

CHAPTER TWENTY

“EXALT NOT YOURSELVES”:
THE REVELATIONS
AND THOMAS B. MARSH,
AN OBJECT LESSON
FOR OUR DAY

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Our purpose here is to understand the historical setting for several revelations related to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1837 and 1838, most notably Doctrine and Covenants 112, but also 114, 118, and the very short 126 (dated July 1841); and, aided by that understanding, better understand the revelations. At the same time, in the spirit of Nephi, who “did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23), we will see the relevance for today of inspired counsel from the 1830s. Reviewing how Thomas B. Marsh responded to challenges and adversity provides profitable reminders for the conduct of our own lives.

What follows is a chapter in the early history of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that transpired before Joseph Smith, in 1841, formally invited them to take their place next to the First Presidency in governing the whole Church. Before that, especially in Kirtland, the Twelve had neither prominence nor precedence (over, for example, the Kirtland High Council), though revelation and inspired counsel from the beginning made clear that this was their potential. This lack

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of status or formal authority within organized stakes rankled some and contributed to misunderstandings and disharmony, but in retrospect we can see it as an important period of testing and preparation before greater responsibility was given to the Twelve. In Doctrine and Covenants 112, which we will examine in detail, the Lord says of the Twelve specifically that “after their temptations, and much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them” *if* they harden not their hearts (D&C 112:13). Their history provides a specific example of the general principle that “after much tribulation come the blessings” (D&C 58:4; see also 103:12; Ether 12:6).

On Sunday, September 6, 1857, in Salt Lake City, Thomas B. Marsh, who had been called in 1835 as an Apostle and as President of the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, stood before the Saints for the first time in nearly two decades. A broken man, a shadow of his former self, he felt acutely the pain of opportunities and blessings irretrievably lost. Among lost blessings was his health. A once vigorous man, Marsh now referred to himself as old and infirm, and so he appeared—a dramatic illustration of the toll of apostasy and disobedience. Standing comparatively young and robust, President Young pointed out that Thomas was his senior by less than two years. For his part Marsh acknowledged faults that led him first to jealousy and anger and finally to apostasy, which brought only misery and affliction. Four months earlier he had confessed to Heber C. Kimball: “I have sined [*sic*] against Heaven and in thy sight. . . . I deserve no place . . . in the church even as the lowest member; but I cannot live long . . . without a reconciliation with the 12 and the Church whom I have injured O Bretheren once Bretheren!! How can I leave this world without your forgiveness Can I have it Can I have it? Something seems to say within yes. . . . can you speak one word of comfort to me. . . . Can I find peace among you?”²

What he sought now, and what the audience voted unanimously to extend, was not office or position but simply fellowship with the Saints. In the 1830s he had aspired to much more.

When the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was organized in February 1835, Thomas B. Marsh became president because he was the eldest of those selected, though thereafter, seniority would be determined by date of ordination, not age. A member since 1830, when the Church was still in New York, and an effective missionary,

Marsh appeared to be a reasonable choice to head the new quorum. David Whitmer had baptized him, Oliver Cowdery had ordained him an elder, he had been one of the first to receive the high priesthood in 1831, and in 1834 he had become a member of the first high council organized in Zion, or Missouri. An 1831 revelation declared that he would be “a physician unto the church” (D&C 31:10).

But there were also warning signs, or at least foreshadowings, of possible trouble. The Quorum of the Twelve was uniquely charged to carry the gospel to all the world, and from the Church’s beginning members looked toward the day they could begin that work abroad by preaching in England, yet the same 1831 revelation that named Marsh a “physician unto the church” warned that he could not be a physician “unto the world, for they will not receive you” (D&C 1:10). Furthermore, an impressive charge to the new Apostles in February 1835, delivered by Oliver Cowdery in Kirtland before Marsh had arrived from Missouri, stressed the need for brotherhood and unity within the Twelve and warned the Apostles to cultivate humility, beware of pride, and give all credit to God. Rather than playing to natural strengths, these requirements challenged Marsh where he was weakest, for he tended toward officiousness and an overblown concern about appearances and position. The 1831 revelation concerning him had ended with a warning and a promise. “Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward,” Marsh was told, but “be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you” (D&C 31:12–13).

