

Hyrum Smith's Liberty Jail Letters

KENNETH L. ALFORD AND CRAIG K. MANSCILL

The story of Liberty Jail has frequently and appropriately been told from the perspective of Joseph Smith. Joseph sent nine letters while in jail in the ironically named town of Liberty, Missouri (see table 1).¹ Three of those letters were sent to Emma, his beloved wife. The first letter, written on the day he arrived at Liberty Jail (December 1, 1838), was brief. Addressing it to his “Dear companion,” he wrote to “take this opportunity to inform you that we arrived in Liberty and committed to Joal [jail] this Evening but we are all in good spirits.”² In his last letter, written on April 4, shortly before his incarceration ended, he expressed his love for Emma and offered her encouragement and advice.³

The day after Joseph dictated his March 20 letter⁴—arguably one of the two most famous and oft-quoted letters he ever wrote—he penned his second letter to Emma that served as a cover and introduction for the much longer letter dictated the previous day. Addressing Emma as “Affectionate Wife,” he explained, “I have sent an Epistle to the church directed to you because I wanted you to have the first reading of it and then I want Father and Mother to have a copy of it keep the original yourself as I dictated the matter myself.” At the end of his three-page cover letter, Joseph touchingly asked his wife, “My Dear Emma do you think that my being cast into prison by the mob renders me less worthy of your friendship,” and then he provided the answer he hoped

to receive: “No I do not think so.”⁵ Joseph’s two letters to Bishop Edward Partridge and the Church—from which Doctrine and Covenants sections 121, 122, and 123 would later be drawn—are the focus of this essay. The first letter was written on March 20; the second was written sometime around March 22. (We will generally refer to them in this essay as the Partridge letters.)

Joseph’s brother Hyrum was incarcerated in Liberty Jail with Joseph, but his experience has largely been downplayed or ignored. Hyrum also wrote several letters while in Liberty Jail, and his letters provide valuable information about conditions and events during the imprisonment, give context to events that were occurring in the Church at large, and add insights into the struggles his family endured during the Missouri persecutions and then as refugees in Illinois. A close study of Hyrum’s letters provides insights into the development, writing, and doctrines espoused in Doctrine and Covenants 121, 122, and 123.

JOSEPH’S LIBERTY JAIL LETTERS	DATE
To Emma Hale Smith (wife) (informing his wife that they had arrived at the jail)	1 December 1838
To the Saints in Caldwell County (guidance and instructions)	16 December 1838
Letter to Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young (directing them to manage the affairs of the Church)	16 January 1839
To Presendia Huntington Buell (friend) (thanking her for friendship and interest in their welfare)	15 March 1839
To the Church and Edward Partridge (includes the text of Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–33)	20 March 1839
To Emma Hale Smith (responding to a letter from her)	21 March 1839
To Isaac Galland (businessman) (expressed a desire to purchase land from him)	22 March 1839
To Edward Partridge and the Church (includes the text of 121:34–46; 122; and 123)	circa 22 March 1839
To Emma Hale Smith (expressed his love and gave her advice and encouragement)	4 April 1839

Table 1. Joseph Smith’s Liberty Jail letters

PRELUDE TO LIBERTY JAIL

Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and other leaders were betrayed at Far West into the hands of Major General Samuel D. Lucas and the Missouri militia on October 31, 1838.⁶ Hyrum Smith and Amasa Lyman were captured later that day while attempting to flee to Iowa.⁷ In Richmond, Missouri, on November 29, 1838, Austin A. King, a Fifth Judicial Circuit judge, signed the court order charging six prisoners with “treason against the state of Missouri.”⁸ The six men were Joseph Smith, who would turn thirty-four years old in three weeks; Sidney Rigdon, forty-five; Hyrum Smith, thirty-eight; Alexander McRae, thirty-one, the youngest member of the group; Lyman Wight, forty-two; and Caleb Baldwin, forty-seven, who was the oldest.

Hyrum later testified that he heard the judge say “that there was no law for us, nor for the Mormons, in the state of Missouri; that he had sworn to see them exterminated, and to see the Governor’s order executed to the very letter, and that he would do so.”⁹ The detainees were bound over to Sheriff Samuel Hadley for transport to Liberty Jail. Before being taken to jail, they were handcuffed and chained together. During the course of his work, the blacksmith informed the prisoners that “the judge [had] stated his intention to keep us in jail until all the Mormons were driven out of the state.”¹⁰ With the exception of Sidney Rigdon, who was freed on February 5, 1839, the detainees would be incarcerated the entire winter—from December 1, 1838, until April 6, 1839—in the unheated jail.¹¹

Isolated from Church headquarters, the jailed Church leadership was rendered unable to lead the Church out of Missouri. Communication with the outside world was limited to letters and visitors. As Liberty is forty miles from Far West, it was possible for family, friends, and Church leaders to call on the prisoners. All the men except Hyrum received visits from their wives during December.¹² They were visited in January over twenty times, with all of the wives visiting at least once. During one of those visits, Hyrum blessed his newborn son, Joseph Fielding Smith.¹³ Jail visitors decreased during February and March as an increasing number of Church and family members fled Missouri for the safety of Illinois.

