

Joseph Smith—History 1:1-26

The History of the Doctrine and Covenants

D&C 1

Lesson 1, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 12 Sep 2016

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General Introduction

In this lesson, we will discuss the early religious experiences of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the history of the Doctrine & Covenants, and the first section of the same. Understanding the foundational events of the Restoration, such as the First Vision, is critical to comprehending the later history of the Church, the life of Joseph Smith, and the doctrines and practices that he instituted. We'll explore some concepts about Joseph Smith's family, his childhood, and his initial visionary encounter with God, as well as how that impacted him in 1820 and how he interpreted that experience later in life.

The Doctrine and Covenants is the contemporary revelatory record of Joseph Smith, capturing much of the word of the Lord as he received it. We gain a great appreciation for the beauty of the text and the blessing it is to have it as we gain insight into its coming forth.

Finally, though not in the same time period as the Joseph Smith-History section, we will explore the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, which the Lord instructed the Prophet to include as a preface to that work. The messages of this section, which do serve as an introduction to the whole volume, help lay a solid groundwork for the messages of the Doctrine and Covenants, and dovetail with the publication history discussion.

Summary Chronology

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- **Mon, 23 Dec 1805** (Sharon, VT) – Joseph Smith, Jr., born

- **1811** (Lebanon, NH) – Smith family moved to Lebanon
- **1813** (Lebanon, NH) – Joseph's leg operated on by Dr. Nathan Smith and others
- **Winter 1816-1817** (Palmyra, NY) – Smith family moved to Palmyra
- **Late 1819 or early 1820** (Manchester, NY) – Smith family moved into log home just north of their property (the home was just in Palmyra township)
- **Early spring 1820** (Manchester, NY) – Joseph experienced the First Vision in the Sacred Grove

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- **Sat, 27 Aug 1831** (Kirtland, OH) – Joseph and others return from several weeks in Missouri
- **Mon, 12 Sep 1831** (Hiram, OH) – Joseph and Emma move in with John and Elsa Johnson
- **Tue-Wed, 25-26 Oct 1831** (Orange, OH) – Joseph presided at a conference where fifteen were ordained high priests
- **Tue, 1 Nov 1831** (Hiram, OH) – At a conference at the Johnson home, a resolution to print 10,000 copies of the Book of Commandments was passed; Joseph received a revelation as the preface to the Book of Commandments, today D&C 1
- **Wed, 2 Nov 1831** (Hiram, OH) – At the conference, a testimony of the divine origin of the Book of Commandments presented and accepted

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Introduction

Joseph Smith kept several histories in his life. This one, called *Joseph Smith-History in the Pearl of Great Price*, is an account taken from a history started in 1838 when John

Whitmer, the former Church historian, then excommunicated, refused to surrender to Church leadership his history kept for many years. On 27 April 1838, while in Far West, Missouri, Joseph Smith's journal notes, "This day was chiefly spent in writing a history of this Church from the earliest perion [period] of its existance up to this date, By

Presidents, Joseph Smith Jr & Sidney Rigdon, myself also was engaged in keeping this record.”¹ Joseph Smith and his clerks and scribes spent much time on this record for the rest of his life, and some of it was published in the *Times and Seasons* and *Millennial Star* newspapers between 1842-1863. After Joseph’s death, others continued to compile the record until it was finally published as *History of the Church* by B. H. Roberts in 1902-1912. Though the earliest part of the 1838 manuscript is now lost, two copies of it survive, one made starting in 1839 (“Draft 2”) and one from 1841 (“Draft 3”).² It was Draft 2 that was used by the Prophet as the basis for the publications in Church periodicals.