A YOUNG QUORUM

Members of a new quorum with scriptural precedents but without institutional memory or living example to rely on, the Apostles at first struggled to understand their proper role and to develop effective ways of working together as a quorum and in harmony with other leaders. In preparation for their first mission—again even before Marsh had arrived from Missouri—Joseph instructed them by counsel and by revelation. In March 1835, feeling unprepared and unworthy, they had petitioned the Prophet to “inquire of God for us, and obtain a revelation, (if consistent) that our hearts may be comforted.”³The significant revelation “on priesthood” (see D&C 107) was the result. Among its instructions was the declaration that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles “form a quorum, equal in authority

and power” to the presidency of the Church—but only when they are united and in harmony as a quorum—along with a reminder, accompanied with a promise, that relationships within the quorum must be characterized by “lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and . . . temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity” (D&C 107:24, 30). Despite such guidelines, only with time and experience could these men learn in detail what it meant to be Apostles. In the meantime, understandably, they would occasionally grope and stumble.

As it turned out, both inexperience and personality made it difficult for Thomas Marsh to lead the new quorum effectively. In terms later used by Joseph Smith in writing about priesthood leadership, too easily do pride, vain ambition, and even compulsion enter into relationships that should be based only on persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned (see D&C 121:31, 41). For Thomas Marsh and others like him—young men in a young church, uneducated, inexperienced as leaders—the style demanded by such principles remained a distant ideal. Faced with opportunities for growth and improvement, for the moment Marsh was part of the committed but struggling generation in Missouri whose “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires,” in the words of revelation, brought them into difficulties (D&C 101:6). Here, clearly, was a man of ability. But it was less clear that he would learn to govern his feelings enough to reach his potential or learn to meet challenges and snubs with patience and love rather than “jarrings and strife.”

The new Apostles spent that summer of 1835 traveling together in the East on their first (and only) missionary undertaking under President Marsh as a full quorum. With pointed counsel and revelation vividly in mind, they conscientiously labored to carry out their commission, and the result was a successful mission. But that fall they returned home not to accolades but to accusations, and these they handled much less well. What should have been minor difficulties arising from affronts or simple miscommunication aroused intense feelings, and soon the new Quorum of the Twelve found itself immersed in charges and countercharges with the First Presidency, concerns about position and precedence with the High Council, and divisive complaints among its own members.⁴

“Exalt Not Yourselves”

279

President Marsh generally met these challenges in a manner that stressed rights, justice, and his (or his quorum’s) prerogatives more than brotherhood or humble submission to counsel. The difficulties cannot all be attributed to Marsh, of course. All of the Apostles were inexperienced, none yet fully understood their calling, and some others shared Marsh’s unfortunate focus on potential authority and prestige greater than the actual. Moreover, the Prophet Joseph Smith ruffled the feelings of his sensitive Apostles as often as he soothed them. Whether this was a conscious ploy to teach that humility and service must precede authority, as Brigham Young came to believe, or simply a consequence of his own style, the results were the same. Anxious to be powerful men in the kingdom, some of the Apostles bristled and complained at every slight.

For the Apostles and other Church leaders in Kirtland, the fall of 1835 should have been a joyful season devoted to preparing hearts and spirits for long-awaited blessings in the nearly completed Kirtland Temple. Instead, hurt feelings required that council after council be dedicated to airing complaints, soothing feelings, and generally working to reestablish brotherhood.⁵ These efforts did bear fruit, however, and as far as records reveal, by November comparative harmony seemed to prevail. Then, without clarifying explanation, on November 3 the Prophet recorded in his diary the following: “Thus came the word of the Lord unto me concerning the Twelve [saying] behold they are under condemnation, because they have not been sufficiently humble in my sight, and in consequence of their covetous desires, in that they have not dealt equally with each other.” The revelation named several of the Apostles as offenders and then concluded that “all must humble themselves before me, before they will be accounted worthy to receive an endowment.”⁶

Understandably this caused a stir among the Apostles. The only other revelation addressing them specifically had been the great revelation on priesthood, and now, only months later, this. Records do not preserve President Marsh’s response to this chastisement, though we can surmise that he took it personally and was not pleased, but Joseph did record that Elders Hyde and McLellin, two of those named, stopped by to express “some little dissatisfaction.” Brigham Young, on the other hand, “appeared perfectly satisfied” with the chastisement.⁷ Perhaps he felt no need to take it personally or, if he

did, remembered the inspired counsel of the June 1833 revelation that became Doctrine and Covenants 95: "Whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation" (D&C 95:1).

