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“How long can rolling waters remain impure?”: Literary Aspects of the Doctrine and Covenants

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“HOW LONG CAN ROLLING WATERS REMAIN IMPURE?”: LITERARY ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Richard Dilworth Rust

Abstract: Many parts of the Doctrine and Covenants are literary in character. That is, their content is made appealing and more memorable and meaningful through aesthetic qualities. With content often determining form and form revealing content, profound concerns are presented in ways that reach us deeply. A statement in the Doctrine and Covenants regarding things which come of the earth applies well to the book's literary elements: They “please the eye and ... gladden the heart; [they] enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18-19).

In his letter from Liberty Jail, Joseph Smith used comparisons to reflect on how “ignorance[,] supe[r]stition and bigotry placing itself ... in the way of the prosperity of this church” were “like the torant of rain from the mountains that floods the most pure and christle stream with mire and dirt and filthyness.”¹ Yet eventually, as the Prophet then asked rhetorically, “How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens?” This vivid comparison follows: “As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it

1. Joseph Smith, Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, 20 March 1839, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839/14> and <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839/15> (accessed December 1, 2016).

up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (D&C 121:33).²

Responding to the literary quality of this passage, Steven C. Walker notes that “tonal richness sometimes expresses itself in vivid metaphor. A single section of the Doctrine and Covenants, for example, displays a sensitive sequence of images of water-progress like ‘rolling waters’ that cannot ‘remain impure’ (D&C 121:33), evil prospects that shall ‘melt away as the hoar frost melteth before the burning rays of the rising sun’ (121:11), and doctrine that will ‘distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven’ (121:45).”³

As with the examples from the 121st section, many parts of the Doctrine and Covenants are literary in character. That is, their content is made appealing and more memorable through aesthetic qualities. More than that, though, with content often determining form, and form revealing content, profound concerns are presented in ways that reach us deeply. A statement in the Doctrine and Covenants regarding things which come of the earth applies well to the book’s literary elements: They “please the eye and ... gladden the heart; [they] **enliven the soul**” (D&C 59:18–19). (Here and elsewhere in D&C quotations, emphasis is added.) To Arthur Henry King, there is in the Doctrine and Covenants an “extraordinary gamut of styles” with a number of “beautiful passages” that “lift and sing.”⁴

In great literature, beauty and truth belong together. As John Keats memorably wrote in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”:

2. B. H. Roberts responded to this passage of scripture in his Semi-annual General Conference talk on October 7, 1917:

The Prophet Joseph, in one of his revelations to the Church, asks this question, or at least the Lord asks it through him: “How long can rolling waters remain impure?” It is the stagnant waters that breed miasmas and that become dangerous to the health of communities. The glorious stream that dashes down the mountain gorge and flows over precipices in waterfalls and then goes rushing down the rapids, broken into spray, kissed by the sunlight, and purified by its exposure to the air in its great race for the ocean — such waters quickly purify themselves, and so do peoples, so does a world in commotion, in intense action.

<https://archive.org/stream/conferencereport1917sa#page/n101/mode/2up/search/roberts> (accessed 3 August 2017).

3. Steven C. Walker, “Doctrine and Covenants as Literature,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:427.

4. Arthur Henry King, *The Abundance of the Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 27–28.

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,” – that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.⁵

Plato would have added goodness to truth and beauty, as did Mormon when he said, “That which is of God [truth] inviteth and enticeth [beauty] to do good continually” (Moroni 7:13).

Memorable prose is, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge expressed it, “words in their best order.” Coleridge’s definition of poetry also fits aesthetically effective prose: “the *best* words in the best order.”⁶ To this I would add, the best words in their best order with the best purposes — meaning a combination of truth, beauty, and goodness.

