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The book of Revelation was important enough to Joseph Smith that he took the time to ponder the book, identify questions that he had, and approach the Lord with those questions, providing a model (section 77) for how we can find resolutions to many of our own questions as we endeavor to understand the scriptures.

Section 77 and Book of Revelation Scholarship

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The book of Revelation is a complicated book, to say the least. For those of us who teach courses covering the book of Revelation, we often rely upon Joseph Smith's questions and answers on the book of Revelation, now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 77, as a means of providing some answers to all the mysterious complexity John's vision presents to us. However, the question inevitably arises as to how closely the answers provided in section 77 adhere to the text of the book of Revelation as well as the opinion of New Testament scholars, both those contemporary to Joseph Smith and those writing now. Essentially, what my students are curious about is the uniqueness of section 77's answers. Do they provide distinctive, heretofore unknown solutions to the book of Revelation's riddles, or do they largely follow the general scholarly consensus (if there even is such a thing when it comes to Revelation)? I typically answer with something like "Kind of." Yes, there are times when section 77 fits nicely with how scholars have interpreted Revelation, but section 77 also provides unique insights that are absent from many academic works. However, this kind of answer feels inadequate. In an attempt to be able to provide some firmer answers to my students' inquiries, I decided to

compare section 77's answers to a variety of prominent commentaries on the book of Revelation, some from the era of Joseph Smith and others more modern. The results of that project are what follows here. To be clear, the purpose of this project is *not* to question the answers delivered through Joseph Smith through revelation (however that process may have worked) but to evaluate *how* those answers align with other students of the book of Revelation as a way of helping students appreciate section 77's contributions.

G. K. Chesterton famously stated, "Though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature as wild as one of his own commentators."¹ The book of Revelation tends to bring out the unpredictable in its readers, as its hundreds of different commentaries can attest. Because the number of books and commentaries on Revelation is enormous, I am going to focus primarily on six specific commentaries—three older, three recent—to use as points of comparison for section 77, all by non-Latter-day Saint scholars.² The three older commentaries are Adam Clarke's *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, volume 6 (1817);³ E. B. Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 2 vols. (1844); and R. H. Charles's *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. (1920). My reasons for picking these three are both their propinquity with Joseph Smith (at least for the first two) and their impact historically on the study of the book of Revelation. The second group of three commentaries consists of David E. Aune's *Revelation*, 3 vols. (1998); G. K. Beale's *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (1999); and Craig R. Koester's *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (2014). My reason for picking these last three is that they are, in my opinion, the three best commentaries on the book of Revelation currently available. Where applicable, I will also direct the reader's attention to other valuable commentaries, such as those written by J. M. Ford,⁴ Robert H. Mounce,⁵ Robert L. Thomas,⁶ Wilfrid J. Harrington,⁷ Grant R. Osborne,⁸ Ben Witherington III,⁹ Brian K. Blount,¹⁰ and John Christopher Thomas.¹¹

A brief note on the context of Doctrine and Covenants 77: Section 77 was received sometime in March 1832, while Joseph was staying in Hiram, Ohio.¹² Joseph had been engaged in his revision of the New Testament, and his later history would record, "I received the following explanation of the Revelations of Saint John."¹³ It is also possible that his recent experience with "The Vision" (section 76) had increased Smith's desire to understand the book of Revelation, wherein John had recorded an account of his own vision.

Unfortunately, section 77 covers only the first eleven chapters of the book of Revelation, as Joseph had received instructions to “omit the translation for the present time.”¹⁴ As far as we know, Joseph never returned to the project, although he would employ the same question and answer technique with the “Sample of Pure Language” document that same March. This revelation, which in its earliest form was entitled “Revelation Explained,” was first published in the Nauvoo periodical *Times and Seasons* on August 1, 1844 and was subsequently canonized as section 77 of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876.

A brief note on methodology: To keep things as simple as possible, I will employ the following methodology. I will reproduce each verse of section 77, followed by what our six commentators say and my own comments. As previously mentioned, relevant comments made by other scholars of the book of Revelation will be included in the footnotes. Additionally, I have divided the answer portions of several verses from section 77 into (a) and (b) sections. I have found that the answer portions tend to have a two-tiered approach. The first part of an answer section, what I term (a), tends to be a fairly general reading, one that adheres more closely to the logical reading of the text. The second part of an answer section, what I term (b), tends to be where the unique material is present.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:1

Q. What is the sea of glass spoken of by John, 4th chapter, and 6th verse of the Revelation?

A. (a) It is the earth, (b) in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.

Clarke: No comment.

Elliott: “The firmament of blue transparent ether above the heads of the four throne-upholders, in which the cloud floated.”¹⁵

Charles: “The waters above the firmament. These waters rest on the firmament, and apparently over them God’s throne was *originally* conceived as established.”¹⁶

Aune: “This is probably based on an allusion to Ezek 1:22, where the prophet sees ‘the likeness of a firmament, shining like crystal,’ spread out over the heads of the living creatures. One of the features of the temple of Solomon was an enormous bronze basin of water mounted on twelve bronze oxen, three facing each of the cardinal directions.”¹⁷

Beale: It “may reflect (1) the laver in Solomon’s temple, (2) God’s holy separateness and splendor in heaven, or especially (3) the heavenly analogue to the Red Sea.”¹⁸

Koester: “At creation God was said to have established a dome over the earth. Above the dome were the waters of heaven, and beyond this was God’s throne or dwelling place. Ezekiel said the dome, or firmament, looked like crystal beneath the throne of God.”¹⁹

Comment: Commentators are largely in agreement that the “sea of glass” refers to either (1) the Earth, whether speaking of the firmament or dome that covered the Earth (separating it from the waters of heaven) and upon which the throne of God rested in Israelite cosmology or the heavenly waters themselves, or (2) the “brazen sea,” the laver of water that rested upon the back of twelve oxen and stood in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple (although the latter has cosmic significance in its own right).²⁰ Section 77’s (a) revealed answer seems largely in line with these ideas. The sea of glass, in some way, represents the Earth. Where section 77 could be seen to differ is in (b) seeing the sea of glass as the Earth itself in a sanctified, sacred state rather than as the waters or the dome themselves, looking ahead to the Earth’s future transformation rather than back at its past creation.²¹

Doctrine and Covenants 77:2–3

Q. What are we to understand by the four beasts, spoken of in the same verse?

A. (a) They are figurative expressions, used by the Revelator, John, in describing heaven, the paradise of God, the happiness of man, and of beasts, and of creeping things, and of the fowls of the air; that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and every other creature which God has created.