Hyrum later commented, “We endeavored to find out for what cause [we were to be thrust into jail], but all that we could learn was [that it was] because we were Mormons.”¹⁴ Life in the jail was difficult. Hyrum reported that “poison was administered to us three or four times, the effect it had upon our systems was, that it vomitted us almost to death, and then we

would lay in a torpid stupid state, not even caring or wishing for life.” He also said, “We were also subjected to the necessity of eating human flesh for the space of 5 days or go without food, except a little coffee or a little corn bread—the latter I chose in preference to the former. We none of us partook of the flesh except Lyman Wight.”¹⁵

BISHOP PARTRIDGE’S MARCH 5 LETTER

On March 5 Bishop Edward Partridge wrote a letter from Quincy, Illinois, to provide details of the Church in Illinois for the “Beloved Brethren” in Liberty Jail. Partridge explained that he wrote because of “an opportunity to send direct to you by br[other] Rogers.”¹⁶ In addition to Partridge’s letter, David Rogers also carried a March 6 letter from Don Carlos and William Smith, two of Joseph and Hyrum’s brothers, and a March 7 letter from Emma, Joseph’s wife.¹⁷ Rogers left Quincy on March 10, 1839, and delivered the letters on March 19.¹⁸

LIBERTY JAIL CORRESPONDENCE

In the difficult conditions of Liberty Jail, the prisoners faced several challenges when it came to writing and receiving letters. The first problem, as Hyrum mentioned in his March 19 letter to his wife Mary, was that they were often in need of paper and ink. The second was difficulty receiving letters. And third was the challenge of finding trustworthy people to deliver their letters. As an increasing number of Church members fled Missouri, letters became the only viable means of communication with family members and Church leaders now in Illinois.

We are currently aware of seven letters Hyrum Smith wrote from Liberty Jail (see table 2).¹⁹ Six of them are dated and were penned during March and April 1839. At least four of the letters, and possibly five, were written before Joseph dictated the Partridge letters of instruction, portions of which would be canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 121–123. Hyrum’s first two letters, both dated March 16, were written to his wife Mary Fielding Smith and Hannah Grinnals. Hannah was a longtime, trusted friend who lived with Hyrum and Mary for almost twenty years. She first appears in the historical record in 1837 giving aid to Hyrum’s family when his daughter Sarah was born and his first wife, Jerusha, died while he was away on Church business. Hannah likewise assisted Mary with Joseph F. Smith’s birth on November 13, 1838, almost two weeks after Hyrum was arrested.²⁰ When Hyrum wrote

to Hannah from Liberty Jail, he thanked her for “friends[h]ip you have manifested towards my family I feel grateful to you for your Kindness.” He included words of encouragement and counsel to his daughter Lovina and to Clarinda, who was likely Hannah’s daughter, as well as general counsel to his other children (“little John little Hiram little Jerusha & little Sarah”) that they “must be good little children till farther [*sic*] comes home.” He also confided to Hannah, “I want you should stay with the family and nev[e]r leave them My home shall be your home for I shall have a home though I have none now . . . my house shall be your home.”²¹

HYRUM'S LIBERTY JAIL LETTERS	DATE
To Mary Fielding Smith (wife) (shared details of an attempted jailbreak)	16 March 1839
To Hannah Grinnals (family friend) (words of encouragement and friendship)	16 March 1839
To Mary Fielding Smith (discussed what it was like to be imprisoned)	19 March 1839
To Mary Fielding Smith (gently chided Mary for not writing to him more often)	20 March 1839
To Mary Fielding Smith (primarily paraphrasing of a Robert Burns poem)	23 March 1839
To Mary Fielding Smith (a discussion of family matters and a fellow prisoner)	5 April 1839 (based on a Liberty, Missouri, postmark; the letter itself is undated)
To Mary Fielding Smith (compared his situation in jail to Joseph in Egypt)	Undated