As I see it, great literature deals with themes of great consequence. Herman Melville expresses this in *Moby-Dick* when he has Ishmael say, “To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme.”⁷ In that spirit, I would like to delineate how several mighty themes in the Doctrine and Covenants are developed through literary aspects of their treatment — which, to apply the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “brings the whole soul of man into activity.”⁸

The Savior and His Restoration of the Gospel in the Latter Days

The “mighty theme” of Christ’s establishment of his latter-day kingdom on earth is emphasized in sections 1 and 133 — which are considered to be the preface and appendix to the Doctrine and Covenants.⁹ While found in a number of parts of the Doctrine and Covenants, this theme is developed in those sections in poetic prose with literary similarities to what John Livingstone Lowes called “the noblest monument of

5. John Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Keats: The Complete Poems*, 3rd ed., ed. John Barnard (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1895), 297.

6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Routledge, 1884), 63.

7. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1988), 456.

8. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1 (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), 11.

9. The Lord calls section 1 “my preface unto the book of my commandments” (D&C 1:6), and the Sidney Rigdon copy of the Book of Commandments calls the current section 133 “An appendix to Revelation.” *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents 2*, ed. Matthew C. Godfrey, et al. (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 116.

English prose,”¹⁰ the King James Version of the Bible. Regarding those similarities, Steven Walker says, “Although a truly unique religious text, the Doctrine and Covenants contains more than 2,000 close parallels to biblical passages, and the literary manner of the book is similar to the Bible in subject matter.”¹¹

The preface to the Doctrine and Covenants begins with a close parallel to Isaiah, who wrote: “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him” (Isaiah 64:4). This was repeated with variation in an epistle by the apostle Paul to the Corinthian saints: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). These are amplified in the opening of Section 1:

Hearken, O ye people of my church,
saith the voice of him who dwells on high,
and whose eyes are upon all men;

yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar;
and ye that are upon the islands of the sea,
listen together.

For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men,
and there is none to escape;
and there is no eye that shall not see,
neither ear that shall not hear,
neither heart that shall not be penetrated.
(D&C 1:1–2)

As with Isaiah’s poetry, a poetic characteristic here is parallelism. Usually, the second line of a Hebraic poem repeats, with some intensification or amplification, the thought of the first line; contrasts an opposing idea to the first line; completes the idea; or repeats the idea in a reverse order.¹² Roger G. Baker says we remember the poetic in Hebrew

10. John Livingstone Lowes, *Of Reading Books: Four Essays ... the Pilgrim’s Progress; The Noblest Monument of English Prose; Two Readings of Earth; Of Reading Books* (London: Constable, 1930).

11. Walker, “Doctrine and Covenants as Literature,” 1:427.

12. Wilfred G. E. Watson in *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1984), 46–47, sets forth some of the principal indicators of Hebraic poetry: evident line-forms, ellipsis, unusual vocabulary, conciseness, unusual word-order, regularity and symmetry, parallelism in various forms,

poetry “because of the repetition, especially when it includes a crescendo of an idea.”¹³ Here, “Hearken” (hearing) is amplified by “voice” (speaking) and followed by “eyes” (viewing). In a parallelistic manner, the audience is expanded from “people of my church” to “people from afar” to “all men.” Contrasting with the past tense of Paul’s “Eye hath not seen,” the opening of Section 1 projects this into the future with “there is no eye that shall not see.”

The appendix likewise begins with the emphatic word “Hearken.” In the following introduction to Section 133, hearkening applies to anticipating the coming of the Lord to his temple — which is connected to Malachi’s prophecy: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:1). The message to people of the Lord’s church is set forth in parallelistic lines with intensification: Hearken/hear; Lord suddenly come/ Lord who shall come; upon the world/upon all the nations/upon all the ungodly; make bare ... in the eyes/all ... shall see; all the nations/the ends of the earth.

*Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the Lord your God,
and hear the word of the Lord concerning you —*

*the Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple;
the Lord who shall come down upon the world with a
curse to judgment;
the Lord who shall come down upon the world with a
curse to judgment;
yea, upon all the nations that forget God,
and upon all the ungodly among you.*

For he shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of *all the nations*,
and *all the ends of the earth* shall see the salvation of
their God. (D&C 133:1–3)

As in its preface and appendix, in the Doctrine and Covenants there is a relationship between poetry and prophecy akin to that found in the Bible. David Noel Freedman says:

word-pairs (e.g., day/night), chiastic patterns, envelope figures, and repetition in various forms.

