133 serves to affirm that the day is near—"the great day of the Lord" (D&C 133:10, echoing Zephaniah 1:14 and many other Old Testament references)—when ancient prophecies will be fulfilled in modern times, bringing the dispensations together and fulfilling the covenants and promises made by the Lord from the beginning of this earth. On this subject, perhaps more than any other, the Doctrine and Covenants brings the Lord's words into one.

A second function of intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants is to expand upon the biblical source. Perhaps the most powerful example of this function is also one of the most indirect. It is found in D&C 19:18, where the Savior describes his own suffering in completing the Atonement: "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink." This description stands powerfully on its own, but it also refers unmistakably to the description in Luke 22:44 of Jesus' agony, in which "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." And the modern revelation's declaration that he shrank from drinking the "bitter cup" also echoes Matthew's account, in which Jesus prayed that the Father would "let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39). Here we have a modern revelation that adds to the biblical accounts by providing profound detail that expands our understanding of the scope of the Atonement.

Section 29 includes another brief intertextual reference that provides expanded doctrinal understanding to a puzzling biblical term. Verse 7 of that revelation instructs the elders that they are "called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect." "Elect" is a term that appears in several places in the New Testament. Jesus himself uses it (see Mark 13:20, 22, for example), and it appears in various epistles, such as Colossians 3:12, which refers to "the elect of God." These usages led the Christian world to much discussion and speculation about how we might know who "the elect" are. Calvinists believed that God would save only a few; Universalists believed that God would save everyone. Either way, "the elect" were chosen by God. Section 29 invokes the

term and then offers a simple definition: "mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts" (v. 7). This definition radically reconfigures the biblical term. The "elect" are not such because God chooses them; they are "elect" because they choose God. We have agency.[13] This one brief intertextual reference clears up centuries of speculation.

Finally, as we saw in conjunction with section 4, some of the most powerful uses of intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants come in revelations addressed to specific individuals. In the March 1832 calling of Frederick G. Williams to become a counselor in the First Presidency, for example, he is instructed to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). This counsel repeats the counsel given in Hebrews 12:12 ("lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees"), a passage that in turn echoes one in Isaiah 35:3 ("Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees"; see also Job 4:4). This language encouraged Brother Williams to see himself as connected to the servants of previous dispensations and to develop characteristics of service and compassion that would likewise qualify him for his calling.

Perhaps the most significant uses of this kind of intertextuality occur in revelations concerning the apostleship. Section 18 was given in June 1829, in part to commission Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer to "search out the Twelve" (v. 37). In this revelation the Lord employs language associated with his New Testament Apostles, often repeating verbatim instructions and counsel given to those ancient servants. The Twelve "are called to go into all the world to preach my gospel unto every creature" (v. 28, echoing Mark 16:15). They are told, "My grace is sufficient for you," repeating words that the Apostle Paul reported the Lord had spoken to him (D&C 18:31; 2 Corinthians 12:9). Six years later, the Lord once again addressed the recently called Twelve Apostles with counsel and instruction delivered through intertextual language. "Take up your cross," he commanded, and "feed my sheep" (D&C 112:14; see, for example, Matthew 16:24 and John 21:16). Here, the command to "go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel unto every creature" includes the rest of the original reference: "And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not, and is not baptized, shall be damned" (D&C 112:28–29; see Mark 16:15–16).

The modern Twelve would certainly have known these verses well. The words would have served to confirm, even to create, a self-image and identity

for these brethren as Apostles—an office that was at once familiar and brand-new to them. By speaking to these brethren in the same language he used to teach his original Apostles, the Lord tied together the dispensations and provided an unmistakable model, replete with biblical precedent, for the modern Church to follow.

Appreciating Intertextuality

In the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, we see clearly that the Lord "speak[s] the same words unto one nation like unto another" and gathers his word into one (2 Nephi 29:8, 14). The use of biblical language in modern revelations marks them with authority and familiarity, expands on ancient sources, and develops identity and motivation in both the original recipients and modern readers. These functions, we might note, parallel the reasons discussed above for the presence of intertextuality. The Lord declares his authority and imparts truth by reaffirming prophecy. Biblical language bridges the gap between the familiar and the new by adding additional information and insight. And the use of intertextuality capitalizes on biblical precedent to profoundly orient and develop the commitment of the new Saints being forged for the new dispensation.

Clearly, many other examples of biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants could be enumerated, and there is yet room to investigate this subject much more fully, identifying patterns and implications that cannot be explored here. I offer these observations not by way of a comprehensive or definitive treatment but in hopes of prompting us to be more sensitive readers of scripture. By attuning ourselves to the biblical intertextuality in the Doctrine and Covenants, we can increase our understanding of modern revelation, and we can also gain new appreciation for the Bible—especially, perhaps, the Old Testament. As we look for the interrelationships in these magnificent texts, we will come to search the scriptures with new eyes, looking for connections and resonances we might otherwise miss—connections and resonances that continue to reverberate powerfully for us, just as they did for Joseph Smith and the early Saints.