Q. Are the four beasts limited to individual beasts, or do they represent classes or orders?

A. (b) They are limited to four individual beasts, which were shown to John, to represent the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order or sphere of creation, in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity.

Clarke: “These creatures may be considered the representatives of the whole creation.”²²

Elliott: “But from what seems certain respecting Ezekiel’s four living creatures, or cherubim, the natural and almost necessary inference respecting the four that appeared to St. John is surely this, that as in their form and position they resembled Ezekiel’s cherubim, so in their nature and functions they must have resembled them also; and thus have symbolized beings of angelic nature, appointed, in that character, to ministrations near and confidential in the conduct of the Lord’s providential government. . . . Thus, and in this manner, I conclude that the . . . four living creatures of the Apocalyptic vision, symbolized the church of the redeemed ones . . . representing specially that part of the church which has past from earth to paradise.”²³

Charles: “To the writer of the Apocalypse these four Living Creatures . . . are simply an order of angels, and apparently the highest, or one of the highest orders.”²⁴

Aune: “The four living creatures . . . are based on OT conceptions of the angelic seraphim and cherubim, depicted as located both above and beneath the throne of God. After the time of Irenaeus, the four creatures came to symbolize the four Gospels and have suggested to some the relative chronological order of each of the Gospels.”²⁵

Beale: “Whether or not a zodiacal background is in mind, it is likely that the four figures are designed to be representative of the whole created order of animate life, a view also held by other commentators. . . . Are the four living beings intended to be understood as literal heavenly creatures of a high angelic order?”²⁶

Koester: “In Ezekiel’s throne vision such creatures drew God’s throne chariot (Ezek 1:15–21), whereas in Revelation they have a new role as representatives of creation.”²⁷

Comment: Section 77’s answers to these two questions contain both figurative and literal elements. On the one hand, the four beasts (or, more accurately, ζῷα, “living things”) figuratively represent “heaven,” “paradise,” and the happiness of the humans and beasts who inhabit them.²⁸ From this perspective, section 77’s (a) response can be seen in the work of Clarke, Beale, and Koester, who see them as representative of a larger created order, whereas our other commentators interpreted them as angelic beings in line with similar throne theophany scenes from Ezekiel 1 or Isaiah 6.²⁹

On the other hand, (b) while the four beasts “represent the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order,” the four beasts, section 77 suggests, were literally four actual beasts. In a later statement, Joseph would remark

that these four beasts “were four of the most noble animals that had filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect; they were like angels in their sphere; we are not told where they came from, and I do not know.”³⁰ Interpreted in this way, section 77’s answer is largely unique.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:4

Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had?

A. (a) Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge; and their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.

Clarke: Discusses the idea that this is the typical description of an angel but says little about any symbolic meanings.

Elliott: Discusses the idea that this is the typical description of an angel but says little about any symbolic meanings.

Charles: Discusses the idea that this is the typical description of an angel but says little about any symbolic meanings.

Aune: Discusses the idea that this is the typical description of an angel but says little about any symbolic meanings.

Beale: “The likelihood is that they (wings) are only a symbolic depiction, since they differ from both the models in Isaiah 6 and in Ezekiel 1, which also differ. . . . The portrayal of ‘fullness of eyes’ on animal figures could be a general history-of-religions symbol associated with deity.”³¹

Koester: “The six wings are reminiscent of the heavenly beings in Isa 6:2–3. Earlier, in Rev 4:6, the living creatures were said to be covered with eyes on the front and the back, and here they have eyes outside and inside. The descriptions suggest that they see in all directions and keep watch continuously, like the ‘sleepless ones who guard the throne of his glory.’”³²

Comment: The majority of our commentators see the “wings” and the “eyes” as a literal description of what John sees, primarily because they see the four “beasts” as angels and descriptions of angels in Jewish literature typically portray them with such exaggerated features. If they see any symbolism in those features, they do not mention it. Beale and Koester come closest to section 77’s answer (as do most other modern commentators) in implying something more symbolic or figurative, such as a manner of deity or comprehensive sight. Section 77’s response focuses primarily upon the symbolic—the “beasts” may have actually appeared this way but the “wings”³³ and the “eyes”³⁴

symbolize a crucial component of the beasts, namely their watchfulness and speed.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:5

Q. What are we to understand by the four and twenty elders, spoken of by John?

A. We are to understand that these elders whom John saw, (a) were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; (b) who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God.

Clarke: “Perhaps this is in reference to the smaller *Sanhedrin* at Jerusalem, which was composed of twenty-three elders; or to the *princes of the twenty-four courses* of the Jewish priests which ministered at the tabernacle and the temple, at first appointed by David.”³⁵

Elliott: “Moreover, as regards the *elders*, thus much was also evident, that they represented the redeemed saints in the character of a *royal priesthood*. . . . Again, as to their number 24, it might be explained either, as some expositors suggest, by reference to the twelve patriarchs, the heads of the Old Testament church, and the twelve apostles of the New; or rather, as others, by reference to the heads of the twenty-four courses of the Jewish priesthood, the fit representatives of the whole priestly body.”³⁶

Charles: Angelic representatives of the twenty-four priestly courses or the entire body of the faithful.

