
Harvey Gilman Whitlock

1809–1885

D&C 52:25

In 1831, physician Harvey Whitlock entered baptismal waters and was ordained an elder. At the fourth conference of the Church, in June 1831, he was ordained a high priest by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Of his ordination, journalist Levi Hancock wrote:

Joseph put his hands on Harvey Whitlock and ordained him to the high priesthood. He turned as black as Lyman [Wight] was white. His fingers were set like claws. He went around the room and showed his hands and tried to speak; his eyes were in the shape of oval O's. Hyrum Smith said, "Joseph, that is not of God." ... Joseph bowed his head, and in a short time got up and commanded Satan to leave Harvey, laying his hands upon his head at the same time. ...

Harvey Whitlock [said] when Hyrum Smith said it was not God, he disdained him in his heart and when the Devil was cast out he was convinced it was Satan that was in him.¹

Harvey is remembered for having preached the message of the Restoration with David Whitmer in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Missouri (see D&C 52:25). When he completed the mission, he moved his family to Missouri, where they attended the Whitmer Branch in Independence from 1831 to 1833. During these years, Harvey took part in Church conferences. At the August 24, 1832, conference, he proposed four questions:

¹ Autobiography of Levi Ward Hancock, typescript, 33–34. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

- 1st. Can a man in the Church of Christ walk by faith without law?
- 2nd. Was the law given to bring men to faith?
- 3rd. Was the law added because of transgression?
- 4th. Was the law given because it was asked for?²

These were not the only questions Harvey had about Church doctrine. He wavered in his testimony and was excommunicated in 1835. On September 28, 1835, he wrote to the Prophet Joseph Smith, confessing, "I have fallen from that princely station whereunto our God has called me. ... I have sunk myself ... in crimes of the deepest dye." He pronounced himself "a poor, wretched, bewildered, way-wanderer to eternity."³

Nearly two months later on November 16, 1835, the Prophet Joseph wrote to Harvey,

I have received your letter ... and I have read it twice, and it gave me sensations that are better imagined than described, let it suffice that I say that the very flood gates of my heart were broken up—I could not refrain from weeping. I thank God that it has entered into your heart to try to return to the Lord, and to this people, if it so be that He will have mercy upon you. I have inquired of the Lord concerning your case; these words came to me. ... [If you repent and remain faithful you will] be counted worthy to stand among princes, and shall yet be made a polished shaft in my quiver for bringing down the strong holds of wickedness.⁴

Harvey was baptized again and ordained a high priest. His embrace of religious truths, however, was short-lived. In 1838 he forsook the Church. By 1845 he had united with Sidney Rigdon's Church of Christ in West Buffalo, Iowa. By 1850 he had moved to the Rockies and was living among the Saints in Utah County. In 1858 he again joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By 1860 he had become a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. After his excommunication from the Reorganization in 1868, he no longer affiliated with a religious society.

His last days were spent in California. On June 6, 1885, he died in Watsonville, California, at age seventy-six.

² Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 53.

³ Letter of Harvey Whitlock, September 28, 1835. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴ Joseph Smith letter to Harvey Whitlock, November 16, 1835, in *History, 1838–1856*, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]. Joseph Smith Papers.