In 1851, while in England, Franklin D. Richards used copies of the *Times and Seasons* publications (based on Draft 2) to produce a section of his booklet, *The Pearl of Great Price*, called “Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith.” As the Pearl of Great Price was published later in Utah and then canonized, the history was included in the section called “Writings of Joseph Smith,” entitled “II Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith,” then soon shortened to “Joseph Smith 2.” In 1978, it was renamed as *Joseph Smith—History*.³

Other histories and journal entries of Joseph Smith fill in the story of the First Vision and other early experiences of Joseph Smith. Of the First Vision in particular, there are four accounts that Joseph Smith either wrote or dictated (and a fifth one that contains a passing reference to it) and several second-hand accounts written by people who heard it directly from Joseph Smith. These are well documented in Steven Harper’s book, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision* as well in the *Joseph Smith Papers* volumes and website (see the footnotes below for references and the separate paper offering a parallel view of the four first-hand accounts).

Briefly, the 1832 account is mostly written in Joseph Smith’s hand for the section covering the First Vision, rare among his documents. It was his first attempt at writing his own history, and is very rough. But it is also a beautiful and personal account, focusing on his own feelings and experiences during this time. Parts of it are quite poetic.⁴

The 1835 account is recorded by Joseph’s scribe, Warren Parrish, after the Prophet received a visitor going by the name of Joshua the Jewish minister or Matthias the Prophet, whose real name was Robert Matthews. Joseph told him the early history of the Church and Parrish recorded it in Joseph’s journal.⁵

The 1838 account is the one on which *Joseph Smith—History* is based, as explained in the Introduction above.

The final 1842 account is part of the well-known Wentworth letter, a document sent to John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, for use by his friend George Barstow, who was writing a history of New Hampshire. Wentworth doesn’t appear to have ever published the history (though the same material was used the next year in a book by Israel Daniel Rupp), but it was published in the *Times and Seasons* in March 1842.⁶

Outline

1. Background and early family history (1-4)
2. Search for the true church (5-13)
3. The First Vision (14-20)
4. Reactions (21-26)

Commentary

Background and early family history (1-4)

1 owing to the many reports...by evil-disposed and designing persons. Over the years, many had published works that attacked the Church. From as early as 1830, E. D. Howe worked to debunk Joseph Smith’s claims in his book *Mormonism Unveiled*. Others had taken similar stances in various newspaper articles in subsequent years. In 1838, a particularly malicious book called *Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons)* was published by John Corril. ⁷ This is perhaps the most recent report to which Joseph was reacting, but other reports by former members turned against Joseph were painful to him.

1 to militate against its character as a Church. “Militate” means to have an influence or impact on something, especially a negative one.

1 I have been induced to write this history. “Induced” means moved, influenced, or compelled; while the Prophet has written his own history before, this version is designed specifically to address attacks he and the Church have been experiencing.

1 to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts. The two purposes of JS-H were to correct errors and provide true facts. “Disabuse” means to help someone realize that an idea is not true.

2 being now [1838] the eighth year since the organization of the said Church. As his journal entry notes (above), this

¹ 27 April 1838 · Friday, in *JSP*, J1:260.

² See Source Notes and Historical Introduction, *JSP*, H1:187-203.

³ Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price*, 327-328.

⁴ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 33-38.

⁵ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 41-42.

⁶ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 52-53.

⁷ Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price*, 329.

history was started in April 1838. It did not progress far that year, owing to the persecutions and threats against the Saints in Missouri that year. Later in 1838, Joseph Smith and others were jailed in Richmond and Liberty jails, finally escaping in April 1839 for Illinois. Joseph Smith and his scribes soon resumed the work on the history, first adding to Draft 1, then making the two other copies with edits and revisions (Drafts 2 and 3). Draft 2 is demonstrated to be a copy of the early work in Draft 1 because it retains the reference to 1838, even though it was being written in 1839.⁸

3 I was born...in the town of Sharon, Windsor country, State of Vermont. See Church History Maps, 1 in the LDS scriptures. Joseph's parents, Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith, were from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, respectively, but met and married in Tunbridge, Vermont, on 24 January 1796, where she was visiting her brother and he had just moved with his father's family five years previous.⁹ They stayed in Tunbridge until 1802, then briefly ran a store in nearby Randolph, Vermont. When the business failed the next year, they then moved to and tenant farmed in Sharon, Vermont, where Joseph Smith was born in 1805. Other moves followed, and in 1811, they moved for two years to Lebanon, New Hampshire, which is where the young Joseph had his leg operations.¹⁰ In 1814, the family then returned to Vermont, just across the Connecticut River, in Norwich, where they stayed until 1816.¹¹