Aune: Aune lays out seven possibilities: (1) heavenly counterparts of the twenty-four priestly courses; (2) twenty-four divisions of musician descendants of Levi; (3) heavenly representatives of Israel and the Church; (4) individual Christians who sealed their faith through martyrdom; (5) the saints in the Old Testament; (6) angelic messengers of the heavenly court; and (7) figures from astral mythology. He then concludes: “There have been many attempts to identify the twenty-four elders of Revelation 4–5, though no solution has found universal acceptance. Since no other early Jewish or early Christian composition depicts God in his heavenly court surrounded by twenty-four elders, it is probable that John himself has created the twenty-four elders for this scene.”³⁷

Beale: “The elders certainly include reference to OT and NT saints. They are either angels representing all saints or the heads of the twelve tribes together with the twelve apostles, representing thus all the people of God. Identification of them as angels is consonant with some of our earlier

observations that many of the traits and functions characteristic of angels are likewise applicable to humans. Probably the elders are angels who are identified with the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles, thus representing the entire community of the redeemed of both testaments.”³⁸

Koester: Koester lays out Aune’s categories before writing, “The elders do not fit standard categories,” and suggesting that readers focus on their “literary functions” rather than trying to identify them with a knowable pre-existing group.³⁹

Comment: Most commentators are largely split on the question of whether these twenty-four beings are angels or humans.⁴⁰ Section 77’s (a) answer identifies the elders as twenty-four specific, historical persons who were members of the seven churches listed in Revelation 2–3. From this perspective, section 77 could be seen to be largely in agreement with those who also see the twenty-four elders as historical people who at one time lived upon the earth, even if they are representative of a larger body in Revelation 4. Where section 77 is unique, again, is in its (b) answer. Section 77 states that these twenty-four elders belonged to the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2–3. This opens up the fascinating possibility that some of them had been known personally by John, as his residence in Ephesus (prior to his exile) would have placed him in their vicinity. From this perspective, section 77’s answer is unique, as none of our commentators make such an identification. However, it should be said that if section 77:5 intended “seven churches” figuratively to represent the entire church and those redeemed through the blood of the Savior, then some of the answers given by our commentators, such as Elliott, Charles, Aune, and Beale, are more on point and section 77 is less unique.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:6

Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?

A. We are to understand that (a) it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy (b) concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

Clarke: “That is, the book was full of solemn contents *within*, but it was *sealed*; and on the *back side* was a *superscription* indicating its contents. It was a *labelled* book, or one written on each side of the skin, which was

not usual. . . . The matter of the book was *so obscure* and *enigmatical*, and the work it enjoined and the facts it predicted so difficult and stupendous, that they could neither be known nor performed by human wisdom or power.”⁴¹ Clarke added that to open the book would be “to *explain* and *execute* all the purposes and decrees of God, in relation to the government of the world and the Church.”⁴²

Elliott: “The events of the coming future as written in the Book in the right hand of the enthroned One, was to mark them as all preordained in his eternal counsels, yet the chief object of their being there written must have been, I think, that of signifying what it is now our purpose to consider,—the plan, order, and grand divisions of the prophecy.”⁴³

Charles: “The divine decrees and destinies of the world, . . . a profound secret which can only be revealed through the mediation of the Lamb.”⁴⁴

Aune: “Narrow conceptions of the significance of the scroll maintain that the author intended his audience to understand that the contents are identical with all or part of the narration of eschatological events that follow the breaking of the first seal in Rev 6:1 (perhaps even with the entire book of Revelation itself). . . . Broader conceptions of the contents of the scroll hold that it has little or nothing to do with the narrative of eschatological events in part or all of the remainder of the book.” These “broader conceptions” include seeing it as a “book of destiny,” the “book of life,” a “record of the sins of humankind,” the “Old Testament,” or a “bill of divorce.”⁴⁵

Beale: “The ‘book’ in ch. 5 should be understood as a covenantal promise of an inheritance when seen in the light of the above two identifications of the ‘book’ and of the broader theological context of the Apocalypse concerning paradise lost and regained. God promised to Adam that he would reign over the earth. Although Adam forfeited this promise, Christ, the last Adam, was to inherit it. A human person had to open the book because the promise was made to humanity.”⁴⁶

Koester: Koester lists four possibilities, with the most likely being “Visions disclosed later in Revelation,” followed by “God’s plan for the world,” “The scroll of life,” and least likely, “The Scriptures.” His reasoning for arguing for the first of these is “Briefly, the scroll of God is received by Christ the Lamb, who opens the seals in 6:1–8:1. Then an angel gives the open scroll to John in 10:1–11, and John reveals the contents through the prophecies that follow. The scroll is summarized in 11:1–15 and disclosed more fully in 12:1–22:5. Some interpreters think the contents begin to be revealed at 6:1 as the seals

are opened, so the scroll contains all of 6:1–22:5, but it is more likely that the contents are revealed only after all seven seals have been broken.”⁴⁷

Comment: Our commentators (and most others) tend to fall into two major opinions: the scroll references the eschatological events that follow the opening of the seals and continue throughout Revelation,⁴⁸ or the scroll encompasses the entire history of the Earth’s existence, including, but not limited to, the eschatological events that follow the breaking of the seals.⁴⁹ Section 77’s response falls squarely into the second category.⁵⁰

Doctrine and Covenants 77:7

Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?

A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.

Clarke: “The calamities which should fall on the enemies of Christianity, and particularly the Jews, are pointed out.”⁵¹

Elliott: “The secrets of futurity.”⁵² Here Elliott specifies the six seals as covering temporal affairs from AD 96 until 395.