13. Roger G. Baker, “Teaching the Poetry of Latter-day Saint Scripture,” *Religious Educator* 3/2 (2002): 201.

The basic and persistent medium of classic religion and revelation is poetry. ... Prose may be adequate to describe setting and circumstances and to sketch historical effects and residues; only poetry can convey the mystery of the miraculous and its meaning for those present. ... In the case of the great prophets, there is a remarkable congruence between content and form, a welding of prophecy and poetry which authenticated both messenger and message.¹⁴

Effective figurative language, as Robert Frost put it, is “saying one thing in terms of another.” “It is the height of poetry, the height of all thinking,” he continued, “to say matter in terms of spirit and spirit in terms of matter.”¹⁵ Borrowing figurative language from the Song of Solomon, Judges, and Isaiah, ¹⁶ Joseph Smith dedicated the Kirtland Temple so that God’s “church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; and be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth; that thy glory may fill the earth.” (D&C 109:73–74).¹⁷

The restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ necessarily required restoration of priesthood authority. In the following passage, this restoration is set forth in a rhetorical device, anaphora, which is a repetition of initial words or phrases. Here, the concept of receiving builds one promise upon another, climaxing with all that the Father has:

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me,
saith the Lord;
for he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;
and he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;
and he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s

14. David Noel Freedman, “Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 96/1 (1977): 15, 20, 25.

15. Robert Frost, “Education by Poetry: A Meditative Monologue,” in *Robert Frost: An Introduction*, ed. Robert A. Greenberg and James G. Hepburn (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 84.

16. Song 6:10, Judges 5:5, Isaiah 40:4.

17. D. Kelly Ogden provides an extensive treatment of figurative language in his essay, “Biblical Language and Imagery in the Doctrine and Covenants,” *The Doctrine and Covenants: A Book of Answers*, ed. Leon R. Hartshorn, Dennis A. Wright, and Craig J. Ostler (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), 169–187. Ogden shows how the Doctrine and Covenants perpetuates many of the “timeless comparisons and figurative expressions drawn from the biblical world — its landscapes, flora and fauna, harvests, vineyards, shepherding, royalty, battle, and marriage images” (186).

kingdom;
therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.
(D&C 84:35–38)

In the following progression that leads to coming unto God the Father, the italicized words are effectively linked one to another:

And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the *words* of eternal *life*. For you shall *live* by every *word* that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. For the *word* of the Lord is *truth*, and whatsoever is *truth* is *light*, and whatsoever is *light* is *Spirit*, even the *Spirit* of Jesus Christ. And the *Spirit* giveth *light* to every man that cometh into the world; and the *Spirit enlighteneth* every man through the world, that *hearkeneth* to the *voice of the Spirit*. And every one that *hearkeneth* to the *voice of the Spirit* cometh unto God, even the Father.
(D&C 84:43–47)

Light

As is also evident in the above scripture, light is a mighty theme. A consideration of this theme reveals expansive intertextuality between the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants. A major factor for this might well have been Joseph Smith's immersion in the Bible while revising it for his "New Translation." As Robert J. Matthews put it, "Many of the revelations that comprise the Doctrine and Covenants have a direct relationship to the translation of the Bible which the Prophet Joseph was making at the time the revelations were received."¹⁸

A prominent interaction of the Doctrine and Covenants with the Bible pertaining to light is with the writings of John. Here are some instances:

"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). This is echoed in the Doctrine and Covenants: "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (D&C 93:2).

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). "Their hearts are corrupt, and full of wickedness and abominations; and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (D&C 21).

18. Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation," *Joseph's Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 255.

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (D&C 106:46).

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light” (John 12:36). “Gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light” (D&C 106:5).