No doubt Brigham Young also recognized the justice of the rebuke. Not only had the Apostles clashed with other Church officials but they had also experienced disunity, jealousy, and pettiness within their own quorum. Years later Young characterized the Kirtland Twelve as "continually sparring at each other." To illustrate, he told of once being summoned to answer for having accepted an invitation to preach. By what authority, demanded his fellow Apostles, had he "presumed to appoint a meeting and preach" without consulting them? Under Thomas Marsh the Twelve met very often, Young continued, "and if no one of them needed cleaning, they had to 'clean' some one any how."⁸ On another occasion President Young contrasted his own style as President, trying to be a father to all, with President Marsh's: "like a toad's hair comb[ing] up and down."⁹

There is no doubt that the personality of Thomas Marsh contributed to the pettiness and self-concern that plagued his quorum. Because of his concern about prerogatives, his leadership could be intrusive and officious. He was also impatient with criticism and tended to view a difference of opinion or even initiative by others as a challenge to his leadership. And he was impatient about the status of the Twelve in Kirtland. According to Brigham Young, he was among those who, when Joseph "snubbed" the Apostles, exclaimed, "We are apostles[!] it's an insult for us to be so treated."¹⁰ Brigham, on the other hand, came to see the snubbing, the trials, in a way Thomas never did: as a testing, a necessary preparation, before they were ready for power. This he once explained to Marsh when he complained of their treatment. "If we are faithful," insisted Brigham Young, "we shall see the day . . . that we will have all the power we shall know how to wield before God."¹¹

JOY AND TROUBLE IN KIRTLAND

Although it took until January 1836, the Apostles eventually settled important differences and came to enjoy both increased unity within their quorum and general harmony with other leaders. Thus

“Exalt Not Yourselves”

281

prepared, they shared with other Kirtland Saints the extraordinary blessings and manifestations associated with the Kirtland Temple in early 1836.

But for the Quorum of the Twelve, unity, harmony, and new spiritual strength did not last. Instead of moving the quorum to Missouri, as earlier contemplated once the temple was finished, Joseph Smith announced that they were now free to move or not, as they chose; and instead of another quorum mission, he suggested that each was free to preach where he would—though each understood his duty to take the gospel abroad as soon as possible. Thomas Marsh and David Patten, the two senior Apostles, returned to Missouri, whereas most of the others continued to call Kirtland home. Within a year the Twelve would be as divided spiritually as they were geographically.

In 1837 dissension and rebellion swept the Church, especially among the leaders. Although most retained faith in the Book of Mormon and believed in the necessity of restored authority, not everyone shared the Prophet’s enthusiasm for the ancient order of things. To some, a society modeled after ancient Israel, where prophetic authority directed all aspects of life (not just the religious), portended a reduction in cherished social and economic freedoms. Too Papist, they declared, too un-American. Those concerns underlay the discontent of many who ostensibly blamed Joseph for meddling in the Kirtland Bank, which ultimately failed, or who had other complaints against his conduct of economic or civic affairs.¹² While most members trusted the Prophet and continued to remain loyal even if they did not yet fully understand his vision, a rift developed between Joseph and many leaders, including some in the Presidency and in the Twelve, who were certain they understood more, or at least better, than he did. Of the Apostles in Kirtland, only Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball expressed unwavering support for Joseph Smith and his program.

When news of the rebellion reached President Marsh in Missouri, he was appalled. Word that several of his own quorum members were prominent among dissenters especially humiliated him. He had envisioned leading a united quorum abroad to introduce the gospel to Great Britain, and now this. He was also distressed to learn that an impatient Parley P. Pratt (and perhaps others) intended to leave on a

foreign mission without him. Hurt, angry, and determined, Marsh hoped to “right-up” the Twelve and reestablish himself as an effective leader by holding a dramatic meeting with his quorum in Kirtland in which he would interject himself vigorously into the fray on the side of the Prophet. On May 10 he and Elder Patten dispatched an urgent letter to Parley P. Pratt, advising him not to depart for England: “The 12 must get together difficulties must be removed & love restored, we must have peace within before we can wage a successful war without. . . . Shall the 12 apostles of the Lambe be a disorganised body pulling different ways, Shall one [go] to his plough another to his merchandise, another to England &c. No! I even I Thomas will step in (if their [*sic*] is none other for it is my right in this case) and give council to you.”¹³

The letter appointed July 24 for an extraordinary council “to break through every obstacle” and prepare for their mission abroad.

Since at least February 1837, Kirtland Apostles had spoken of a summer mission to England; Parley Pratt was not alone in this. But amid dissension and the continuing absence of President Marsh, the mission appeared doubtful. Heber Kimball was thus shocked when the Prophet told him in early June that “for the salvation of His church” the mission must go forth without delay and that he must head it.¹⁴ Joseph needed Brigham Young in Kirtland, he insisted, Parley had joined the others in rebellion, and they could not wait for Marsh and Patten. Begging forgiveness, Orson Hyde sought reconciliation the very day Kimball was set apart for his mission and requested permission to accompany him. Thus it was that Elders Kimball and Hyde, not Marsh and Patten, left Kirtland June 13 to open the work abroad.¹⁵

A few days later, after Brigham Young tried but failed to reconcile him with Joseph, Parley Pratt suddenly departed for Missouri. Providentially, Marsh and Patten encountered Parley en route, and they succeeded (where Brigham had not) in turning him around.