Charles: The first six seals each represent one of the eschatological events foretold by Jesus in the Olivet discourse. Thus, the first seal means war, the second seal means international strife, and so forth.⁵³

Aune: “A variety of plagues.”⁵⁴

Beale: “The divine decree of suffering.”⁵⁵

Koester: “The threats conveyed by the seals challenge the idea that the current world order offers security. Rhetorically, this vision affirms what afflicted readers already know to be true. For those at Smyrna, violence and economic hardship are present realities (2:9–11), and the martyrs under the altar voice the questions about divine justice that those who suffer would ask. But for readers who flourish in the imperial world (3:17), the visions are designed to be unsettling.”⁵⁶

Comment: As we can see, the majority of our commentators view the seals as representing the eschatological calamities or judgments of God that will occur at a point in time, whether in John’s era or one in our future.⁵⁷ The closest of our commentators to section 77’s answer is Elliott, who sees the seals as representing specific periods of time in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.⁵⁸ It is not uncommon, especially for those who write in a historical perspective, to interpret the scrolls as periods of time, but that

time typically begins in the first century AD, or John's time, and describes the evolution of the Christian church. Section 77's information here extends these periods of time back to the beginning of time and concludes only at the end of the Earth's temporal existence.⁵⁹ This viewpoint puts section 77's perspective closer to the camp of premillennial dispensationalists or those who promote the "millennial day" theory that postulates (based largely upon a reading of 2 Peter 3:8) the Earth's existence to encompass seven thousand years, with the seventh thousand-year period serving as a millennial Sabbath.⁶⁰ But section 77's application of that theory to the seven seals is, I think, what is largely unique here. One could perhaps argue that "1,000" refers to simply a long period of time rather than 1,000 literal years, since "a thousand" was used figuratively in that sense.⁶¹ In that case, the Earth's existence could simply be understood as consisting of seven lengthy periods of time, with this dispensation of the fulness of times representing a sixth, lengthy period and the millennium a seventh, lengthy period.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:8

Q. What are we to understand by the four angels, spoken of in the 7th chapter and 1st verse of Revelation?

A. We are to understand that they are (a) four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; (b) these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness.

Clarke: "The four angels holding the four winds of heaven" who attend to "the extreme parts of the land of Judea."⁶²

Elliott: "*Four destroying tempest-angels*, just now under temporary restraint, but destined ere while evidently to desolate the Roman earth."⁶³

Charles: "A lower order of angelic being. They are set over the works of nature."⁶⁴

Aune: "Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth."⁶⁵

Beale: "Four angels" who are "standing on the *four corners of the earth* [which] refers to their sovereignty over the *whole world*. . . . That the winds must be held back to prevent their harmful activity is evidence of their rebellious and wicked nature. They are evil angelic agents of judgment."⁶⁶

Koester: "They are God's angels, who can threaten earth and sea. Since they have been 'given' power, they are under God's authority."⁶⁷

Comment: All of our commentators are more or less in agreement that the four angels are sent by God to prevent something that could be catastrophic for the entirety (four parts or corners/land and sea) of the Earth. In this case, section 77's answer aligns pretty well with how most commentators interpret Revelation 7:1. Again, the (b) material provides additional information about what these angels are qualified to do. Whereas Revelation simply says that the angels retain the winds from doing damage to the Earth, section 77 adds that the angels have an evangelizing and a sealing function in addition to the power granted them to prevent the winds.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:9

Q. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east, Revelation 7th chapter and 2nd verse?

A. We are to understand that (a) the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel, saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And, (b) if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things.

Clarke: "This angel is represented as the chancellor of the supreme King, and as *ascending from the east*. . . . Some understand this of Christ."⁶⁸

Elliott: A "sealing Angel."⁶⁹

Charles: No comment.

Aune: An "angel bearing the signet of God."⁷⁰

Beale: "This angel is a harbinger of grace, since he has the 'seal of the living God.'"⁷¹

Koester: No comment.

Comment: The first part of section 77's answer, on one hand, fits well with our commentators, primarily because pretty much all are in agreement that this angel is righteous, possesses a seal, and has seniority over the four angels from 77:1. That part is pretty straightforward. On the other hand, section 77's (b) material once again adds additional information, in this case that this angel is "Elias," whose charge was the gathering of Israel and the restoration of all things. If "Elias" is seen as Jesus Christ, as Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:28 suggests, then Clarke's comment that "Some understand this of Christ" is relevant.⁷² But if Elias is seen as a composite being or another individual prophet named Elias, then section 77's information is largely unique.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:10

Q. What time are the things spoken of in this chapter to be accomplished?

A. They are to be accomplished in the sixth thousand years, or the opening of the sixth seal.⁷³

Doctrine and Covenants 77:11

Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel—twelve thousand out of every tribe?

A. We are to understand that (b) those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.

Clarke: “In the number of 144,000 are included all the *Jews* converted to Christianity; 12,000 out of each of the twelve tribes: but this must be only a certain for an uncertain number; for it is not to be supposed that *just* 12,000 were converted out of *each* of the *twelve tribes*.”⁷⁴

Elliott: “Which being so the twelve tribes, the large body in all its tribual completeness, must necessarily signify the *whole Christian professing body* in the Apocalyptic world, or Roman empire; the latter, God’s *true servants* out of it. In the figurative language of the Apocalypse, the one was the *professing* Israel, the other the *Israel of God*, or *true* Israel. . . . God had out of each his election of grace.”⁷⁵

Charles: “It is not believers descended from literal Israel but from spiritual Israel that are here referred to.”⁷⁶

Aune: Aune gives five possibilities: “(1) the faithful remnant of Israel, (2) Jewish Christians, (3) Christian martyrs, (4) Christians generally, the Israel of God, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, or (5) primarily gentile Christians, since the Jews have rejected their place.”⁷⁷

Beale: “The entire community of the redeemed.”⁷⁸

Koester: “All who are redeemed by the Lamb.”⁷⁹

Comment: Section 77’s answer here is intriguing and very much unique.⁸⁰ Rather than see the 144,000 as representing a particular group,⁸¹ such as the Jews, the Christians, or the community, section 77 suggests that the 144,000 are representatives from every nation on Earth, whose responsibility it is to go out and gather the Jews, the Christians, or the community. In other words, section 77 would say that the commentators are missing a link in the chain.