Table 1:
Biblical Intertextuality in D&C 133:1–5

Verse	D&C Phrase	Biblical Reference	Biblical Phrase
2	"The Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple"	Malachi 3:1	"The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple"
	"[The Lord] shall come down upon the world with a curse to judgment"	Isaiah 34:5	"[My sword] shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment"
	"Upon all the nations that forget God"	Psalm 9:17	"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"
3	"For he shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of their God"	Isaiah 52:10	"The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"
4	"Prepare ye, prepare ye"	Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4	"Prepare ye the way of the Lord"
	"Sanctify yourselves"	Leviticus 11:44, seven other references in OT	"Sanctify yourselves"
	"Gather ye together"	Matthew 13:30	"Gather ye together first the tares . . ."
5	"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord"	Isaiah 52:11	"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord"

Notes

1. For historical background on section 4, see Steven C. Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 29.

2. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1946), 1:35.

3. There is also a great deal of interdependence between the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon. For example, though Joseph Smith Sr. and his son would not have fully recognized it yet, many of the biblical expressions in section 4 are also found in the Book of Mormon. The prophecy of a "marvelous work" is quoted directly from Isaiah in 2 Nephi 27:26 and again by Mormon in 3 Nephi 28:32, and it appears elsewhere in 1 and 2 Nephi. Ammon speaks of thrusting in the sickle in Alma 26:5, and the sacred triumvirate of "faith, hope, and charity" appears in several places (Alma 7:24; Ether 12:28; Moroni 7:1, 42–48; 10:20–22). The Savior teaches the Nephites about the importance of having an "eye single" (3 Nephi 13:22) and exhorts them to "ask" and to "knock" (3 Nephi 27:29). This subject is worthy of further exploration. However, most of the expressions that appear in the Doctrine and Covenants from the Book of Mormon are also found in the Bible, and it was the Bible that held a place of cultural familiarity and authority, especially for those who did not know the Book of Mormon; therefore, I am focusing this discussion on the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants.

4. A complete discussion of the concept of intertextuality is found in Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). Allen stresses that postmodern theorists, who coined the term, use it to challenge the idea of authority in language and texts (209). In this view, all language is interrelated and all human thought and interaction take place through language; therefore, they argue, there is no ultimate authority outside of language. I would argue that God and his communication with us (i.e., revelation) do exist outside of human language, radiating from a realm of ultimate truth and reality and therefore making the only legitimate claim to authority we can know—despite the difficulties, as I discuss below, of translating that revelation into human language. In any case, we do not have to accept all of the uses or possible implications of the term to find it helpful in discussing the interrelationship of texts.

5. Professor D. Kelly Ogden has written an impressive study of biblical expressions, analogies, and imagery used in the Doctrine and Covenants. While his essay provides an exhaustive cataloging of those items, I want to explore more fully the question of *why* this intertextuality exists and how it functions. See D. Kelly Ogden, "Biblical Language and Imagery in the Doctrine and Covenants," in *Doctrine and Covenants, A Book of Answers*, ed. Leon R. Hartshorn, Dennis A. Wright, and Craig J. Ostler (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 169–87.

6. We should note that technology has made it much easier to identify scriptural intertextuality by allowing us to search for specific words and phrases. The "search the scriptures" function on lds.org, for example, works well to identify shared language across the standard works. Because the footnotes in our scriptures are geared toward topics and principles, rather than language, they tend to identify only the most obvious instances of intertextuality.

7. As discussed below, the relationship of revelation and language is complex, and we cannot completely recover or pinpoint that relationship. In the case of the Bible, we have added layers of complexity because of the process of transmission and translation from the original languages in which the scriptural texts were originally written. Acknowledging all of these factors, it still seems safe to assume that the translators of the King James Version were divinely guided in their choice of language, which became the basis for the language used in subsequent revelation, including the Joseph Smith Translation.

8. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, revised and enhanced ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 72; paragraphing altered. Pratt reported that he had witnessed the reception of "several communications" (i.e., revelations to Joseph Smith) but did not specify which ones.

9. Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, November 27, 1832. See *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee. rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 287. Joseph's statement about language appears at the end of the letter; the central section of the letter contains the instructions now canonized as section 85 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

10. John S. Tanner, "The King James Bible in America: Pilgrim, Prophet, President, Preacher," *BYU Studies* 50, no. 3 (2011): 6.

11. Perry Miller, "The Garden of Eden and the Deacon's Meadow," *American Heritage* 7 (December 1955): 54, quoted in Tanner, "The King James Bible in America," 5.

12. Quoted in Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph: Personal Recollections of Those Who Knew the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 303.

13. I am indebted to Steven Harper's discussion of section 76 for this insight. See Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 262.