Table 2. Hyrum Smith's Liberty Jail letters

Hyrum's five remaining letters were written to Mary. While we can date four of those letters (March 19, 20, 23 and April 5), the fifth remains undated because the first page is missing.²² Hyrum addressed the undated letter to Mary at Quincy, Illinois, which provides some clue as to the approximate date it was written. Joseph's and Hyrum's families left Far West on February 7. We are uncertain when they reached Illinois, but we know

they settled in Quincy, Illinois, before March 5, 1839. In his March 5 letter to the Liberty Jail inmates, Bishop Edward Partridge informed Joseph and Hyrum that “Brother Joseph’s wife lives at Judge [John] Cleveland[?]s, I have not seen her but I sent her word of this opportunity to send to you. Br[other] Hyrum’s wife lives not far from me.” Bishop Partridge added, “I have been to see her a number of times, her health was very poor,” implying Mary Fielding Smith had arrived in Quincy well before March 5.²³

In a March 6 letter to Hyrum and Joseph written from Quincy, their younger brother Don Carlos explained, “Father’s family have all arrived in this state except you two. . . . Emma and Children are well, they live three miles from here, and have a tolerable good place. Hyrum’s children and mother Grinolds²⁴ are living at present with father; they are all well, Mary [Fielding Smith] has not got her health yet, but I think it increases slowly. She lives in the house with old Father Dixon, likewise Br[other] [Robert B.] Thompson and family; they are probably a half mile from Father’s.”²⁵ Given the short time Joseph and Hyrum remained incarcerated after the Partridge letters were written in March (they left the jail, never to return, on April 6), there is a greater possibility that the undated letter from Hyrum to Mary was written before Joseph’s March 20 letter of counsel and instruction rather than on some later date.

JOSEPH’S MARCH 1839 PARTRIDGE LETTERS

In two long letters totaling twenty-six pages, Joseph wrote “To the church of the Latterday saints at Quincy Illinois and scattered abroad and to Bishop [Edward] Partridge in particular.”²⁶ The first letter, written on March 20, 1839, was signed by the five men who remained in Liberty Jail—Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin, and Alexander McRae.²⁷ Those seventeen pages include text that would eventually be canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–33.

The second letter, dated in *The Joseph Smith Papers* as “circa 22 March 1839,” is an additional nine handwritten pages. Those pages begin with the heading “Continued to the church of Latter-day-saints” and are signed by the same five detainees. One of the purposes of the additional pages was “to offer further reflections to Bishop [Edward] Partridge and to the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day saints whom we love with a fervent love.”²⁸ It is from the second letter that Doctrine and Covenants sections 121 (vv. 34–46), 122, and 123 were later excerpted and added to the Doctrine and Covenants.

The letters were recorded “by Alexander McRae and Caleb Baldwin, who acted as scribes for Joseph Smith.”²⁹ Historian Stephen C. Harper has concluded that “frequent misplaced and misspelled words show the rush in which the dictation was scribbled down.”³⁰ Inspection of the original pages shows that Joseph made a few corrections to the text.

Lyman Wight’s journal states that “Brother Ripley [almost certainly Alanson Ripley, a participant in Zion’s Camp who served on a committee that assisted poor members of the Church in moving from Missouri] came in and took our package of letters for Quincy” on March 22—providing sufficient time and opportunity for the second of the Partridge letters to have been dictated and signed on either March 21 or 22.³¹

HYRUM’S RELATIONSHIP WITH DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 121–123

The two Partridge letters dictated by Joseph Smith contain “some of the most sublime revelations ever received by any prophet in any dispensation.”³² It is reasonable to consider that many of the thoughts, feelings, doctrines, counsel, and teachings found throughout those two letters—in both the canonized and noncanonized sections—had been germinating for many weeks before being recorded. With so little to occupy their time in jail, Joseph and his fellow prisoners had many days to reflect on the content expressed in that letter. That would be especially true for conversations Joseph had with his beloved brother Hyrum. The overlapping content in Joseph’s and Hyrum’s letters demonstrates that they included some of that conversation in their letters. Hyrum’s letters also demonstrate that some of the ideas in sections 121–123 took shape orally before they were committed to paper.

Excerpts from Hyrum’s letters are included in tables 3–7. Text in the left-hand columns is from Hyrum’s Liberty Jail diary and letters. The right-hand columns list similarly themed excerpts from sections 121, 122, and 123. We will leave it to the reader to draw conclusions as to whether the presumed interchange of ideas between brothers can be seen within Hyrum’s letters and diary entries.