While the Jews, the Christians, and the community are all involved in the process, their involvement only comes to pass when the 144,000 go out and find them, but they aren't the 144,000 themselves. The use of the title "high priest" suggests that the 144,000 must possess the Melchizedek Priesthood (Doctrine and Covenants 76:57), and will then use that priesthood to gather the nations to the "church of the Firstborn" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:54).⁸²

Doctrine and Covenants 77:12

Q. What are we to understand by the sounding of the trumpets, mentioned in the 8th chapter of Revelation?

A. (a) We are to understand that as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, even so, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man, and judge all things, and shall redeem all things, except that which he hath not put into his power, when he shall have sealed all things, unto the end of all things; and the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years—the preparing of the way before the time of his coming.

Clarke: "Each took up his trumpet, and stood prepared to blow his blast. Wars are here indicated; the *trumpet* was the emblem of *war*."⁸³

Elliott: Two purposes: (1) "to proclaim to them the epochs of advancing time;" and (2) "to proclaim war against those enemies."⁸⁴

Charles: Eschatological judgment.⁸⁵

Aune: The blowing of the trumpets serves to introduce "a series of eschatological divine punishments."⁸⁶

Beale: "The trumpets portray judgment on unbelievers because of their hardened attitude, thus demonstrating God's incomparable sovereignty and glory. These judgments are not intended to evoke repentance but to punish because of the permanently hardened, unrepentant stance of the unbelievers toward God and his people."⁸⁷

Koester: "The trumpet visions draw on the exodus tradition, but the imagery is also broader. The visions depict divine wrath in ways that would have been comprehensible throughout John's cultural context. From a Greco-Roman perspective the plagues could be understood as warnings of the disasters that will occur if people persist in a course of action that God or the gods view unfavorably. Including such threats in the trumpet visions shows

people receiving warnings of heavenly judgment in ways that they should have been able to recognize. This makes their refusal to repent more remarkable and, at a deeper level, more plausible.”⁸⁸

Comment: Section 77’s answer to this question feels more or less in line with our commentators (and most others) in seeing the trumpets as indicative of an eschatological age as we approach the Second Coming of Jesus, initiated through warnings and judgments that come about due to the prayers of the righteous in Revelation 7. The exception is the reappearance of the “millennial day” schema laid out in Doctrine and Covenants 77:7, which few, if any, agree with. One interesting distinction comes in the tone of section 77’s answer. Whereas most commentators emphasize the “war” and “plagues” and “destruction” that arrive following the blowing of the trumpets, section 77 finds a more optimistic outlook, focusing upon sanctification, redeeming, and sealing. This is not to say, though, that section 77 doesn’t acknowledge the terror that Revelation 8–9 bring, as is hinted at in the threat to exclude those “which he hath not put into his power.”

Doctrine and Covenants 77:13

Q. When are the things to be accomplished, which are written in the 9th chapter of Revelation?

A. They are to be accomplished after the opening of the seventh seal, before the coming of Christ.⁸⁹

Doctrine and Covenants 77:14

Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation?

A. (a) We are to understand that it was a mission, (b) and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things.

Clarke: “There was in it some pleasing, some unpleasing, intelligence. I read of the consolations and protection of the true worshippers of God, and did *rejoice*; I read of the persecutions of the Church, and was *distressed*.”⁹⁰

Elliott: “By the *book* that he held opened in his hand the instrumental means seemed figured whereby all this was to be accomplished; viz. the opening of the volume of his own book, the *Bible*.”⁹¹

Charles: The scroll contains the contents of Revelation 11:1–13, and the “sweetness” and “bitterness” represent the dual messages present in Revelation 11.⁹²

Aune: Aune speculates that “since the scroll with seven seals provides the structure, if not the content, of Rev 6:1–8:1, it is worth considering whether the same is true for the little open scroll of Rev 10.”⁹³ In other words, Aune debates whether the content that follows beginning in Revelation 11 come from this second scroll.

Beale: “John’s eating of the scroll has the same meaning as Ezekiel’s, although the historical situation is different. It represented for both prophets their total identification with and submission to the divine will as a prerequisite for their service as prophetic instruments in God’s hand. Their message carries with it the power of God’s word because it is, in fact, God’s word. But John is warning not Israel but the church.”⁹⁴

Koester: “Eating the scroll indicates empowerment to communicate God’s word. . . . The Christian community will learn that the scroll is sweet because of its message of salvation, but it is bitter because God’s purposes will be accomplished in part through the suffering and witness of his people.”⁹⁵

Comment: Most of the discussion around the “little book,” including by our commentators, involves its possible connection to the “sealed book” in Revelation 5. Some see it as the same scroll, while others point to differences in the Greek terms for the two “books” (*biblion* in Revelation 5:1 and *biblaridion* in Revelation 10:9) and suggest that the first “book” contains the material in 6:1–8:5, while the “little book” contains the material found in 10:1–11 or beyond.⁹⁶ However, section 77 rarely demonstrates a desire to investigate structural concerns or narratological issues, preferring instead something of a strict literal hermeneutic, and this trend continues here, as section 77 identifies the “little book” as something similar to a mission call, summoning John to gather the ten tribes. In this way, both Beale and Koester’s suggestions generally fit with section 77’s.⁹⁷ What is innovative about section 77’s answer, as we have seen, is the (b) material. Terming the “little book” as an “ordinance” and describing John’s role as specifically that of gathering Israel as an “Elias” figure is largely unique. One final point: section 77’s elaboration that “John” is an “Elias” tasked with gathering Israel seems to provide a further indication that John the Revelator and John the Evangelist are to be understood as one and the same person.