As soon as they reached Kirtland, Brigham Young briefed Elders Marsh and Patten on the perplexing problems. Marsh then went directly to Joseph’s home—his headquarters during his Kirtland stay—and set to work reconciling the disaffected. (David Patten, meanwhile, visited first the dissenters and, according to Brigham, “got his mind prejudiced” and insulted Joseph. The Prophet reacted strongly to the

“Exalt Not Yourselves”

283

affront, which, in Young’s view, “done David good,” and quickly returned him to his senses.)¹⁶The Prophet arranged a special meeting at his home for several of the prominent malcontents, no doubt including Apostles. Marsh “moderated” and, he reported later, “a reconciliation was effected between all parties.”¹⁷ Without question President Marsh contributed to the healing and reconciliation in Kirtland that summer. He labored with the “merchant apostles,” Lyman Johnson and John Boynton, and with Constable Luke Johnson. Following his arrival, Elders Orson Pratt and Parley Pratt, among others, made public confessions and expressions of support for Joseph. Although neither Marsh nor the Prophet swept away the basic differences in outlook that had brought dissent, as President of the Twelve, Marsh was able to return a modicum of civility and unity to his quorum. An early departure for England seemed out of the question, however, and there is no evidence that Marsh convened the “extraordinary meeting” he had earlier proposed for July 24.

Despite modest success, President Marsh was still troubled—troubled that members of his quorum had rebelled and also troubled that missionary work abroad was proceeding without him. Concerned about his own status and wondering if the Lord could still accept the Twelve, he went to Joseph on July 23, the day before his extraordinary council would have been held, to discuss his concerns. That evening the Prophet dictated as Thomas wrote “the word of the Lord unto Thomas B. Marsh, concerning the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb” (headnote to D&C 112).

The revelation acknowledged Marsh’s prayerful concern for his quorum and counseled him to continue to pray for them and, as needed, to admonish them sharply, for “after their temptations, and much tribulation . . . I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts . . . they shall be converted, and I will heal them” (verse 13). It admonished the Twelve—“Exalt not yourselves; rebel not against my servant Joseph” (verse 15)—and counseled Marsh to be more faithful and humble, at the same time reaffirming his position as President of the Twelve. The revelation also approved Marsh’s residence in Missouri, where he worked with the printing office, “for I, the Lord, have a great work for thee to do, in publishing my name among the children of men” (verse 6).

With that background, we are now ready to closely examine

Doctrine and Covenants 112, given on July 23, 1837, for Thomas Marsh and the Twelve, noting how it applied to them and how it might apply to us. “I have heard thy prayers,” says verse 1, “. . . in behalf of those, thy brethren, who were chosen to bear testimony . . . abroad . . . and ordained through the instrumentality of my servants.” Though we are not of their quorum, this passage describes a duty common to many priesthood holders, especially missionaries.

In verse 2, President Marsh is told that “there have been some few things” in his heart and with him with which the Lord is not pleased. Again, this is something that applies to us all.

Verse 3 tells Marsh that because he has humbled himself he can still be exalted and his sins are forgiven. (*Abase* means to humble, which is a universal requirement for forgiveness and reconciliation.)

So, in verse 4, President Marsh is told to let his heart be of good cheer and—now this was what he was *really* concerned about—he is told, “thou shalt [still, despite all the problems] bear record of my name” and “send forth my word unto the ends of the earth.” Even though Elders Kimball and Hyde had departed, Thomas Marsh might yet have his day.

Therefore, says verse 5, “Contend thou, therefore, morning by morning; and day after day let thy warning voice go forth”—a good description of what we all should be about.

More specifically, verse 6 says that President Marsh is not to move his household from Missouri, for from there, as printer, he is to publish the word abroad.

Verse 7 warns Marsh “Therefore, gird ye thy loins for the work. “Let thy feet be shod also, for thou art chosen” to do this work. Where? “Among the mountains” (a hint of the Rocky Mountains?¹⁸) and “among many nations” (which because of apostasy he failed to fulfill).

Verses 8 and 9 indicate that Marsh’s word will bring down the exalted and exalt the lowly and that he will rebuke the transgressor. Priesthood leaders generally share this responsibility to rebuke when so inspired. Given the history of his quorum, one might conclude that these two verses apply to counseling his brethren, but because a reminder about that specific responsibility begins with verse 12, this reference appears to be more general.