Hyrum Smith kept a contemporary diary while incarcerated in Liberty Jail. The three excerpts below (in table 3) from Hyrum’s diary under the dates of March 15 and 18 share sentiments similar to verses found in Doctrine and Covenants 122 and 123.

HYRUM'S DIARY	CANONIZED PORTIONS OF JOSEPH'S LETTER
<p>"I was with several others Committed to Jail for my religion" (15 March 1839)</p>	<p>"And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit" (Doctrine and Covenants 122:7)</p>
<p>"the same acqisitions was had a gainst the son of god" (15 March 1839)</p>	<p>"The Son of Man hath descended below them all." (122:8)</p>
<p>"Kept in close Confine ment and our familiees we're Driven out of the state they also were Robed of all they [smudged] goods and substance for theyr suport all most maked [naked] and Desitute as they were when they were born in to the world all this by a hellish mob let loose by the athoreties of the state to practise their wicked Designs upon an inosent people and for no other cause than to put Down their <our> Religion" (18 March 1839)</p>	<p>"It is an imperative duty that we owe to God, to angels, with whom we shall be brought to stand, and also to ourselves, to our wives and children, who have been made to bow down with grief, sorrow, and care, under the most damning hand of murder, tyranny, and oppression, supported and urged on and upheld by the influence of that spirit which hath so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who have inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children, and filled the world with confusion, and has been growing stronger and stronger, and is now the very mainspring of all corruption, and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity." (123:7)</p>

Table 3. Excerpts from Hyrum Smith's diary, March 1839

Hyrum's March 16 letter to Mary Fielding Smith. In this letter, addressed to "Mary, my dear Companion," Hyrum shared details regarding an attempted jailbreak. As he explained:

Some friend put some auguers [augers] in to the window & an iron bar we made a hole in through the logs in the lower room & through the stone wall all but the out side stone which was suffitiently large to pass out when it was pushed out but we were hind[e]red for want of handles to the auguers the logs were so hard that the handles would split & we had to make new ones with our fire wood we had to bore the hole for the shank with my penknife which delayed time in Spite of <all> we could do the day of Examination came on before in the after noon. that Evening we was ready to make our Essape [escape] & we were discovered & prevented of making our Essape there apeared to be no hard feelings on the part of the Sheriff & Jailor but the old Baptists

& prisbiterians & Me[r]hodests were very mutch Excited they turned out in tens as volenteers to gard the Jail till the Jail was mended.³³

Hyrum closed this letter with the following plea: “O god in the name of thy son preserve the life & health of my bosom companeon & may she be prsious [precious] in thy sight & all the litle children & that is pertaining to my family & hasten the time when we shall meet in Each others Embrass [Embrace].” The following statements in this letter sound like text included in Doctrine and Covenants 121–123:

HYRUM'S CORRESPONDENCE	CANONIZED PORTIONS OF JOSEPH'S LETTER
“O god how long shall we suffer these things will not though [thou] deliver us & make us free Still thy will be done O lord.”	“O God, where art thou? . . . How long shall thy hand be stayed . . . ? Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions . . . ?” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3)
“O lord god wilt though [thou] hear the pra[y]er of your servant”	“let thine ear be inclined” (121:4)
“May the lord bless you & give you stren[g]th to Endure all these things”	“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.” (121:8)

Table 4. Excerpts from Hyrum Smith's March 16, 1839, letter to Mary Fielding Smith

Hyrum's March 19 letter to Mary Fielding Smith. From this letter we learn that Hyrum was ill—“q[u]ite out of hea[l]th to day have Kept my bed all day”—the day before Joseph dictated his March 20 letter. He expressed his disappointment “that I did not hear from you & the family by your own pen” and let her know that “brother Pa[r]tr[i]dge says he imformed you of the oppertunity of sending [a letter] by brother Rodgers.” He conceded that “I do not Know but your was sick so that you could not write.” Hyrum shared that he was “verry anxious to hear from you,” and he worried about his family. “I have been informed,” he wrote, “that you are seperated from the family . . . on this side of the river & you on the other . . . my feelings & anxiety is sutch that my sleep has departed from me.” And then Hyrum confided that his jail experience was wearing on him: “My faith understanding & Judgement is not suffitient to over come these feelings of sorrow a word from you might possibly be sattisfactory or in degree relieve my feelings of anxiety that sleep may return.” He also provided a glimpse into the physical

toll life in jail exacted. “Excuse my poor writing my nerves are some what affected & <my hands> are this Evening q[u]ite swollen & fingers are stiff & painfull with the rheum[a]tism.”³⁴ Two statements from this letter sound similar to the canonized portions of Joseph’s March 20 letter:

HYRUM’S CORRESPONDENCE	CANONIZED PORTIONS OF JOSEPH’S LETTER
“God has said that he would deliver us from the power of our Enemeis in his own due time we try to be as patient as possible”	“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8)
“the bonds of true friendship & love”	“Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.” (121:9)

Table 5. Excerpts from Hyrum Smith’s March 19, 1839, letter to Mary Fielding Smith

Hyrum’s March 20 letter to Mary Fielding Smith. Hyrum informed Mary that David Rogers visited that morning and that Alanson Ripley was also there and “is a going to start back to [*faded*] this after noon.” Ripley did not depart, though, until March 22. Toward the end of this letter, Hyrum again gently chided Mary for not writing: “I thought if you could not write you could send a friendly word. . . . I do not wish to harrow up your feelings if they are inocent but I thought it strange that you did not send one word to me when I thought you Knew I was so anxious to hear from you. . . . If you have no feelings for me as a husband you could sent or caused to be sent some information concerning the little babe or those little children that lies near my hart.”³⁵ Unlike the other letters to Mary, this letter has no signature or address.³⁶ As this letter is dated the same day as Joseph’s letter, it is no surprise that several concepts from the latter found their way into the former.

HYRUM'S CORRESPONDENCE	CANONIZED PORTIONS OF JOSEPH'S LETTER
"if you have not forsaken me"	"O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:1)
"our Enemies must be left without Excuse those that seek our hurt will see their folly sooner or later"	"Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs." (121:5)
"our sufferings will only cal[l] to mind the sufferings of the aintients [ancients]"	"Remember thy suffering saints, O our God. . . . Thou art not yet as Job." (121:6, 10)
"we must be patient in tribulation"	"If thou art called to pass through tribulation . . ." (122:5)

Table 6. Excerpts from Hyrum Smith's March 20, 1839, letter to Mary Fielding Smith

Hyrum's undated (presumably pre-March 20) letter to Mary Fielding Smith. This letter is addressed (on the final page) to "Mrs Mary Smith, Q[u]incy Adams Co Illinois." In the extant pages, Hyrum compares their situation to Joseph in Egypt, who "was sold by his bretheren notwithstanding he was cast in to prison for many years yet the power of wisdom was there all though men thought to disgrace him but they fail'd." He shared his opinion with Mary that "bonds and imprisenments and persecutions are no dis grace to the Saints it is that is common in all ages of the world since the days of adam for he was persecuted by his own posterity in the days of Seth with sutch violence the he had to flee out of his own count[r]y to an other land." He closed this letter by asking Mary to "pray for me my companion I will pray for <you> unceasingly as mutch as I can." After signing his name, he asked Mary to "Excuse all imperfections."³⁷

HYRUM'S CORRESPONDENCE	CANONIZED PORTIONS OF JOSEPH'S LETTER
"that the wicked ungodly oppresser shall come to a speedy distruction and have no Excuse in the Day of Judgement"	"Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs." (Doctrine and Covenants 121:5)
"he was patient in tribulation and hardened to that redeeming power that saves"	"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes." (121:8)
"wisdom shows us that these things are for our salvation spirituallly and temporallly"	
"all these things are to make us wise and inteligent that we may be the happy recipient of the hi[gh]est glory"	
"bonds and imprisenments and persecutions are no dis grace to the Saints"	"And those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death . . ." (121:18)
"that what we do not learn by precept we may learn by Experince"	"We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion." (121:39)
"the scepter of the kingdom shall be in their hands"	"thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth" (121:46)
"if they are cast in to the pit it shall b[<i>faded</i>] be with them and deliver them all though th[e]y are left in bonds"	"And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit . . ." (122:7)

Table 7. Excerpts from an undated letter from Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith

As these letter excerpts demonstrate, Hyrum Smith appears to have been involved in discussions regarding the doctrines and concepts included in the Partridge letters. For a brief time, those letters of instruction served almost as a de facto Church presidency while the Church was deprived of Joseph and Hyrum's presence. It should not come as a surprise that Joseph and Hyrum discussed much of the contents of Joseph's March letters to Edward Partridge; they were sharing the same space and experiencing the

same trying conditions, emotions, and family difficulties. Plus, there was a strong and lifelong bond between them.

There are additional similarities to Joseph's March letters to Edward Partridge in Hyrum's subsequent letters and diary entries, but they do not necessarily reflect discussions that could have occurred between Joseph and Hyrum before Joseph dictated the long March letters.