Doctrine and Covenants 77:15

Q. What is to be understood by the two witnesses, in the eleventh chapter of Revelation?

A. (b) They are two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers.

Clarke: “This is extremely obscure; the conjectures of interpreters are as unsatisfactory as they are endless on this point. . . . Those who wish to be amused or bewildered, may have recourse both to ancients and moderns on this subject.”⁹⁸

Elliott: In a very lengthy section, Elliott argues that the two witnesses represent those Christians whose beliefs take them outside the “orthodoxy” of the Catholic Church, with the resurrection of the witnesses being a reference to the Protestant Reformation.⁹⁹

Charles: Moses and Elijah.¹⁰⁰

Aune: “Since the people of God are both kings and priests (1:6; 5:10), it is likely that the two witnesses represent the Christian Church in its prophetic witness. Since the witnesses are identical in every respect, the fact that there are *two* of them is based on the notion of the reliability of two witnesses.”¹⁰¹

Beale: “The ‘two witnesses’ are not two individual prophets, whether Moses and Elijah, Enoch and Elijah, Paul and Peter, or the two Jewish high priests killed in A.D. 68. . . . Rather, they represent the whole community of faith, whose primary function is to be a prophetic witness.”¹⁰²

Koester: “Representatives of the whole church. The witnesses combine the traits of a number of figures in Israel’s history.”¹⁰³

Comment: As Clarke indicates, the two witnesses remain one of Revelation’s most hotly debated topics, with the various answers reaching all across the spectrum of possibility. No possibility, it seems, is off limits when it comes to interpreting these two figures. Section 77’s answer is to see the two prophets as two actual people who will be called upon at some future time to minister to the Jews and who will then, by implication, be killed and resurrected at Jerusalem. None of our commentators interpret the witnesses this way, with the majority viewing them as collectively representing, in some fashion, the faithful Christian church. The closest to section 77 is Charles, who sees the witnesses as being Moses and Elijah based upon their descriptions in 11:6.¹⁰⁴

Final analysis: I mentioned at the beginning of the paper that when students ask me how well section 77 aligns with the general consensus of biblical scholars, I tend to answer, “Kind of.” Due to the sheer number of commentaries written on the book of Revelation and the disparate solutions those commentaries provide, it is a difficult task to assess section 77 in terms of how its perspective fits with those scholars who have studied it. This project may not be as comprehensive as it could be, but it is, I believe, representative. After researching and writing this paper, I am much more confident in saying that the answer to that question is still “Kind of.” When compared with the analysis and thoughts of scholars past and present, the answers provided in section 77 largely fall into two categories—they generally align with what other readers of the book of Revelation believe, or they provide largely unique (and often strikingly literal!) views that represent the very minority positions. A third category can be seen in those answers where section 77 answers the question with an explanation that the scholars may not support but has found support among other groups. Into the first category, where section 77 demonstrates general alignment, I would place 77:1(a); 77:2(a); 77:4(a); 77:5(a); 77:6(a); 77:8(a); 77:9(a); 77:12(a); and 77:14(a). Into the second category, where section 77 more or less diverges from what commentators say and puts forth rather unique ideas, I would place 77:1(b); 77:3(b); 77:5(b); 77:8(b); 77:9(b); 77:11(b); 77:14(b); and 77:15(b). Finally, into the third category, where section 77 provides an answer that goes outside the general scholarly consensus but is not necessarily unique, I would place 77:6(b) 77:7; 77:10; and 77:13.

demonstrates general alignment	diverges from what commentators say and puts forth unique ideas	provides an answer outside consensus but is not unique
77:1(a)	77:1(b)	77:6(b)
77:2(a)	77:3(b)	77:7
77:4(a)	77:5(b)	77:10
77:5(a)	77:8(b)	77:13
77:6(a)	77:9(b)	
77:8(a)	77:11(b)	
77:9(a)	77:14(b)	
77:12(a)	77:15(b)	
77:14(a)		

The book of Revelation was an important text for Joseph Smith and the Restoration. The language of the book of Revelation appears in several places in the Book of Mormon and in the Doctrine and Covenants.¹⁰⁵ Its author, John, experienced a panoptic vision on par with those of Nephi, the brother of Jared, and Joseph Smith himself, and thus provides readers insights as to how the prophetic experience can be understood. Perhaps most of all, the book of Revelation was important enough to Joseph Smith that he took the time to ponder the book, identify questions that he had, and approach the Lord with those questions, providing a model (section 77) for how we can find resolutions to many of our own questions as we endeavor to understand the scriptures. I hope that this paper will assist those who take it upon themselves to come to a better understanding of John's remarkable text, whether because they want to engage their students on a deeper level, or because they want to better grasp how John's vision can speak to their circumstances today.

Notes

1. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lang, 1908), 19.
2. My reason for choosing to focus on the work of non-Latter-day Saint scholars is that much of the work performed by Latter-day Saints on the book of Revelation tends to use section 77 as the lens through which to interpret John's vision, and thus their work, while useful, wouldn't necessarily be helpful here. For those who want to seek out work on the book of Revelation from a Latter-day Saint perspective, I would recommend Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Revelation of John the Apostle* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2016); Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry, *Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), and Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991).
3. Adam Clarke and Joseph Smith have been linked in recent discussions on the origins and composition of the Joseph Smith Translation due to work by Thomas A. Wayment and others. To be clear, although my project involves Clarke as well, my project differs from Wayment's in that I have no interest in Clarke's relationship with section 77 other than as an example of what a scholar contemporary with Joseph Smith is saying about the book of Revelation. My use of Clarke's work should not be taken as an implication that section 77 is reliant in any way on Clarke's work.
4. J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, AB 38 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).
5. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977).
6. Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).
7. Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina 16 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993).

8. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002).
9. Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
10. Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).
11. John Christopher Thomas, *The Apocalypse: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).
12. The text of section 77 was first recorded in Revelation Book 1, 141–44 by John Whitmer between April 26 and August 1832. For a more thorough exploration of section 77's context, see Matthew C. Godfrey et al., eds., *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, vol. 2 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee et al. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 208–9.
13. Joseph Smith History, Vol. A-1, 192.
14. Revelation, March 20, 1832, as cited in Godfrey et al., *Documents, Volume 2*, 218.
15. E. B. Elliott, *Horæ Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 5th ed. (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1862), 1:84.
16. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1:118.
17. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1997), 296.
18. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI; William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 327. Beale also states, “The most prominent background for the image of the sea is Ezek. 1:22” (327).
19. Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 363. Readers interested in studying the book of Revelation without committing to all the commentaries should invest in Koester's *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001).
20. Oswalt summarizes both of these positions nicely: “The most likely allusion here is the ‘expanse’ or firmament that separated the waters in Gen. 1:7 (and perhaps also the bronze sea in Solomon's temple),” (Oswalt, *Revelation*, 231). Both Witherington (*Revelation*, 117) and Ford (*Revelation*, 73) point out that the waters in the Hebrew Bible represented chaos and may indicate that the “sea of glass” signified that chaos may have reached into Heaven itself. R. Thomas takes a slightly different approach, suggesting that the “sea of glass” represents “the splendor and majesty of God on His throne that set Him apart from all His creation, a separation stemming from His purity and absolute holiness.” R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:353.
21. Joseph Smith will expand on this image, identifying the angels who reside in the presence of God as being “on a globe like a sea of glass and fire,” adding, “This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon.” See Doctrine and Covenants 130:7–9.
22. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6 vols. (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, 2014), 6:990.
23. Elliott, *Horæ Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:91–93.
24. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 119.
25. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 314.
26. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 329–30.
27. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 369.

28. Joseph Smith would later comment, "I suppose John saw beings there of a thousand forms that had been saved from ten thousand times ten thousand earths like this;—strange beasts of which we have no conception." Joseph Smith History, D-1, 1523.

29. R. Thomas concludes several pages of summary with this description: "They are of an exalted angelic order engaged in worship . . . and whose special function in the context of the Apocalypse is the administering of divine justice in the realm of animate creation." R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:358. J. C. Thomas believes that the four beasts should be seen as "a comprehensive term for representatives of the created order, including mankind," and have a "representative function for all of creation." J. C. Thomas, *The Apocalypse*, 211–12. Ford comments, "The living creatures are symbolic of creation and the divine immanence. They are what is noblest (lion), strongest (ox), wisest (man), and swiftness (eagle)." Ford, *Revelation*, 75.

30. Joseph Smith History, D-1, 1523.

31. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek text*, 330–31.

32. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 364.

33. "The traditional interpretation of swiftness makes sense; . . . the wings must represent speed." Oswalt, *Revelation*, 234. R. Thomas notes that "some have supposed that the wings depict swiftness and unlimited mobility," but feels it more likely that the wings refer to the wings of the seraphs in Isaiah 6, which have a different purpose. R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:360.

34. "They [eyes] signify unceasing vigilance," (Oswalt, *Revelation*, 232). R. Thomas adds that the eyes represent "such penetrative intelligence that they are immediately aware of happenings pertaining to their judicial responsibility." R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:359.

35. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:989.

36. Elliott, *Horæ Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:87.

37. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 288.

38. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 332.

39. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 363.

40. Oswalt does a nice job of summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of both positions before concluding, "From this evidence it is more likely that these are heavenly beings who reign with God and are part of the retinue surrounding his throne. Moreover, since 'all the angels' also stand before the throne (7:11), these must be celestial beings with a ruling function." Oswalt, *Revelation*, 228–29. But see also Harrington, *Revelation*, 79. Blount's observation is well worth noting here: "In the end, John is more interested in narrating the significance of the elders than he is in identifying them." Blount, *Revelation*, 90.

41. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:990.

42. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:991.

43. Elliott, *Horæ Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:104.

44. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 138.

45. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 344.

46. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek text*, 340–41.

47. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 373.

48. Commentators who lean in this direction include Mounce, who writes of the scroll that "it contains the full account of what God in his sovereign will has determined as the

destiny of the world,” and R. Thomas, who writes that the scroll “is a ‘history’ of the future that gives the successive steps leading to the inauguration of the world-kingdom of Christ.” R. Thomas’s reason for rejecting a more panoramic approach to the scroll is that “The opening of the seals does not relate to the past . . . but to things yet future at the time of writing.” R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:377. See also discussion in Blount, *Revelation*, 99–104.

49. Other commentators who appear to lean somewhat toward a similar interpretation include Oswalt, who writes that the scroll “summarizes the whole of biblical truth, beginning with the foreshadowing of the plan in the OT and the progressive unveiling of it in Christ,” and Harrington: “The plan of God for his world, which begins to come into effect at the opening of the scroll, embraces the whole of God’s creation—in particular, the whole of humankind.” Harrington, *Revelation*, 86–87.

50. For analysis of 77:6(b), see commentary on the next verse.

51. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:993.

52. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:95.

53. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 158–59.

54. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 392.

55. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 379.

56. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 405.

57. Other possible interpretations include “The ‘seven seals’ point to completeness, focusing on the fullness of the divine plan” (Oswalt, *Revelation*, 249); “It symbolizes an event still hidden in mystery, but divinely decreed” (R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:380); “eschatologically and theologically significant events” (J. C. Thomas, *The Apocalypse*, 238); represents the idea that “history is an enigma,” therefore “Christ, and Christ alone, has the key to the meaning of human history” (George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1972], 82).

