At the Kirtland Temple dedication on Sunday, March 27, 1836, President Frederick G. Williams testified that he saw a holy angel enter the temple during the opening prayer and take his seat between Joseph Smith Sr. and himself in the upper pulpits on the Melchizedek priesthood side of the room, a holy site that had just been dedicated and consecrated to the Lord earlier that morning. This study collects nine eyewitness statements regarding Williams’s vision of the heavenly personage to see if the identity of the angel as well as the purpose of his visit can be determined from their records. This article also suggests that Williams’s vision was of Christ because such a vision would fulfill the prophecies and pattern of having all the first First Presidency witness the Savior for themselves, so they, as spokesmen, could spread “the word . . . to the ends of the earth” (D&C 90:9).

There has been some confusion on this matter because one account, given by Truman Angell in 1884, nearly fifty years after the fact, states that Joseph Smith identified Peter as the angel who had “come to accept the dedication,”1 while four other eyewitnesses, writing nearer to the time of the event, recorded that the angel was the Savior himself who had come to the dedication.

Oliver Cowdery published an account of the proceedings of the day in the Messenger and Advocate. The service began at 9 a.m. and had one thousand people in attendance. Sidney Rigdon read the 96th and

A choir sang “Ere Long the Vail Will Rend in Twain,” which was written by Frederick G. Williams. President Rigdon gave an opening prayer, another hymn was sung, and then Rigdon spoke for two and a half hours on the temple. Rigdon then presented Joseph Smith Jr. as prophet and seer to the presidency of the Church, to each quorum, and to the congregation, which was acknowledged in each instance by a unanimous vote. Another hymn was sung. The meeting had a short intermission and recommenced in the afternoon with another hymn, remarks from Joseph Smith, and then Joseph presented the several presidents of the Church as being equal with himself, acknowledging them to be prophets and seers. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. Another hymn followed, and then Joseph Smith gave the dedicatory prayer, which is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 109. Another hymn was sung, President Smith asked the quorums and the congregation if they accepted the prayer, and then he conducted a vote. The sacrament was administered. Joseph Smith then spoke about his mission. Don Carlos Smith spoke, Oliver Cowdery spoke on the Book of Mormon, and then Frederick G. Williams spoke. Cowdery reported, “President F. G. Williams bore record that a Holy Angel of God, came and set between him and J. Smith sen. while the house was being dedicated.” Hyrum Smith spoke, and Sidney Rigdon gave “closing remarks; and a short prayer which was ended with loud acclamations of Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to God and the Lamb, Amen, Amen and Amen! Three times.” Brigham Young spoke “in tongues,” and David Patten “interpreted and gave a short exhortation in tongues himself.” Joseph blessed the congregation, and at about 4 p.m. the meeting closed.

Joseph Smith’s journal records Williams’s statement in this manner: “I [Joseph Smith] then bore testimony of the administering of angels.”

2. Frederick G. Williams, “Singing the Word of God: Five Hymns by President Frederick G. Williams,” BYU Studies 48, no. 1 (2009): 69. The veil in fact was rent in twain by a heavenly visitor whom Williams saw immediately following the singing of the hymn.


4. Joseph sometimes spoke of the post-mortal Christ as an angel and even as a man “like ourselves” (D&C 130:1). Four months before the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph refers to the Savior and even the Father as angels, when speaking to Erastus Holmes (who was not a Church member) on November 14, 1835, about his First Vision: “I commenced and gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from 6, years old up
Presdt Williams also arose and testified that while Presdt Rigdon was making his first prayer an angel entered the window and <took his> seated himself between father Smith, and himself, and remained their during his prayer Presdt David Whitmer also saw angels in the house.”

Another meeting was held later that same day in the temple, and the visions continued. Joseph Smith’s journal records, “Met in the evening and instructed the quorums respecting the ordinance of washing of feet which we were to attend to on wednesday following.”

Joseph Smith’s history adds that in this evening meeting, he and others saw glorious visions: In fact, the temple was filled with angels.