3 left the State of Vermont, and moved to Palmyra. In 1816, after three crop failures in Vermont, Joseph Smith, Sr. preceded the family to Palmyra, New York, and they joined him later that year or early 1817, after a challenging ride in the winter to Palmyra.¹² They likely settled in a rented place on the eastern edge of town, on the corner of Johnson and Vienna Streets (where the road comes south out of the small circle south of east Main, on Church History Map 2), but they soon moved to a house on west Main Street.¹³ In about 1819 or early 1820, they saved enough to start the purchase of 100 acres of land at the south end of town on Stafford Road, and soon built a small, four-room log cabin there, to which they later added a fifth room on the back (see Church History Photographs, 3).¹⁴

3 he moved with his family into Manchester. It so happened that the log home they built was just off the northern edge of their property, which also happened to be the

county and township line. So technically the house was in Palmyra but the property in Manchester. Later, when the oldest son, Alvin, led the building of a frame home on the center of the property—about 200 yards south from the log house—it was in Ontario county, Manchester township (Church History Map 2). Alvin died in 1823 before the home was finished.

Though their property was in Manchester township, Palmyra was half as close and so the family did most of their business in Palmyra.¹⁵ It was a time of major growth in Palmyra. In 1820, Palmyra consisted of about 100 families and about 700 inhabitants. By 1830 there were nearly 2,000 residents in the village, and nearly 5,500 in the township. Much of this growth was driven by the completion of the Erie Canal near the city in 1822 (Maps 2 and 3), which opened up commerce and travel to the otherwise isolated region. The entire canal was completed three years later in 1825, linking Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean.

4 His family consisting of eleven souls. The family consisted of ten people in 1820 (the parents, six boys, and two girls), dropped to nine with Alvin's death in 1823, then back up to ten in 1824 when Lucy was born (see v. 4). In other words, there were never more than eight children living. In Joseph's list, he counts Alvin among the total, bringing it to eleven, though Alvin had long since passed when this history was written; Joseph always considered Alvin part of the family. Joseph Sr. and Lucy had two other sons who both died shortly after birth, which are not counted here.¹⁶

Search for the true church (5-13)

5 in the second year after our removal to Manchester. This is 1818, but other First Vision accounts show that Joseph was concerned about religion as early as 1817. It is interesting to note how personal this concern was—neither his family nor friends and neighbors later realized that he was going through anything like this.¹⁷

5 an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. Historical records show that the increase in religious fervor began as early as 1799. Open-air preaching, revivals, and large groups of conversions led to great church growth and hotly contested competition for the souls of men and women of the day. Though the various faiths differed on many points of doctrine (see v. 6 below), the major one was the nature of salvation, or more specifically, the role of

⁸ *JSP*, H1:195.

⁹ Bushman, *Beginnings*, 19.

¹⁰ Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 72-77.

¹¹ Bushman, *Beginnings*, 19-40.

¹² Bushman, *Beginnings*, 41-42; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 28-29; Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 330.

¹³ Garr, Cannon, and Cowan, *Encyclopedia*, 889.

¹⁴ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 32.

¹⁵ See <https://history.lds.org/site/palmyra> for an interactive map and pictures of sites in the area. See also <https://history.lds.org/narrative/first-vision> for more pictures and a detailed story.

¹⁶ Garr, Cannon, and Cowan, *Encyclopedia*, 1141-1142.