58. One potential problem with seeing the seals as being the information contained on the scroll is summarized well by Oswalt: “It is important here to note that the events of chapter 6 accompany the opening of the seals and do not constitute the contents of the scroll. The judgments of the seals are preliminary events that lead up to the unfolding drama of the eschaton and the completion of the divine plan.” Oswalt, *Revelation*, 249.

59. Intriguingly, Joseph Smith would later say that “The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch, Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is plainly represented by John, and clearly set forth by him. John saw that only which was lying in futurity and which was shortly to come to pass.” Joseph Smith History, vol. D-1, 1522. This statement suggests that Joseph came to understand the seven seals as representing time periods that began, at the earliest, toward the end of the first century AD. This reading would bring Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the seven seals into much closer agreement with the scholars discussed above.

60. The idea that the Earth would have six thousand years of existence before the seventh thousand-year period, the Millennium, is termed by some as “the sexta-septamillennial tradition.” Texts such as Psalm 90:4, Jubilees 4:29–30, and 2 Peter 3:8 are often used to support it, and it was a viewpoint held by at least one prominent early Christian writer (see *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 15). Modern scholars today are largely critical of this approach. According to one scholar, “Even today, some people try to make eschatological predictions using the ‘day=1000 years’ idea. That entire approach is false. Peter’s statement was not

designed to prove that a day equals a thousand years, or that a thousand years equals a day. Peter's meaning simply is that God is not limited by our notions of time." Jonathan Menn, *Biblical Eschatology*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 64, 65n18.

61. "Rev 20 provides a reversal of Satan's fortune for a long period represented by a thousand years." Koester, *Revelation*, 330. This schema would be more in line with what Joseph Smith develops as "dispensations" of Earth's history. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.

62. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:996.

63. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:253.

64. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 1:204.

65. David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 450.

66. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 406. Here Beale interprets the "winds" as demonic beings who are being held back by the four angels.

67. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 415.

68. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:996.

69. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:258.

70. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 455.

71. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 408.

72. R. Thomas summarizes the issue thusly: "Various special identities that have been assigned to this angel have included Christ, the Holy Spirit, an archangel, a special messenger from Christ, and the prophet Elijah. They are all mistaken. . . . He is best seen as another of the spirit beings who is distinguished because of the exalted mission committed to him." R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:467.

73. See commentary on Doctrine and Covenants 77:7.

74. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:996–97.

75. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:264.

76. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 1:206.

77. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 460.

78. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 413.

79. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 427.

80. Perhaps one place where similarities with Doctrine and Covenants 77:11's answer could be found is Richard Bauckham's *Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 213–37, but this would require us to reinterpret Bauckham's argument for a "messianic army" that converts the nations as the "high priests" who gather Israel through spiritual warfare.

81. A good summary of the arguments as to the identity of the 144,000 can be found in R. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 473–78.

82. Latter-day Saint readers of section 77 are naturally going to have a different understanding of "seal" than other Christian readers due to the prominence of that term in sacred settings. Oswalt provides a nice summary of the different ways Christian commentators have wrestled with understanding the "seal": "There is considerable debate as to the exact Christian experience alluded to in the 'seal' metaphor. Many think it is a reference to baptism, primarily because Paul calls baptism a 'seal' (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13–14). However, baptism is not specifically mentioned in these texts, and if anything it would refer

to the Holy Spirit, not baptism, as the seal. However, Aune doubts that either baptism or the Holy Spirit fits the context here. He is probably correct, for in the context it means simply that the saints belong to and are protected by God.” Oswalt, *Revelation*, 310.

83. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:999.

84. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 1:347.

85. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 1:232–33.

86. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 497.

87. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 472.

88. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 452.

89. See commentary on Doctrine and Covenants 77:7.

90. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:1004.

91. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 2:43.

92. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 1:260–68.

93. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 571.

94. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 551.

95. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 482–83.

96. For a good summary of the differing arguments, see Oswalt, *Revelation*, 394–95.

97. Viewing the “little book” as dealing, in some way, with John’s personal ministry is a fairly common interpretation. Oswalt calls the little book “his own commission to prophecy.” Oswalt, *Revelation*, 401. R. Thomas terms it a “recommissioning,” linking it with 10:11. Turner, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 2:72. J. C. Thomas describes it as “a(nother) prophetic commission.” Thomas, *The Apocalypse*, 318. Harrington calls it a “new prophetic investiture.” Harrington, *Revelation*, 117.

98. Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6:1005.

99. Elliott, *Hore Apocalypticæ; or, A Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, 2:201–58.

100. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation*, 1:281.

101. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 631.

102. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 573.

103. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 497.

104. This is not to say that there are not other commentators who view the two witnesses as actual eschatological figures similar to section 77. Osborne writes, “These are the two major eschatological figures expected in the last days, and that is sufficient for this context.” Osborne, *Revelation*, 418. Similarly, Ladd writes of the two witnesses that “these two prophets need not be thought of as the historical prophets Moses and Elijah returning to earth, but as two eschatological prophets who will be the embodiment of these two great prophets.” Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 155. However, this viewpoint tends to be the minority position. Mounce sums it up nicely with “Some identify them as two literal prophetic figures who will arise at the end. It is more likely, however, that they are not two individuals but a symbol of the witnessing church in the last tumultuous days before the end of the age.” Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 217. However, see also R. Thomas, who states, “Objections to the symbolic identification of the two witnesses are rather easy to come by.” Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, 2:87. For a nice summary of the dozens of possible interpretations, see Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, 126–30.

105. I have discussed the presence of the book of Revelation's language in Restoration scripture elsewhere in "The New Testament in the Doctrine and Covenants," in *New Testament History, Culture, and Society: A Background to the texts of the New Testament*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 712–43; and "The Book of Mormon and the Redaction of the King James New Testament," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 27 (2018): 44–87.