I gave them Instruction in relation to the spirit of Prophecy and called upon the Congregation to speak, and not fear to prophecy good concerning the saints, for if you prophecy the falling of these hills and the rising of these valleys, The downfall of the enemies of Zion, and the rising of the Kingdom of God—it shall come to pass.—do not quench the spirit—for the first one that opens his mouth shall receive the spirit of prophecy.—brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophecy when a voice was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind which filled the Temple and all the congregation simultaneously arose being moved upon by an invisible power many began to speak in Tongues and prophecy others saw glorious visions and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels which fact I declared to the <to the congregation> The people in the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within and seeing a bright light like a piller of Fire resting upon—the Temple) and where astonished at what was transpiring The number present on this occasion was 416 (being a greater number of official members

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to the time I received the first visitation of Angels which was when I was about 14, years old and also the visitations that I received afterward, concerning the book of Mormon, and a short account of the rise and progress of the church, up to this date.” “Journal, 1835–1836,” 36–37, Church History Library, available online at Church Historian's Press, The Joseph Smith Papers, http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/37; Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, The Joseph Smith Papers, Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839, vol. 1 of the Journals series of The Joseph Smith Papers, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 100.


Additional Accounts

Unfortunately, Frederick G. Williams left no personal account of this experience. However, other records give us more information about Williams’s vision. Some reports tell of Williams’s description of the visitor’s appearance. Most importantly, four accounts add that the angel was the Savior. The accounts are given in rough chronological order of the time they were written. The accounts are charted in the accompanying table.

Stephen Post. Brother Stephen Post kept a journal from his baptism in 1835 until his death in 1879. The entry for March 27–31, 1836, tells of his attendance at the Kirtland Temple dedication and of the testimony Frederick G. Williams bore of seeing an angel:

President F. G. Williams arose & testified that in the A.M. an angel of God came into the window (at the back of the pulpit) while Pt. Rigdon was at prayer & took his seat between him & Father Joseph Smith sen. & remained there during the prayer.⁸

Edward Partridge. Bishop Partridge also penned a few important lines about the temple dedication in his 1833–36 diary. In addition to confirming the participants’ roles and the sequence of events, Partridge’s brief account also includes the appearance of the heavenly messenger to Frederick G. Williams, whom Partridge stated was the Savior.

Sunday the 27 [March 1836] Met and dedicated the house of the Lord. Prest. Rigdon preached in the forenoon. Prest. J. Smith Jun made many remarks and delivered the dedication prayer. Met at 8 morn & dismissed ¼ past 4 afternoon Met again in the evening that is the authori-
ties of the church. many spoke in tongues some saw visions &c.


## Accounts of Frederick G. Williams’s Testimony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Witnesses</th>
<th>O. Cowdery</th>
<th>J. Smith</th>
<th>S. Post</th>
<th>E. Partridge</th>
<th>N. Knight</th>
<th>L. Knight</th>
<th>G. A. Smith</th>
<th>H. C. Kimball</th>
<th>T. Angell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year recorded</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>1836?</td>
<td>1836?</td>
<td>Before 1847</td>
<td>Before 1884</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Before 1868</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Williams saw an angel

|                         | X          | X         | X         | X         | X         | X         | X          | X             | X         |

### The vision happened at the morning meeting of the temple dedication

|                         | X          | X         | X         | X         |           |           | X          |               | X         |

### The place the angel occupied in the temple: The pulpit

|                         | X          | X         | X         | X         | X         | X         | X         | X             | X         |

### Williams described the appearance of the angel

|                         | X          | X         | X         | X         | X         |           |           |               |           |

### Reason for the angel’s coming: To accept the dedication

|                         | X          | X         | X         | X         | X         |           |           |               |           |

### Identity of angel: The Savior

|                         | X          | X         | X         | X         | X         |           |           |               |           |

### Identity of the angel: Peter

|                         | X          |           |           |           |           |           |           |               |           |

### It was Joseph Smith who identified the angel

|                         | X          | X         |           |           |           |           |           |               | X         |
Doct. F. G. Williams saw an angel or rather the Savior during the fore-noon service.9

Newel Knight. Newel Knight, another eyewitness, wrote an entry in his diary that supports the account that Joseph Smith identified the angel as Christ himself.

When he [Williams] had described the dress and personal appearance of the holy visitor brother Joseph said it was Christ himself. This was to me a satisfaction to know that the Lord did come into the house we had labored so diligently to build to his name, and that he had accepted it of his servants.10

Lydia Knight. Lydia, Newel Knight’s wife, recorded a similar testimony and possibly wrote it at about the same time.