Verse 10 preserves one of the great promises in scripture, one that

“Exalt Not Yourselves”

285

surely can be adopted as a general principle and applied to all: “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.” This and related scriptural promises (see, for example, Romans 8:28 and D&C 90:24) all include qualifications. To claim the promised blessings, we must be humble and faithful, love God, and honor His commandments. With us, as with President Marsh, worthiness determines whether we can claim the promise.

Verses 11–14 contain pleadings and admonitions for the Twelve. Here the Lord tells President Marsh that He knows his heart and has heard his prayers for his brethren. As president it is his right and duty to be concerned, of course, and to express and extend love, but the Lord reminds him, “Let thy love be for them as for thyself; and let thy love abound unto all men, and unto all who love my name” (verse 11). Again, though we may each have specific responsibilities, beyond that, we must learn to love all men.

Marsh should, of course, continue to “pray for [his] brethren of the Twelve” and “admonish them sharply” for their sins. But likewise (harking back to verse 2, where he is reprov'd), he is told, “Be ye faithful before me” (verse 12).

Reprove them as required, Marsh is told, for “after their temptations, and much tribulation,” there is still a promise: “I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and I will heal them” (112:13). Note that even though they were Apostles, these men— young, inexperienced, in transgression—needed to be converted anew. Similarly, we should search our own hearts about where we stand. When we find ourselves stumbling or kicking against the pricks, this verse reminds us of the way back.

The passage concludes with this counsel to President Marsh, counsel that the Lord says “unto all the Twelve” (and to us): “Gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep” (verse 14). For the Twelve in 1837, this charge specifically meant that they should prepare to take the gospel abroad to His sheep in other lands.

Then follows, in verses 15 through 22, counsel clarifying the roles and duties of the First Presidency and the Twelve. After President Marsh had been specifically warned in verse 10 to be humble, here all the members of the Twelve are told, “Exalt not yourselves.” The

warning was not against general pride alone but against a tendency to place themselves above their leaders: “Rebel not against my servant Joseph; for verily I say unto you, I am with him” (verse 15). We can now understand why that was essential counsel to them at that time—as well as a reminder for us. Verse 15 goes on to clarify, as do earlier revelations, that while both the First Presidency and the Twelve have keys, the Prophet Joseph is the head: “My hand shall be over him,” and his keys “shall not be taken from him till I come.”

Verses 16 and 17 are at the heart of what weighed heavily on President Marsh’s mind when he approached the Prophet seeking the word of the Lord: “Verily I say unto you, my servant Thomas, thou art the man whom I have chosen to hold the keys of my kingdom, as pertaining to the Twelve [still, despite the difficulties], abroad among all nations” (even in England!) and “to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places.”

Unfortunately, instead of humbly accepting this assurance as a renewed opportunity, Thomas immediately visited Vilate Kimball and, backed by this affirmation, told her that Heber could not open an “effectual door” in England because *he*, Thomas, had not sent him! The Prophet had assured him, Marsh explained, that since proclaiming the gospel abroad was his special responsibility, the door could not be “effectually” opened until *he* sent someone or went himself.

In pressing this point, Thomas Marsh once again missed the mark, as the revelation itself makes clear. That very verse continued: Marsh held the keys “to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places *where my servant Joseph*” and his counselors, in other words, the First Presidency, “cannot come”; and, said verse 18, “*On them* have I laid the burden of *all* the churches for a little season. Wherefore, whithersoever they shall send you [or Heber Kimball and Orson Hyde or *whomever*], go ye, and I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word” (112:17–19; emphasis added). Stated again: the Prophet’s keys held precedence even over those of the President of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Heber understood that principle. When he learned in England of Marsh’s claim, he was philosophical, allowing that “Brother Joseph said it was all right to prepare the way . . . so we have come to pre-

“Exalt Not Yourselves”

287

pare the way before Brother Thomas. And we have baptised a good lot of them.”¹⁹ Even so, he added, Brother Marsh would have to do some of the work himself if he intended to claim some of the credit.

As if that were not clear enough, and apparently it was not for Marsh, verse 20 tries still again to clarify: “Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth these, the First Presidency, whom I have sent, whom I have made counselors . . . unto you.” Others also have power—especially the Twelve with their special calling and responsibility to take the gospel abroad—but it is all under the First Presidency.

Verse 21 adds: “And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name *by the voice of your brethren*, the Twelve” (that is, President Marsh was not to act alone; compare to the principle of unity and unanimity in D&C 107:27–38), “shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them” (112:21). Any nation? Always? “Inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit” (verse 22).