RELEASE FROM LIBERTY JAIL

The five prisoners left Liberty Jail on April 6 and were taken to Daviess County to appear before Judge Birch. For ten days a ribald and irreverent grand jury boasted of abuses they had perpetrated on the Mormons. Hyrum reported that after ten days of the grand jury's drunken antics, "we were indicted for treason, murder, arson, larceny, theft, and stealing."³⁸ The prisoners requested a change of venue to Marion County but were granted instead a change to Boone County. "They fitted us out with a two horse wagon, and horses, and four men, besides the sheriff, to be our guard," according to Hyrum. "There were five of us [prisoners]. We started from Gallatin the sun about two hours high, P.M., and went as far as Diahman that evening and staid till morning. There we bought two horses of the guard, and paid for one of them in our clothing, which we had with us; and for the other we gave our note." Upon reaching Boone County, "we bought a jug of whiskey; with which we treated the company." The sheriff informed the prisoners that Judge Birch had instructed him "never to carry us to Boon[e] county . . . and said he, I shall take a good drink of grog and go to bed, and you may do as you have a mind to. Three others of the guard drank pretty freely of whiskey, sweetened with honey; they also went to bed, and were soon asleep, and the other guard went along with us, and helped to saddle the horses."³⁹

Joseph and Hyrum mounted the horses, and Caleb Baldwin, Lyman Wight, and Alexander McRae started walking to Quincy, Illinois. Joseph and Hyrum reached Quincy on April 22, 1839, where they found their families "in a state of poverty, although in good health."⁴⁰ Their extended ordeal had reached an end.

AFTERMATH

Joseph Smith's March 1839 letters to Bishop Partridge and the Church were considered historical documents and were not canonized during Joseph and

Hyrum's lifetime. Both letters were published several times before Doctrine and Covenants 121–123 was canonized, including excerpts printed in the *Times and Seasons*, the *Deseret News*, and the *British Millennial Star*.⁴¹ Sometime before January 15, 1875, Elder Orson Pratt received an assignment from Brigham Young to work on a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, “arranging the order in which the revelations are to be inserted.” Elder Pratt “divided the various revelations into verses, and arranged them for printing, according to the order of date in which they were revealed.”⁴² Responsibility regarding which excerpts from the Partridge letters would be canonized was also apparently left to Elder Pratt. The six excerpts (five of which were stitched together to become Doctrine and Covenants 121 and 122, with a final excerpt providing the text for section 123) were included in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Pearl of Great Price was sustained as one of the four standard works of the Church during the October 1880 general conference; Doctrine and Covenants 121, 122, and 123 were canonized at the same time.⁴³

Kenneth L. Alford is a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

Craig K. Manscill is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

Kenneth L. Alford and Craig K. Manscill, “Hyrum Smith’s Liberty Jail Letters,” in *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes*, ed. Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara Morgan Gardner (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016), 189–206.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of Joseph Smith’s Liberty Jail letters, see H. Dean Garrett, “Seven Letters from Liberty,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Missouri*, ed. Arnold K. Garr and Clark V. Johnson (Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1994), 189–90. Garrett’s essay was written before the Joseph Smith Papers Project. See also *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents*, 6:293–406.
2. Letter to Emma Smith, 1 December 1838, [1], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
3. See Letter to Emma Smith, 4 April 1839, [1], <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.

4. See Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839, 1, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
5. Letter to Emma Smith, 21 March 1839, [1], <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
6. It is insightful to note that both Lilburn W. Boggs and Samuel D. Lucas were residents of Jackson County, Missouri, and had figured prominently in the 1833 expulsion of the Saints. In 1833 Boggs was Missouri's lieutenant governor and Lucas was a county court justice and colonel of local militia. See Leland H. Gentry and Todd M. Compton, *Fire and Sword: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri, 1836–39* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 15.
7. Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fulness of Times Student Manual: Religion 341 through 343* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 205.
8. Judge King had determined the outcome before the hearing. "If a cohort of angels were to come down and declare we were clear, Doniphan said it would all be the same, for he (King) had determined from the beginning to cast us into prison." Sidney Rigdon, *Appeal to the American People*, 1840, 67, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
9. Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], p. 1615, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/>.
10. Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, volume D-1, p. 1615.
11. See Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 680–81. On July 1, 1843, Sidney Rigdon testified before the Municipal Court of Nauvoo that in January 1839 "I was ordered to be discharged from prison, and the rest remanded back. . . . It was some ten days after this before I dared leave the jail. . . . Just at dark, the sheriff and jailer came to the jail with our supper. . . . I whispered to the jailer to blow out all the candles but one, and step away from the door with that one. All this was done. The sheriff then took me by the arm, and an apparent scuffle ensued. . . . We reached the door, which was quickly opened, and we both reached the street. He took me by the hand and bade me farewell, telling me to make my escape, which I did with all possible speed." See Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], p. 1651, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
12. Joseph Smith III and Heman C. Smith, *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Volume 2, 1836–1844* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1967), 2:309 (hereafter *History of the Reorganized Church*). Mary Fielding Smith had recently given birth to a son, Joseph F. Smith, on November 13, 1838, and her health remained poor for many weeks.
13. *History of the Reorganized Church*, 2:315.
14. Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 273, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
15. Hyrum Smith, quoted in Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 273.
16. Letter from Edward Partridge, 5 March 1839, 3, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
17. See Letter from Don Carlos Smith and William Smith, 6 March 1839, 38, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
18. Elder David White Rogers, Journal History, March 17, 1839, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 2–4 (hereafter CHL). The typewritten copy of Rogers's statement that appears in the Journal History is dated February 1, 1839, at Quincy, Illinois. The date is somewhat problematic because most of the statement outlines events that occurred well after February 1, 1839. It seems likely that Rogers began his statement, which details his