F. G. Williams arose and testified that while the prayer was being offered, a personage came in and sat down between Father Smith and himself, and remained there during the prayer. He described his clothing and appearance. Joseph said that the personage was Jesus, as the dress described was that of our Savior, it being in some respects different to the clothing of the angels.11

George A. Smith. Apostle George A. Smith told about Williams’s vision and about further visions in a speech in Utah in 1864:

On the first day of the dedication, President Frederick G. Williams, one of the Council of the Prophet, and who occupied the upper pulpit, bore testimony that the Savior, dressed in his vesture without seam, came into the stand and accepted of the dedication of the house, that he saw him, and gave a description of his clothing and all things pertaining to it. That evening there was a collection of Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons, etc., amounting to four hundred and sixteen, gathered in the house; there were great manifestations of power, such as speaking in tongues, seeing visions, administration of angels. Many individuals

bore testimony that they saw angels, and David Whitmer bore testimony that he saw three angels passing up the south aisle, and there came a shock on the house like the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and almost every man in the house arose, and hundreds of them were speaking in tongues, prophecying or declaring visions, almost with one voice.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Heber C. Kimball.} President Heber C. Kimball recorded in his journal what Frederick said and included many details about the appearance of the messenger.

During the ceremonies of the dedication an angel appeared and sat near President Joseph Smith, Sen., and Frederick G. Williams so that they had a fair view of his person. He was a very tall personage, black eyes, white hair, and stoop shouldered, his garment was white, extending to near his ankles, on his feet he had sandals. He was sent as a messenger to accept of the dedication.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Truman O. Angell.} Angell, who helped to build the Kirtland Temple and later was the designer of the Salt Lake Temple, wrote late in life concerning the angelic visitor that Frederick G. Williams saw and said that Joseph identified the visitor as the Apostle Peter come to accept the dedication.

The Hall was filled at an early hour in the forenoon, I being present among the rest. The Dedicatory prayer was offered Sidney Rigdon being mouth[.]

When about midway during the prayer there was a glorious sensation passed through the House; and we, having our heads bowed in prayer felt a sensation very elevating to the soul.

At the close of the prayer F. G. Williams being in the upper East stand (Joseph being in the speaking stand next below) rose and testified that midway during the prayer an holy angel came and seated himself in the stand.


\textsuperscript{13} Heber C. Kimball, Journal, quoted in Helen Mar Whitney, “Life Incidents,” \textit{Woman’s Exponent} 9 (February 1, 1881): 130; and in Orson F. Whitney, \textit{Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle: The Father and Founder of the British Mission} (Salt Lake City: Kimball Family through the Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), 103. These publications used Kimball’s journal as a source. Kimball died in 1868.
When the afternoon meeting assembled Joseph feeling very much elated, arose the first thing and said the Personage who had appeared in the morning was the Angel Peter come to accept the dedication.14

Angell’s recollection claims that the dedicatory prayer was offered by Sidney Rigdon, when in fact it was offered by Joseph Smith. Also, Angell’s recollection is the only one that says that Joseph Smith identified the angel as Peter, when four other accounts (Edward Partridge, George A. Smith, Newel Knight, and Lydia Knight) specifically state that the angel was the Savior. The evidence strongly supports the latter identification.

It is unfortunate that Angell’s account is the one that some historians prefer regarding the identity of the angel. In 1975, Lyndon W. Cook published a note titled “The Apostle Peter and the Kirtland Temple.”15 Cook cites the accounts of Joseph Smith (or the scribe who wrote his journal), Heber C. Kimball, and Truman O. Angell and concludes that Peter was the angel that Williams saw. Alexander Baugh in 1999 also favored the idea of the visitor being Peter in his article on Joseph Smith’s visions.16 The incomplete study of the identity of Williams’s angel continues in the 2008 publication of The Joseph Smith Papers, Journals, Volume 1.17 The book cites Edward Partridge’s account that the angel was the Savior but suggests that Partridge is conflating Williams’s March 27, 1836, vision with the vision of Jesus Christ shared by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery a week later, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 110. The book acknowledges that Angell’s account was written decades later. Likewise, Karl Ricks Anderson in The Savior in Kirtland (2012) cites the accounts of Edward Partridge and George A. Smith in favor of the heavenly visitor being the Savior, but finds that since the Savior came to the


17. Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, Journals, Volume 1, 211.
temple on April 3, “it seems unlikely that the Savior would appear twice to accept the dedication,” and finds the Partridge and George A. Smith accounts “problematic.”\(^{18}\)