Verses 23–26 shift the focus. These verses warning of a day of weeping, desolation, and mourning that “cometh speedily” (verse 24) may speak of things yet to occur; certainly the principles are more broadly applicable than merely Kirtland in 1837. But they also had a specific application to Kirtland, and it is that connection that we will examine.

Why will there be troubles? Because, says verse 23, “darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt.” (That sounds like a description of today.) *Where* will there be troubles? “Upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth” (verse 25). *Who* will suffer? Those who “have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house” (verse 26). Surely some of the wayward Apostles, soon to be cut off, could be among that number. Why “my house”? Already there had been difficulties and soon there would be riots, disorder, and blasphemy *in the temple* in Kirtland, and perpetrators would include John Boynton, Apostle, and Warren Parrish, recently Joseph Smith’s private secretary.

“Therefore”—therefore what? Therefore the Twelve should labor

at home where the problems are and try to straighten things up? No! Verses 27 and 28 tell the Apostles: “Therefore, see to it that ye trouble not yourselves concerning the affairs of my church in this place, saith the Lord,” but rather purify *your hearts* and then go about *your labor*, which is, of course, to take the gospel to all the world.

The message seems to be that the Lord Himself can care for His house, and moreover, as verses 28–33 suggest, what can be more important for the Twelve than to preach divine truth with power and authority? They are to preach to every creature who has not received the gospel, either to their damnation or to their salvation, for “unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders [again the emphasis on order, everyone under the First Presidency], is the power of this priesthood given, for the last days and for the last time” (verse 30). These are the same keys which “have come down from the fathers” (verse 32). The Lord tells them, “Verily . . . behold how great is your calling” (verse 33).

A TRIAL OF FAITH IN MISSOURI

So great is the calling that they—and we—must cleanse themselves and do their duty “lest the blood of this generation be required at your hands” (verse 33). But—and the revelation closes with this in verse 34—for the faithful, the Lord says, “My reward is with me to recompense every man according as his work shall be.”

Despite the best efforts of Joseph, Sidney, Thomas, David, and Brigham, the Church could not be saved in Kirtland. Up to this point, the Prophet had patiently worked with dissenters, bringing back many, but when open rebellion broke out again in the fall of 1837, patience was no longer a virtue and backsliders were cut off. Anger mounted, division deepened, apostates grew bolder, and by year’s end Brigham Young, the most vigorous and outspoken among the Prophet’s defenders, was forced to flee for his life. In early January, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon followed, their families close behind, and by spring most of the faithful were on their way to Missouri.

Joseph Smith arrived in Far West, Missouri, in March 1838. After firming up local organization and leadership, he then set about the business in Kirtland of removing apostates. At the April 7 conference,

"Exalt Not Yourselves"

289

David Patten reviewed the status of each of the Twelve; there were concerns about William Smith, and he was unable to recommend Elders McLellin, Boynton, Johnson, and Johnson at all. At proceedings that commenced April 12, the four Apostles, along with Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, were each formally tried and cut off. After months of concern and labor with his quorum, Thomas's twelve were now eight, and one of those could not be relied upon. Feeling deep concern for their quorum, no doubt Marsh and the remaining Apostles were cheered by a revelation for David Patten received April 7.

In Doctrine and Covenants 114, given April 7, 1838, verse 1 advised Patten to prepare himself, saying, "He may perform a mission unto me next spring, in company with others, even twelve including himself, to testify of my name and bear glad tidings unto all the world." What twelve, including himself? There were no longer twelve Apostles in his quorum, nor had any ever been added since its organization more than three years before. Verse 2 supplied the answer: "For verily . . . inasmuch as there are those among you who deny my name, others shall be planted in their stead and receive their bishopric." By noting that fallen brethren would be replaced and by commanding Elder Patten to prepare, after all, for a mission "with others, even twelve," this short revelation foreshadows several of the key points made more explicitly three months later.

On July 8, in answer to the query "Show us thy will, O Lord, concerning the Twelve" (D&C headnote to D&C 118), another revelation, now Doctrine and Covenants 118, imparted firm direction and new life to the Quorum of the Twelve. "Let men be appointed to supply the place of those who are fallen," declared the revelation (verse 1). Thomas Marsh was to "remain for a season in the land of Zion," where he was now coeditor of the *Elder's Journal* with Joseph, "to publish my word" (verse 2). The others were to resume preaching and, as a quorum, prepare for a spring 1839 mission abroad. They would depart, continued the revelation, from the Far West temple site on April 26, the very day an earlier revelation had named for laying the temple cornerstone (see D&C 115).