Like early Christian literature, the following passage in the Doctrine and Covenants develops the implications of Jesus being the light of the world. It does so with reference to both the individual and the universal:

This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. ... And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space — the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:7, 11–13)

In a subsequent revelation, recognition of Christ as “the true light” is the culmination of gaining perfect knowledge of Christ in his presence. This comes from part of Section 93 wherein Roger Petersen finds “that sublimity and transcendence of thought that marks the true poet.”¹⁹

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am; and that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (D&C 93:1–3)

The literary device of personification brings to life this passage about light:

19. Roger K. Petersen, “Joseph Smith: Prophet-poet,” *Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, January 26, 1980), 269. Petersen subsequently amplified his insights with his PhD dissertation, “Joseph Smith Prophet-poet: A Literary Analysis of Writings Commonly Associated with His Name” (Brigham Young University, 1981).

The earth rolls upon her wings,
 and the sun giveth his light by day,
 and the moon giveth her light by night,
 and the stars also give their light,
 as they roll upon their wings in their glory,
 in the midst of the power of God. (D&C 88:45)

Light manifest by fire and the sun characterize the glorified Jesus Christ who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple. This passage also has some striking similes.

We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit,
 before us. ...
 His eyes were as a flame of fire;
 the hair of his head was white like the pure snow;
 his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun;
 and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters,
 even the voice of Jehovah. (D&C 110:2–3)²⁰

Discipleship

Discipleship is a theme that in various places in the Doctrine and Covenants is developed through literary devices.

As recounted in the gospel of John, Jesus used the metaphor of white fields and subsequent harvest to teach his disciples the mighty theme of sowing seeds of truth and reaping “fruit unto life eternal.” He said: “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

While this is the only instance in which this metaphor appears in the Bible, it is used eight times in the Doctrine and Covenants. Here is one of those instances. Notice how the Johannean metaphor is amplified

20. The *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* gives this in response to the question as to why the Prophet Joseph Smith used figurative language in D&C 110:1–3 to describe the gloried Christ:

A complete description of the glorified Savior in human language is probably not possible. But by comparing the indescribable things of a spiritual realm to things within our comprehension, the Prophet could give us some sense of the glory and appearance of the Lord. The language of the Prophet’s description is similar to that of the descriptions written by Daniel (see Daniel 10:4–8) and by John the Revelator (see Revelation 1:13–17). <https://www.lds.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/section-110-121/section-110-messengers-with-keys?lang=eng> (accessed August 7, 2017).

and deepened. “Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God” (D&C 6:3). (The other instances are found at D&C 4:4, 11:3, 12:3, 14:3, 31:4, 33:3, and 33:7.)

The Savior’s literary device of the parable of the wheat and the tares is responded to in the Doctrine and Covenants with striking additions and a notable difference. In his explanation of the parable, Jesus said that “the reapers are the angels” with the charge to “Gather ye together first the tares” (Matthew 13:39, 30), while in the Doctrine and Covenants it is the latter-day disciples who are the harvesters and who are commissioned to “first gather out the wheat from among the tares” (D&C 6:7).

The parallelism in this passage emphasizes the basic requirement to be a disciple: “He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you” (D&C 41:5).

Repetition is used to emphasize the basic quality necessary to be a disciple:

Whoso receiveth you receiveth me;
and the same will feed you, and clothe you, and give you
money.
And he who feeds you, or clothes you, or gives you money,
shall in nowise lose his reward.
And he that doeth not these things is not my disciple;
by this you may know my disciples. (D&C 84:89–91)

A challenge to “go forward” as disciples in the latter-day work was set forth poetically in an epistle from Joseph Smith the Prophet to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, dated at Nauvoo, Illinois, September 6, 1842.

Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause?
Go forward and not backward.
Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!
Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad.
Let the earth break forth into singing.

Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King
Immanuel,
who hath ordained, before the world was,

that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison;
for the prisoners shall go free. (D&C 128:22)

Last Days

An extensively developed theme in the Doctrine and Covenants pertains to revelations regarding divine purposes in the last days and during the millennium.

At Jerusalem, Jesus lamented: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:27). In the Doctrine and Covenants, this similar apocalyptic lament is for all nations of the earth: “O, ye nations of the earth, how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!” (D&C 43:24).