When the accounts stated herein are considered, the evidence that Joseph Smith stated the angel was the Savior is stronger than Angell’s single account. The idea that the Savior would come to the temple only a week after its dedication on April 3 but not attend the actual dedication ceremony does not correlate well with the Savior having already visited Joseph Smith and others in the Kirtland Temple on January 21, 1836 (a portion of which vision was later recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 137) and several other recorded instances besides the First Vision and the temple dedication.\(^{19}\) It is unlikely that the Savior would appear in the temple before the dedication and soon afterward but not during the actual dedication. Also, when Christ appeared to Joseph and Oliver on April 3, he did not say, “I accept this house,” but rather, “I have accepted this house,” which form suggests something done in the past. The sentence forms part of the Lord’s command to tell the people that built the house to rejoice, for he had accepted the temple: “Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name. For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice” (D&C 110:6–8).

In further support that the angel was the Savior, Truman Angell’s recollection states that Joseph was elated that the heavenly personage had come. The Lord’s acceptance of the temple had been promised and had been prayed for in the dedicatory prayer, which was given to Joseph earlier by revelation. In the following passage, the Prophet asks for the Lord’s divine acceptance of the house as a fulfillment of the promise that the Lord’s holy presence would continually be in this house.

> And now, Holy Father, we ask thee to assist us, thy people, with thy grace, in calling our solemn assembly, that it may be done to thine honor and to thy divine acceptance; And in a manner that we may be found worthy, in thy sight, to secure a fulfilment of the promises which


thou hast made unto us, thy people, in the revelations given unto us; That thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house; And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness (D&C 109:10–13).

Unfortunately, Truman Angell confused the personage who had come to accept it, just as he had confused the person who had offered the dedicatory prayer.

A Secondary Account. Ebenezer Robinson quoted Oliver Cowdery’s Messenger and Advocate account and then added a personal note:

“President F. [Frederick] G. Williams bore record that a holy angel of God came and sat between him and J. [Joseph] Smith, Sen., while the house was being dedicated.”

We did not see the angel, but the impression has evidently obtained with some, that we did see the angel, from the fact that different persons, strangers from abroad, have called upon us and expressed gratification at meeting with a person who had seen an angel, referring to the above circumstance. We told them they were mistaken, that we did not see the angel, but that President F. [Frederick] G. Williams testified as above stated. We believed his testimony, and have often spoke of it both publicly and privately.20

Robinson’s account adds no personal information about Joseph or Frederick’s statements given at the dedicatory meeting but adds evidence that the vision was known among the Saints.

The Significance of This Vision

When presenting his counselors at the temple dedication for a sustaining vote as prophets and seers, Joseph Smith made a point of saying that they were equal with himself. Furthermore, Oliver Cowdery made it a point of recording it that way in the minutes: “President J. Smith jr. then rose, and after a few preliminary remarks, presented the several Presidents of

the church, then present, to the several quorums respectively, and then to the church as being equal with himself, acknowledging them to be Prophets and Seers.”21 The idea of the several presidents being equal was not a new concept: D&C 90:6, received on March 8, 1833, reads, “And again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom.”

On December 5, 1834, Joseph Smith, aided by his two assistant presidents, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, ordained Oliver Cowdery an assistant president of the Church, an office the two counselors already held and would again have confirmed upon them at that same meeting. Joseph explained that the office of assistant president, besides assisting in presiding over the whole church, was to act as a spokesman.

Friday Evening, December 5, 1834. According to the direction of the Holy Spirit, President Smith, assistant Presidents, Rigdon and Williams, assembled for the purpose of ordaining High Counsellor Cowdery to the office of assistant President of the High and Holy Priesthood in the Church of the Latter-Day Saints.

It is necessary, for the special benefit of the reader, that he be instructed concerning the power and authority of the above named Priesthood.

First. The office of the president is to preside over the whole Church; to be considered as at the head; to receive revelations for the church; to be a Seer, and Revelator having all the gifts of God:—having taking Moses for an ensample. . . .

Second. The office of Assistant President is to assist in presiding over the whole church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to their rank and appointment, viz: President Cowdery, first; President Rigdon Second, and President Williams Third, as they are severally called. The office of this Priesthood is also to act as Spokesman—taking Aaron for an ensample. . . .