¹⁷ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 35-36.

the individual in their own salvation. Presbyterians, who were Calvinists, believed that God elected certain people to salvation or to damnation, and the person had no influence on that outcome. But John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, rejected this notion and taught that people could choose to follow Christ and be saved by his grace. This marked controversy over the nature of salvation is what troubled Joseph Smith the most:¹⁸

...respecting the subject of religion and looking at the different systems taught the children of men, I know not who was right or who was wrong and I considered it of the first importance that I should be right, in matters that involve eternal consequ[en]ces.¹⁹

5 It commenced with the Methodists. A huge conference of Methodist ministers in 1819 resulted in many itinerant preachers passing through the Palmyra area, generating many converts. This in turn stimulated more preaching from other groups, including Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and more, who all record substantial increases in congregation sizes during this time.²⁰ Because of this religious fervor, this period is called “the Second Great Awakening”²¹ and the area of western New York the “Burned-Over District.”²²

6 a strife of words and a contest about opinions. We see some of this today, but in Joseph Smith’s day, antagonism between churches was very strong. Christians argued over issues that today are seldom discussed. In Palmyra, there were congregations of Presbyterians (the largest group in the area), Methodists (the fastest growing), Baptists, and Quakers.²³ However, going further out in the area would add Episcopalians, Eastern Christians, and Universalists. They disputed about doctrines such as baptism; the depravity of man; pre-destination and agency; the role of the Bible; revelation and inspiration; trinitarianism (the Nicene Creed) and the nature of God; the authority to act for God; the nature of the Lord’s Supper; and Sabbath-breaking. This thought is continued in v. 9.

7 in my fifteenth year. In other words, he was 14 years old, making it 1820, as he turned 15 that December.

7 proselyted to the Presbyterian faith. As the oldest church with a building in Palmyra (just north of ‘four corners’ on Church street, across from the cemetery where Alvin will later be buried),²⁴ it’s no wonder they attracted the attention of several of the Smith family, including Lucy, the

mother, Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia.²⁵ It’s significant to note that the Methodists were being more successful, in terms of growth, in that area at that time, which is reflected in Joseph’s comments in v. 8.

8 serious reflection and great uneasiness. The 1832 account gives more details about these feelings, showing how Joseph was concerned for his own salvation as well as that of his fellow humans, that he detected an apostasy and a deviation from the church of the New Testament:

At about the age of twelve years, my mind became seriously imprest with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God...I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind the contentions and divi[sions] the wicke[d]ness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the of the minds of mankind my mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that ~~man~~ <man-kind> did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and liveing faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world.²⁶

8 my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect. While Presbyterianism was the dominant religion in the early 1800s in New York, mostly because the early settlers came from areas where that religion was the prevailing one, Methodism was the most rapidly growing group in this western frontier. In 1820, the Methodists had no church building in Palmyra (the first was built in 1822) but they had many meetings in homes and camp meetings out in the woods.²⁷ Joseph related to Alexander Neibaur in 1844 that his family members “got Religion” at such revival meetings and that “he wanted to get Religion too wanted to feel & ~~sh~~ shout like the Rest but could feel nothing.”²⁸

10 Who of all these parties are right. The 1842 account says that he determined “that God could not be the author

¹⁸ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 13-22.

¹⁹ From the 9 November 1835 account (Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 42; see also *JSP*, H1:115-116).

²⁰ Bushman, *Beginnings*, 53; Steven C. Harper, “On the Eve of the First Vision,” in Black and Skinner, *Joseph*, 33.

²¹ Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 76-79.

²² Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 333.

²³ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 36-37.

²⁴ Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 67.

²⁵ Joseph’s recollection of these four attending the Presbyterian church is backed by local records which show them attending regularly; see Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 67-69.

²⁶ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 39-40; *JSP*, H1:11-12.

²⁷ Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 70-72.

²⁸ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 66; Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:461.

of so much confusion.”²⁹ Joseph’s own family was divided on this question, with several members in the Presbyterian faith (v. 7), and his father being attached to no church, taking after his own father, Asael, who believed the Universalist notions of salvation for all.³⁰ With Joseph leaning toward Methodism but unable to commit, their dinner conversations could have been lively reflections of the same strife happening all around them.