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March, 1831, a month later than the above, the apocalyptic theme is developed in a parable of the ten virgins. It is prefaced by an account of how

The Lord shall utter his voice,
and all the ends of the earth shall hear it;
and the nations of the earth shall mourn,
and they that have laughed shall see their folly.
And calamity shall cover the mocker,
and the scorner shall be consumed;
and they that have watched for iniquity
shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.
(D&C 45:49–50)

The parable provides reasons not found in the Bible as to why the wise virgins “shall abide the day” of the Lord’s coming:

At that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins. For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived — verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. (D&C 45:56–57).

We see in the following a transition in focus from the apocalypse to the millennium:

I, the Almighty, have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness. And plagues shall go forth, and they shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness — Until all shall know me, who remain, even from the least unto the greatest, and shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song, saying:

The Lord hath brought again Zion;

The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel,
According to the election of grace,
Which was brought to pass by the faith
And covenant of their fathers.

The Lord hath redeemed his people;
And Satan is bound and time is no longer.
The Lord hath gathered all things in one.
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.

The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;
And truth is established in her bowels;
And the heavens have smiled upon her;
And she is clothed with the glory of her God;
For he stands in the midst of his people.

Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God; for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
Forever and ever, Amen. (D&C 84:96–102)²¹

In this “new song,” the process of redemption in the first stanza moves to the accomplishment of redemption in the second. In the third, “earth” is followed by “heavens.” The literary device of personification describes the earth as giving birth (“travailed”) and then being clothed with “the glory of her God.” Christ, who earlier is said to have redeemed

21. The “new song” is lined out as poetry in the Doctrine and Covenants. T. Edgar Lyon, *Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: LDS Department of Education, 1955), 202–204, notes that these words were set to music by Arthur Shepherd and published under the title, “The Lord hath Brought Again Zion.”

his people, is then honored for his redemptive mercy, justice, grace, truth, and peace.

Praise to God

Praise to God is developed in Joseph Smith's 1842 epistle from Nauvoo as a poetic adaptation of Isaiah's declaration, "Break forth into singing, ye mountains," and of God's question to Job as to where Job was "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Isaiah 44:23; Job 38:7). Heightened by the literary device of personification, the poem moves from the earth to the heavens, and ends with a striking crescendo:

Let the mountains shout for joy,
and all ye valleys cry aloud;
and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal
King!

And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with
gladness.

Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord;
and ye solid rocks weep for joy!

And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together,
and let all the sons of God shout for joy!

And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and
ever! (D&C 128:23)

Commenting on this poem with its beautiful lyrical quality, Charles Swift says, "As we read the poetry in this epistle, we not only learn of the Prophet's commitment to the restored gospel and his enthusiasm for the work of the Lord but also experience it. And this experience helps us to feel more committed and more enthusiastic. The language the Prophet uses does not just inform us — it *changes* us."²² Steven Walker notes the lyric refrain (shout/weep for joy) in each stanza, and affirms that "the concluding passage of the revelation is exultant, exhilarated, and profound — a masterpiece of stylistic craftsmanship."²³

22. Charles Swift, "The Literary Power of the Doctrine and Covenants," *Religious Educator* 10/1 (2009): 24.

23. Steven C. Walker, "The Voice of the Prophet," *BYU Studies* 10 (Autumn 1969): 104.

Eternal Kingdoms

The ultimate destination of God's children is set forth poetically in Section 76, initially called "The Vision." Joseph Smith said that "that document is a transcript from the Records of the eternal world. The sublimity of the ideas; the purity of the language; the scope for action ... are so much beyond the narrow mindedness of men, that every honest man is constrained to exclaim; It came from God."²⁴

"The Vision," according to Steven Walker, is "preeminent among the revelations both in its stylistic majesty and in its sustained spiritual fervor. This is, of course, entirely in keeping with the sublimity and profundity of its subject matter."²⁵ Throughout "The Vision," as William H. Brugger has shown, there are "chiasmic and repetitive structures, parallelism, imagery, and figures of speech — characteristics commonly found in biblical poetry."²⁶

A majestic witness of "the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father" highlights this exposition on the degrees of glory in the resurrection. The rhetoric is that of testimony, of personal seeing and hearing:

And now, after the many testimonies which have been given
of him,
this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That
he lives!