Presidents Rigdon, and Williams, confirmed the ordinance and blessings by the laying on of hands and prayer, after which each were blessed with the same blessings and prayer.22

Why would the members of this first First Presidency be considered equal with the Prophet, according to the Lord? Why were they considered spokesmen? In what way could they demonstrate they were equal with and spokesmen for the Prophet? Certainly as fellow-witnesses of Jesus Christ and the restoration of his Church. Joseph Smith testified that he saw the Savior, and by April 1836 these men could each add their own witness that they had also seen the Savior. As prophets and seers equal in holding the keys of this last kingdom, they were each special witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The sequence of these visions is much like the pattern followed by the special witnesses to the gold plates. Joseph first saw the angel Moroni and the plates in 1823. It wasn’t until 1829, however, that three others saw the angel and the plates, which lifted a great burden from Joseph’s shoulders, for he was no longer the only witness. Others also saw the plates, of course, but these three special witnesses were designated and were fulfilling a prophesy given in the Book of Mormon itself (2 Nephi 27:12).

In like manner, Joseph saw the Savior and the Father in 1820. But it wasn’t until 1832 that Sidney Rigdon became a second witness of the Savior, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 76:20, 24: “We beheld the glory of the Son, . . . 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.” Frederick G. Williams saw the angel of the Lord (and was instructed by Joseph that it was the Savior) at the Kirtland Temple dedication on March 27, 1836. Oliver Cowdery saw the Lord a week later, on April 3, 1836. The individual testimonies of the Savior witnessed by each of the three assistant presidents occurred at different times, but each in public, where others could hear or see that something sacred was occurring, and not in hidden settings.

It is also significant that the Book of Mormon prophesied that the Latter-day prophet who would bring forth the record of the Nephites would have a “spokesman” that “shall write the writing of the fruit of [Joseph of Egypt’s] loins” (2 Nephi 3:18). We often associate that spokesman with Sidney Rigdon; a scripture given in 1833 (D&C 100:9–10) and Rigdon’s activities corroborate that he was a spokesman. But “spokesman” is more a reference to a position or calling rather than to a person, as Joseph explained on December 5, 1834, and all three assistant presidents became spokesmen for Joseph: by witnessing and witnessing of the

Savior and by writing the Prophet’s words. Oliver was the scribe for most of Joseph’s translation of the Book of Mormon and a witness to the restoration of both priesthhoods by heavenly angels. Sidney was the most vocal spokesman for Joseph, but also the scribe for most of Joseph’s translation of the New Testament. Frederick was the scribe for Joseph’s early history, the bulk of Joseph’s words in the revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants, and most of Joseph’s translation of the Old Testament.

Doctrine and Covenants 90 tells much about their shared responsibilities, unique to that first First Presidency. It states that they are also equal in holding the keys of the School of the Prophets, so that “they may be perfected in their ministry for the salvation of Zion, and of the nations of Israel, and of the Gentiles, as many as will believe” and then “through your [Joseph’s] administration they may receive the word, and through their administration the word may go forth unto the ends of the earth” (D&C 90:7, 8, 9). In addition, it is these three men with Joseph that select the revelations for the Book of Commandments and Doctrine and Covenants (and their names are on the title page), and it is F. G. Williams & Co. that publishes the Doctrine and Covenants, the hymnal, the Messenger and Advocate and the continuation of the Evening and Morning Star, plus several other publications containing Joseph’s words.

The visions and testimonies of the Savior by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and Oliver Cowdery are all recorded in foundational Church histories. However, the canonization of the testimonies of these four special witnesses as scripture is not parallel. Sidney Rigdon’s vision was canonized first in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (section 76). The compilers of the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants included Oliver Cowdery’s vision as section 110. Joseph’s First Vision was not canonized as scripture until 1880, in the Pearl of Great Price. Frederick’s vision has not been canonized as scripture, and very little of the other appearances of the Savior have been canonized. For example, only a portion of the glorious vision of the Father and Son to Joseph on January 21, 1836, was canonized and included in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1981 as section 137.

Many besides the three witnesses who corroborated Joseph Smith’s testimony of the plates saw the plates of gold. Many besides the three assistant presidents who corroborated Joseph’s testimony of the Savior saw the Savior before and during the Pentecostal outpouring in

23. See the introduction to the Pearl of Great Price.
24. See the introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
connection with the temple dedication, including at the solemn assembly held March 30, 1836, where “the Saviour made His appearance to some, while angels minestered to others, and it was a penticost and an enduement indeed, long to be remembered.” But in the case of the members of the Presidency, these were special witnesses, set apart for just such a testimony.