11 ***I was one day reading the epistle of James.*** Joseph’s brother, William, recounted that in 1819 Joseph heard a Methodist preacher, Rev. George Lane, use James 1:5 to answer the question, “What church should I join?” Oliver Cowdery also thought Lane had been an influence on the young man.³¹ Going home and reading it for himself, he pondered on its meaning, and eventually determined that he would do just that—ask God. Some think this could possibly be the same minister with whom Joseph shared his vision later,³² but careful study of Lane’s itinerary shows he was not in the area long after the 1819 conference and was in many cases quite far away, so while possible, it was probably not him.³³

12 ***Never did any passage of scripture come with more power.*** The 1835 account also refers to the scripture, “ask and you shall receive knock and it shall be opened seek and you shall find” (Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9).³⁴

12 ***I reflected on it again and again.*** If William Smith is correct and Joseph heard the sermon about James 1:5 in 1819, it was nearly a year before Joseph acted on his feelings. This was a subject that weighed on him heavily for an extended time, which is reflected in the language of v. 13 where “at length” is used twice to describe this time before going into the woods.

12 ***destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.*** The Bible was the ultimate authority for Protestants, but they offered multiple interpretations of its doctrines and teachings, thus making it impossible to determine truth by using the Bible alone.

13 ***At length I came to the conclusion.*** Only after trying everything in his power to learn the truth and spending much time talking to others who he hoped would help him,

did Joseph determine that no one but God himself could actually answer his fervent question about the nature of salvation.³⁵

The First Vision (14-20)

14 ***I retired to the wood to make the attempt.*** In one account recorded by David Nye White in 1843, Joseph related that the location he went to in the wood was “where my father had a clearing, and [I] went to the stump where I had stuck my axe when I had quit work.”³⁶

14 ***the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty.*** This account (1838) is the only one where the year is given. Some have made a point about a supposed contradiction with an insertion in the 1832 account where it says, “in the 16th year of my age.” But the insertion was added at a later, unknown date by Frederick G. Williams, and was not part of the original text that Joseph Smith himself wrote.³⁷ From all other accounts, it seems clear that 1820 is the correct year, and he was in his 15th year.

15 ***I was seized upon by some power.*** In the 1835 account, Joseph adds additional details about this encounter with Satan:

I made a fruitless attempt to pray, my tounge seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter, I heard a noise behind me like some person walking towards me, <I> strove again to pray, but could not, the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer, I sprung up on my feet, and and looked around, but saw n person or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking, I kneeled again my mouth was opened and my tounge liberated, and I called on the Lord in mighty prayer.³⁸

The Church movie from the 1970s, “The First Vision,” combines these 1835 account elements in its presentation.

16 ***I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.*** In the 1832 version, Joseph first called it “a pillar of fire” but then crossed out “fire” and changed it to “light.”³⁹ The 1835 account also reads “A pillar of fire” and “a pillar of flame.”⁴⁰ In 1842, he recounted that he was “surrounded with a brilliant light.”⁴¹

²⁹ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 53; JSP, H1:494.

³⁰ Bushman, *Beginnings*, 26-28.

³¹ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 25; Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 333-334.

³² For example, Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price*, 345.

³³ See <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/exploring-first-vision/5-reverend-george-lane-good-gifts-much-grace-and-marked-usefulness> for an account of Lane’s travels during this time.

³⁴ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 42; JSP, J1:87.

³⁵ Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 335-336.

³⁶ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 65.

³⁷ JSP, H1:12n44.

³⁸ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 43; JSP, J1:88.

³⁹ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 40; JSP, H1:12.

⁴⁰ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 43; JSP, J1:88.

