

Doctrine & Covenants 66-67

William E. McLellin



Following this conference I went home with the Prophet, and on Saturday, the 29th, I received through him, and wrote from his mouth a revelation concerning myself [D&C 66]. I had expected and believed that when I saw Brother Joseph [Smith], I should receive one: and I went before the Lord in secret, and on my knees asked him to reveal the answer to five questions through his Prophet, and that too without his having any knowledge of my having made such request. I now testify in the fear of God, that every question which I had thus lodged in the ears of the Lord of Sabbath, were answered to my full and entire satisfaction. I desired it for a testimony of Joseph's inspiration. And I to this day consider it to me an evidence which I cannot refute. **William McLellin Ensign of Liberty 1 (1848), p.61**

Doctrine & Covenants 67

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote: "After the foregoing [D&C 67] was received, William E. [McLellin], as the wisest man, in his own estimation, having more learning than sense, endeavored to write a commandment like unto one of the least of the Lord's, but failed; it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord. The Elders and all present that witnessed this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ, renewed their faith in the fulness of the Gospel, and in the truth of the commandments and revelations which the Lord had given to the Church through my instrumentality; and the Elders signified a willingness to bear testimony of their truth to all the world" (History of the Church, 1:226).

Later with William E. McLellin

On Friday, 11 May 1838, he appeared before a bishop's court in Far West, Missouri. He explained that his apostasy centered on his lack of confidence in the Presidency of the Church. He volunteered that this lack had caused him to quit praying and keeping the commandments for a time and that he had indulged in sinful lusts. William was excommunicated in 1838 for "unbelief and apostasy."

After his excommunication he joined mobbers in robbing and driving the Saints from Missouri. While the brethren were imprisoned at Richmond, McLellin, who was a large and active man, went to the sheriff and asked for the privilege of flogging the Prophet. Permission was granted on condition that Joseph would fight. The sheriff made known to Joseph McLellin's earnest request, to which Joseph consented, if his irons were taken off. McLellin then refused to fight unless he could have a club, to which Joseph was perfectly willing; but the sheriff would not allow them to fight on such unequal terms.

During this time of William's fickle embrace of pseudo-Mormonism, questions arose about his testimony of the Book of Mormon. Three years before his death he affirmed that testimony in his letter to J. T. Cobb:

I have set to my seal that the Book of Mormon is a true, divine record and it will require more evidence than I have ever seen to ever shake me relative to its purity.... When a man goes at the Book of M. he touches the apple of my eye. He fights against truth-against purity-against light-against the purist, or one of the truest, purist books on earth.... Fight the wrongs of L.D.S.ism as much as you please, but let that unique, that inimitable book alone.

He further advised Cobb to "cease your opposition and strife against the Book, ... for you might just as well fight against the rocky mountains as the Book!!" --Susan Easton Black, Who's Who in the Doctrine and Covenants, p.193