For we saw him, even on the right hand of God;
and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only
Begotten of the Father —

That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are
and were created,
and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and
daughters unto God. (D&C 76:20, 22–24)

The eternal character of the Lord is set forth poetically in the opening of Section 76. The rhythms fit David Noel Freedman's view that "in any mythic or epic situation, involving the divine and the human and communication or action between heaven and earth, the appropriate

24. History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]; 25 January–16 February 1832 • Wednesday–Thursday, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/198> (accessed December 1, 2016).

25. Steven C. Walker, "The Voice of the Prophet," 105.

26. William H. Brugger, "Section 76 as Literature in the Doctrine and Covenants" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1993), 51.

language is that of poetry.”²⁷ Though the form of this opening is an apostrophe, Brugger points out that it is energized by the statement being literal.²⁸ As with other portions of the Doctrine and Covenants we have considered, it interrelates with the Bible — particularly Isaiah, whose vision begins with the words, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken” (Isaiah 1:2), and who wrote, “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour” (Isaiah 43:11).

Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth,
and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof,

for the Lord is God,
and beside him there is no Savior.

Great is his wisdom,
marvelous are his ways,
and the extent of his doings none can find out.

His purposes fail not,
neither are there any who can stay his hand.

From eternity to eternity he is the same,
and his years never fail. (D&C 76:1–4)

The Voice of the Lord and Continuing Revelation

The Lord’s preface and appendix “to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this dispensation”²⁹ serve as structural bookends to set forth and recapitulate some of the major themes of the book, especially continuing revelations given by the Savior. The voice of Jesus Christ is heard throughout the work, beginning in section 1 and climaxing in section 133. Indeed, the phrase “voice of the Lord,” or variations of it, is found one hundred times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

“The voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth,” the Lord says in his preface. “My word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:11, 38). Echoing this in his Appendix, the Lord commands, “Hearken and hear, O ye inhabitants of the earth. Listen, ye elders of my church together, and hear the voice of the Lord; for he calleth upon all men, and he commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” The Lord “shall

27. Freedman, 20.

28. Brugger, 90.

29. Headnote to Section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, <http://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/1?lang=eng> (accessed November 30, 2016).

utter his voice out of Zion, and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people; and it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. (D&C 133:16, 21–22).

As suggested in the following examples, this motif is repeated with intensity throughout the Doctrine and Covenants.

“Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful” (D&C 27:1).

“Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the Great I AM, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins” (D&C 29:1).

“Hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, whose word is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, soul and spirit” (D&C 33:1).

“For the day cometh that the Lord shall utter his out of heaven; the heavens shall and the earth shall and the of God shall sound both long and loud” (D&C 43:18).

In an extended anaphora and with repetitive and cumulative power, the Lord in the following declaration refers to spiritual, then physical, and again spiritual voices, closing with a tone of sorrow:

How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants,
and by the ministering of angels,
and by mine own voice,
and by the voice of thunderings,
and by the voice of lightnings,
and by the voice of tempests,
and by the voice of earthquakes,
and great hailstorms,
and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind,
and by the great sound of a trump,
and by the voice of judgment,
and by the voice of mercy all the day long,
and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life,
and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation,
but ye would not! (D&C 43:24–25)

The voice of the Lord continues with challenges and promises:

“Hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you” (D&C 45:2).

“Behold, and hearken unto the voice of him who has all power, who is from everlasting to everlasting, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (D&C 61:1).

“Behold, I, the Lord, utter my voice, and it shall be obeyed” (D&C 63:5).

“Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:4).

“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy. ... And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers!” (D&C 128:19, 23).

In sum, through many of its parts being poetic and memorably descriptive in their nature, the Doctrine and Covenants effectively testifies of Jesus Christ, of continuing revelation, and of the Savior’s redemptive power.

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