Verse 1 of Doctrine and Covenants 118, given July 8, 1838, announced: "Let a conference be held immediately; let the Twelve be

organized; and let men be appointed to supply the place of those who are fallen.”

Verse 2 then authorized President Marsh to remain in Far West, Missouri, “for a season.” This was not a choice between Kirtland and Missouri, as before in Doctrine and Covenants 112, but between staying for a time in Far West and going abroad immediately. Verse 3 instructed “the residue,” the other Apostles who had remained faithful or who had returned to full fellowship—to “continue to preach from that hour.” It promised that if they would do this “in all lowliness of heart, in meekness and humility, and long-suffering,” they could still fulfill their divine mission (that is, despite disaster and division they had not yet lost the possibility of fulfilling their destiny) “and an *effectual door* shall be opened for them, from henceforth” (emphasis added; see also D&C 112:19).

Moreover, if they were thus faithful they had another promise, that while they were serving abroad, the Lord would “provide for their families” (D&C 118:3).

Verses 4 and 5 instructed, “Next spring let them [the residue and the new] depart to go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel [in Britain]. . . . Let them take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building-spot of my house, saith the Lord.”

The revelation closed, with verse 6, by naming those “appointed to fill the places of those who have fallen”: John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards.

The following day, the Apostles, for the first time in months, held a formal quorum meeting. They agreed to notify immediately the four new Apostles, none of whom were in Far West, and to prepare for their mission abroad. The anticipated ordination of new Apostles, the return of Elders Kimball and Hyde from England later in the month, and this renewal of their commission to carry the gospel to the nations seemed to portend a new day for Marsh’s shattered quorum. The command had been given, the date was known: finally President Marsh would have the opportunity to lead his colleagues abroad.

But it was not to be. Before the spring mission, indeed even before existing vacancies could be filled, there would be two more, one when David Patten was killed during the violence that soon erupted in northern Missouri, and the other caused by the disaffection of

President Marsh himself, in some ways a by-product of that same Missouri conflict.

Marsh’s disillusionment and decision to leave the Church were the result of many factors, having to do with pride, misunderstanding, hurt feelings, suspicion, and, in Marsh’s own later words, stubbornness and a loss of the Spirit.²⁰ Troubled of mind and spirit, feeling himself wavering, he humbled himself before the Lord in his printing shop long enough to receive a revelation about what course he should take. After sharing it with Heber Kimball and Brigham Young, he promptly went out and did the opposite, becoming bitter against the Church. Once his face was set, the stubborn, inflexible Thomas was not a man who could be turned. By removing himself from the Saints, he escaped the violence that soon decimated Far West and drove his coreligionists from Missouri, but at what cost? As he eventually came to acknowledge, his loss was the greater.

From Liberty Jail, the Prophet named George A. Smith to fill the vacancy created by the death of Elder Patten, but Marsh’s position remained vacant for nearly three years. In the meantime, under the direction of President Brigham Young, now senior Apostle, the available Apostles—William Smith was not to be found, Parley Pratt was in prison, and Willard Richards was in England—boldly returned to Missouri, whence they had so recently escaped, to fulfill the July 1838 revelation requiring them to depart April 26, 1839, from “the building-spot of my house” in Far West (D&C 118).

Enemies had boasted that the revelation proved Joseph Smith a false prophet because it could not be fulfilled. So certain were they that no one would attempt it that they did not even bother to post a guard. Perhaps, under the circumstances, the Lord would “take the will for the deed,” some Latter-day Saints urged, but Brigham Young and his associates would not allow even supposed failure to stand as a witness against Joseph. In the predawn hours they and a small group of Saints sang hymns, ordained two Apostles, laid a symbolic cornerstone, excommunicated dissidents, and departed before the first surprised anti-Mormon reached the site.

NEW HOPE IN NAUVOO

From Far West the Apostles returned to the new city being built in Illinois on the banks of the Mississippi to complete their preparations

and to situate their families as well as possible before departing. Instead of keeping them at arm's length as had often been the case in Kirtland, Joseph Smith embraced them, instructed them, blessed them, and participated fully in their preparations. None, however, had means to help their families. Destitute after the Missouri tragedy, without adequate shelter or provisions, everyone suffered—the more so when summer diseases befell them in the damp, sickly hollows along the river. Consequently, it was a great test of faith to leave their families in such circumstances in order to fulfill their mission. Because they understood that the Church could provide little help, they essentially left their families in the hands of God to embark on a mission that could not be postponed and which would eventually transform the Church. The Apostles did not forget that the revelation commanding their departure also declared, “I . . . give unto them a promise that I will provide for their families” (D&C 118:3). As Brigham Young wrote to his wife from England, though he longed to be able to administer to their needs, he had faith enough not to be unduly concerned: “The Lord said by the mouth of Brother Joseph, that they should be provided for, and I believed it.”²¹