It is not by coincidence that Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams are listed on the title page of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) and identified as the “Presiding Elders of said Church.” These four also signed the preface and dated it February 17, 1835.

Frederick G. Williams had been told in a blessing that he would see the Savior. The blessing was given when the Quorum of the Seventy was formed, on March 1, 1835. Frederick was told, “Thou shalt stand according to thy desires and see the face of thy Redeemer.” Frederick’s patriarchal blessing, given by Joseph Smith Sr. on September 14, 1835, has these words: “Thou shalt have the ministering of angels not far hence, and the visions of heaven shall be unfolded to thy mind.”

Was Truman Angell incorrect that Peter visited the Kirtland Temple? There were so many visions in connection with the temple, beginning in January 1836 and continuing into at least April 1836, that it might be considered unusual if Peter did not come to the temple at some point, since he played an important role in the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In fact, Joseph had said on that evening, “I beheld the Temple was filled with angels which fact I declared to the congregation.” Most assuredly many others who helped in the Restoration were also present. Latter-day Saints wish more could be known for certain about the identity of these heavenly visitors. Even though we may not know who they were, we can all rejoice that there is a heavenly presence in temples. Eliza R. Snow wrote concerning the dedication held March 27, 1836, “The ceremonies of that dedication may be rehearsed, but no

mortal language can describe the heavenly manifestations of that memorable day. Angels appeared to some, while a sense of divine presence was realized by all present, and each heart was filled with ‘joy inexpressible and full of glory.’”

The place the angelic visitor appeared in the Kirtland Temple in Williams’s vision is significant because those pulpits had been dedicated earlier that morning by the First Presidency in a separate ceremony preceding the dedication of the temple as a whole: “The presidency entered with the door keepers and arranged them at the inner and outer doors also placed our stewards to receive donations from those who should feel disposed to contribute something to defray the expenses of building the House of the Lord—<we also dedicated the pulpits & consecrated them to the Lord> The doors were then opened President Rigdon President Cowdery and myself seated the congregation as they came in.”

It was in that same pulpit location, with the veils dropped, that Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery a few days later, on April 3, 1836, for that was the most holy of holy spaces in the temple.

In summary, the details surrounding the appearance of the angel of whom President Frederick G. Williams testified at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple are remarkably consistent among the nine eyewitnesses, with the one exception. Six state that the personage sat between Williams and Smith Sr. (Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith, Stephen Post, Lydia Knight, Heber C. Kimball). Four state the vision took place in the morning (Joseph Smith, Stephen Post, Edward Partridge, Truman Angell). Four recorded some portion of President Williams’s description of the personage’s dress (Newel Knight, Lydia Knight, George A. Smith, Heber C. Kimball). Four reported that the heavenly personage was

31. “When enclosed by the hanging ‘veils,’ the pulpits functioned as an inner sanctum analogous to the veiled ‘most holy place’ in Solomon’s temple.” Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, Journals, Volume 1, 200 n. 415. On March 29, 1836, two days after the dedication of first the pulpits and then the whole temple, the presidents met in that sacred place seeking a revelation: “At 11 o clock A.M. Presidents Joseph Smith Junr., Frederick G. Williams, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, and Oliver Cowdery met in the most holy place in the Lord’s house and sought for a revelation from him to teach us concerning our going to Zion, and other important matters.” “History, 1838–1856, Volume B-1,” 723.
the Savior (Edward Partridge, Newel Knight, Lydia Knight, George A. Smith). One reported that the personage was Peter (Truman Angell). Three reported that it was Joseph Smith who identified the personage (Newel Knight, Lydia Knight, Truman Angell). Four reported that the purpose of the angel’s appearance was to accept the dedicated temple (Newel Knight, George A. Smith, Heber C. Kimball, Truman Angell).

It would be most befitting that the heavenly visitor was the Savior himself, for this was his house, the House of the Lord, and, as Newel Knight reported, “This was to me a satisfaction to know that the Lord did come into the house we had labored so diligently to build to his name, and that he had accepted it of his servants.”

Frederick G. Williams is the Gerrit de Jong Jr. Distinguished Professor of Luso-Afro-Brazilian Studies at Brigham Young University and the author of twenty-six volumes and more than fifty articles. He is a grandson twice removed of Frederick G. Williams and wrote his namesake’s biography, The Life of Dr. Frederick G. Williams: Counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2012). He serves on the BYU Studies Church history editorial board.