efforts with S. Bent and Israel Barlow to find a suitable location for the Saints to settle in Illinois, on February 1 and simply did not redate the completed statement. Rogers recorded: "We left Far West on the 20th. I have visited the brethren in Richmond Jail in the meantime. And on the morrow [March 21] we visited the Prophet Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail." There appears to be a dating error in Rogers's account, though, because both Hyrum and Joseph wrote that they received Bishop Partridge's letter on March 19—not March 21 as Rogers remembered. In a letter to his wife Mary, dated March 19, Hyrum wrote that "we received a letter this evening from brother [Edward] Pa[r]tridge by the hand of brother Rodgers it was q[ui]te late when it came to us & we was out of paper except this scrap & the mesinger said he should start very Erley in the morning." Holograph, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, March 19, 1839, MS 2779, CHL. In his March 20 letter (a few lines before the location where the text for Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–25 would later be extracted), Joseph stated that "we received some letters last evening one from Emma one from Don C. Smith and one from Bishop Partridge all breathing a kind and consoling spirit"—showing that Rogers arrived at the jail on March 19. See Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839, 1.

19. Table 2 lists Hyrum's personal correspondence. As a member of the First Presidency, Hyrum also signed the January 16, March 20, and circa March 22, 1839, letters listed in table 1. Please note that an earlier version of this essay incorrectly listed eight private letters written by Hyrum Smith in Liberty Jail. The correct number is currently believed to be seven. On close examination, the letter dated April 3 in the 2016 publication was an incomplete and poor-quality copy of the April 5 letter.
20. Lucy Mack Smith referred to Hannah as "Mrs. Grenolds." The spelling *Grinnals* is from the Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register, which records her endowment on December 13, 1845, and gives her date of birth as November 3, 1783. The Hannah Grennell (born November 3, 1796, Killingsworth, Connecticut) found in the Church's patriarchal blessing index may be the same person despite the discrepancy in the year of birth. The blessing, given in Nauvoo on July 4, 1845, records her parents as William Woodstock and Elizabeth with no last name given. The patriarchal blessing indicates that Hannah would receive her companion and children in the resurrection of the just, suggesting that she may have been a widowed mother of more than one child. The 1850 federal census lists a sixty-six-year-old Hannah Grennells, born in Connecticut, as a member of Mary Smith's home. This is consistent with the 1840 federal census (from Hancock County, Illinois), which lists a woman between fifty and sixty years of age living in Hyrum's home. If the girl listed with Hannah in the 1840 census is her daughter Clarinda, then she and Hyrum's daughter Lovina were near the same age. According to historian Don C. Corbett, Hannah "died two years after Mary Smith, who passed away on 21 September 1852 at the age of fifty-eight." If Hannah died in 1854, however, she would have been seventy according to the 1850 federal census. Mary Fielding Smith's obituary appeared in the December 11, 1852, *Deseret News*. If Hannah had a published obituary, it is yet to be located. Considering Hannah's long-term relationship and significant contributions to Hyrum's family, there is an amazing paucity of information about her. See Don Cecil Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith: Daughter of Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970); Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith, Patriarch* (Salt

- Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); and Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978).
21. Hyrum Smith to Sister Grinnals, March 16, 1839, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, VMSS 774, series 2, box 1, folders 18–20. All transcriptions of Hyrum's Liberty Jail letters and diaries are from the Hyrum Smith Papers Project directed by Craig K. Manscill and Kenneth L. Alford.
 22. The Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith letters from 1839 reside in the CHL (MS 2779).
 23. Letter from Edward Partridge, 5 March 1839, 3. Bishop Partridge also kindly included what he knew about the status and location of the wives and families of Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin, and Alexander McRae.
 24. One of the many variant spellings of *Grinnals*.
 25. Letter from Don Carlos Smith and William Smith, 6 March 1839, 38.
 26. The Joseph Smith Papers Project originally assigned a March 20, 1839, date to both Partridge letters—referring to the first letter as “Part-A” and the second as “Part-B.” That changed with the publication of *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 6*. The second letter is now dated “circa 22 March” by *The Joseph Smith Papers*. See Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839, 1; and Letter to Edward Partridge and the Church, circa 22 March 1839, 1, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/>.
 27. See Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839, 1. When the six prisoners were remanded to Liberty Jail by Judge Austin A. King for the “said charge of treason,” Sidney Rigdon was “to answer in the county of Caldwell.” The other five prisoners were “to answer in the county of Daviess.” Partly as a result, Sidney Rigdon was released from Liberty Jail on February 5, well before the March 20 letter was written. See *History of the Reorganized Church*, 2:294.
 28. Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839, 1.
 29. Dean C. Jessee and John W. Welch, “Revelations in Context: Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail, 20 March 1839,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 125.
 30. Steven C. Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 448.
 31. Ripley had made previous visits to the jail. See *History of the Reorganized Church*, 2:315–23; and Holograph, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, March 16, 1839, MS 2779, CHL.
 32. Neal A. Maxwell, “A Choice Seer,” *Ensign*, August 1986.
 33. Holograph, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, March 16, 1839.
 34. Holograph, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, March 19, 1839.
 35. Mary Fielding Smith was ill much of the time Hyrum was incarcerated in Missouri, which is likely why she did not reply to Hyrum's letters.
 36. Holograph, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, March 20, 1839, MS 2779, CHL.
 37. Holograph, Hyrum Smith to Mary Fielding Smith, undated (written from Liberty Jail).
 38. Joseph Smith, *History*, 1838–1856, volume D-1, p. 1617.
 39. Joseph Smith, *History*, 1838–1856, volume D-1, p. 1618.
 40. Statement of Hyrum Smith, 1 July 1843, in Joseph Smith, *History*, 1838–1856, volume D-1, p. 1618.
 41. As noted by Jessee and Welch, “Revelations in Context,” 131, the March 20 letter was published in the *Times and Seasons* (May and July 1840), the *Deseret News*

- (January 26 and February 2, 1854), and the *Millennial Star* (December 1840, October 1844, and January 27 and February 10, 1855).
42. Church Historian's Office, Journal, CR 100 1, 1844–1879, January 15, 1875, CHL. See also Journal History, January 15, 1875, and “New and Revised Edition of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants,” Historian's Office, Journal, January 15, 1875, 70, CHL.
 43. See Richard E. Turley Jr. and William W. Slaughter, *How We Got the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 98–99.

Selected RSC Publications on Church History in Ohio and Missouri, 1831–1838

GENERAL READING

- Dorius, Guy L., Craig K. Manscill, and Craig James Ostler, eds. *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio and Upper Canada* (2006).
- MacKay, Michael Hubbard, and William G. Hartley, eds. *The Rise of the Latter-day Saints: The Journals and Histories of Newel Knight* (2019).
- Ostler, Craig James, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara Morgan Gardner, eds. *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes* (2016).
- Van Orden, Bruce A. *We'll Sing and We'll Shout: The Life and Times of W. W. Phelps* (2018).

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS AND MODERN REVELATION

- Cope, Rachel, Carter Charles, and Jordan T. Watkins. *How and What You Worship: Christology and Praxis in the Revelations of Joseph Smith* (2020).
- Esplin, Scott C., Richard O. Cowan, and Rachel Cope, eds. *You Shall Have My Word: Exploring the Text of the Doctrine and Covenants* (2012).
- Hedges, Andrew H., J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill, eds. *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context* (2008).
- Ostler, Craig J. "Doctrine and Covenants 93: How and What We Worship." *Religious Educator* 3, no. 2 (2002): 77–85.

TRIALS IN OHIO AND MISSOURI

Esplin, Scott C. "The Fall of Kirtland: The Doctrine and Covenants' Role in Re-affirming Joseph." *Religious Educator* 8, no. 1 (2007): 13–24.

Wessel, Ryan J. "The Textual Context of Doctrine and Covenants 121–23." *Religious Educator* 13, no. 1 (2012): 103–15.