The result of this sacrifice, of obedience in difficult circumstances, and of diligent efforts to labor together with unity and harmony was perhaps the most successful single mission in the history of the Church. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland noted after reading a recent book on the subject, after this mission, “neither this group of men, the British Isles, nor the Church would ever be the same again.”²² Finally the Twelve had fulfilled the promise inherent in their calling that had so eluded them during the years under President Marsh.

The rewards for service are many and often individualized. No doubt each of the Apostles received assurances and blessings fitted to his needs, as suggested by Doctrine and Covenants 82:10: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.” Doctrine and Covenants 126, the last section in our story, preserves one example—the knowledge that service is acceptable to the Lord: “My servant Brigham,” began the revelation, given July 9, 1841, “it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past, for your offering is acceptable to me.” Verse 2 affirmed that “I have seen your labor and toil . . . for my name” and, verse 3: “I therefore command you to *send* my word

“Exalt Not Yourselves”

293

abroad [from now on *send*, rather than take it], and take especial care of your family.”

Under Brigham Young, the “new” Quorum of the Twelve proved competent and fiercely loyal to Joseph and his principles and rendered extraordinary service at great sacrifice. After shared experiences in Britain molded this new quorum into an effective, united body of power, they returned home at a time when the Prophet’s needs for loyal assistance had multiplied. The result, announced by Joseph Smith on August 16, 1841, was a significant realignment of assignment and authority, with the Twelve taking their place next to the First Presidency in managing all Church affairs. The ambiguity between the high councils and the Twelve that had so vexed Thomas Marsh and the Apostles in Kirtland was over. The Apostles had completed their preparation, and the Prophet judged them, to use Brigham Young’s phrase, “fit for power.” What Thomas Marsh had dreamed of was now reality.

Throughout his service as President of the Twelve, Thomas Marsh had thought it his special mission to lead his quorum in taking the gospel abroad, and the July 1838 revelation, a few months before his apostasy, reaffirmed that mission (see D&C 118). His 1857 letter to Heber Kimball pleading for readmission revealed that nineteen years later he still remembered: “I know what I have done a mission was laid upon me & I have never filled it and now I fear it is too late but it is filled by another, I see, the Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?”²³

Had Thomas B. Marsh remained faithful in 1838, he would have led the Quorum of the Twelve to England instead of Brigham Young and he would have presided over the “new quorum” and the “new role”—the one he had so impatiently longed for—that resulted from that mission. All this occurred, instead, without him.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young and Thomas B. Marsh, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 5:206–10.
2. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Heber C. Kimball Papers, Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.

3. Minutes, March 28, 1835, Kirtland Record Book, 198, Church Archives.
4. See Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership, 1830–1841," PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1981, 166ff.
5. For details, see chapter 4 in Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young."
6. Joseph Smith Diary, November 3, 1835, in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:63–64.
7. Joseph Smith Diary, November 5, 1835, in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:65–66.
8. Historian's Office Journal, February 16, 1859, Church Archives.
9. Minutes, February 12, 1849, Church Archives.
10. Minutes, November 30, 1847, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives.
11. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8: 197.
12. For details of the Kirtland crisis, see chapters 5 through 7 in Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young," and chapters 17 and 18 in Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983); details not otherwise documented are from Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young."
13. Thomas B. Marsh and David Patten to Parley P. Pratt, May 10, 1837, Joseph Smith letterbook, Joseph Smith Papers, Church Archives.
14. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51), 2:489.
15. The story of Kimball's call and of the Kimball-Hyde mission is told in James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837–1841* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 23–53.
16. Wilford Woodruff Diary, June 25, 1857, LDS Church Archives.
17. Marsh autobiography published in *Deseret News*, March 24, 1858.
18. If this is the allusion, it would not necessarily be an anachronism. Discussion of and prophecies about a destiny in the Rocky Mountains can now be demonstrated long before Nauvoo.
19. Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young," 313–44.
20. Esplin, "Emergence of Brigham Young," 339ff.
21. Brigham Young to Mary Ann Young, October 16, 1840, in Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 399.
22. Jeffrey R. Holland to Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, July 31, 1992.
23. Thomas B. Marsh to Heber C. Kimball, May 5, 1857, Heber C. Kimball Papers, Church Archives.