⁴¹ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 54; JSP,

Interestingly, Orson Pratt's 1840 recording of the story explains that at first, the

bright and glorious light...seemed to be at a considerable distance. He [Joseph] continued praying, while the light appeared to be gradually descending towards him; and, as it drew nearer, it increased in brightness, and magnitude, so that, by the time that it reached the tops of the trees, the whole wilderness, for some distance around, was illuminated in a most glorious and brilliant manner. He expected to have seen the leaves and boughs of the trees consumed, as soon as the light came in contact with them; but, perceiving that it did not produce that effect, he was encouraged with the hopes of being able to endure its presence. It continued descending, slowly, until it rested upon the earth, and he was enveloped in the midst of it. When it first came upon him, it produced a peculiar sensation throughout his whole system; and, immediately, his mind was caught away, from the natural objects with which he was surrounded; and he was enraptured in a heavenly vision.⁴²

17 I saw two personages. The 1832 account doesn't specifically mention two people, and some have used that as 'evidence' that Joseph Smith developed this account over time and changed it to make it more glorious.⁴³ But it's clear from all accounts that the Son did all the talking except for the Father's introduction, a pattern followed in other scriptures (e.g., Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 3 Nephi 11:7). It's also possible to read it as being two people, both with the title "Lord," an entirely appropriate way to refer to both the Father and the Son: "I was filled with the spirit of god and the <Lord> opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me."⁴⁴

In the 1835 account, the Father appears first, followed shortly by the Son (perhaps as the Father was introducing him?): "a personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame which was spread all around, and yet nothing consumed, another personage soon appeared like unto the first."⁴⁵

In the 1842 account, Joseph mentions something unique about their appearance: "I was enraptured in a heavenly vision and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other in features, and likeness."⁴⁶

18 which I should join. You can almost hear Joseph humbly saying, 'I wasn't expecting anything like this. I just wanted to know which church to join.'

The 1832 account emphasizes that he was first seeking personal forgiveness for his sins and was given that by the Lord up front: "thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy <way> walk in my statutes and keep my commandments."⁴⁷

19 their creeds were an abomination in his sight. "Creeds" refers to formal beliefs professed by various church leaders from the fourth century onward, including the Apostles' Creed, Creed of Nicaea, Nicene Creed, Chalcedonian Creed, Athanasian Creed, and many more.⁴⁸ There were an abomination (strong language) because they incorrectly defined the very nature of God and his relationship to mankind, making it impossible for the truth about God to be known without new revelation—like the First Vision.

19 those professors were all corrupt. We think of "professors" as teachers at universities, but as Joseph Smith is using the term here, it simply means someone who 'professes' a certain belief, thus any committed member of any church.

19 draw near to me. The Lord is paraphrasing Isaiah 29:13. Though not mentioned, the next verse is about a "marvelous work and a wonder" coming forth, and the 1842 account states that at a future date the fullness of the gospel would be made known to Joseph.

19 a form of godliness. A reference to 2 Timothy 3:5.

20 many other things did he say unto me. Joseph never recorded the entire conversation he had with the Lord in the grove. Besides what is mentioned here, other accounts briefly mention personal forgiveness of sins and allude to the Second Coming and the future restoration. But one can't help but wonder what "other things" Joseph learned this day.

Reactions (21-26)

21 one of the Methodist preachers. Some think this was perhaps George Lane, as mentioned above, but it was more likely a local minister who was more permanent to the area. Joseph never gave any details about the identity of this person.

21 he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt. Methodism in that day was moving away from spiritual manifestations that people then commonly expressed and which had been encouraged just a few years before, "toward a more respectable, reasonable religion."⁴⁹ The leaders worried about excesses and wild visions and

⁴² Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 58-59.

⁴³ Fawn Brodie first developed this notion in her history of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*.

⁴⁴ Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 40-41; *JSP*, H1:12-13.

⁴⁵ Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 43; *JSP*, J1:88.

⁴⁶ Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 54; *JSP*, H1:494.

⁴⁷ Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 41; *JSP*, H1:13.

⁴⁸ See a good listing of them at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_creeds#Ecumenical_and_Historical_Christian_Creeds.

⁴⁹ Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 69.

manifestations that appeared to be more “fringe” than mainstream, and such revelations made the person suspect rather than saintly. There are many reports from this time of similar revelatory experiences, and church leaders determined to stand against them to maintain respectability. “The preacher reacted quickly and negatively, not because of the strangeness of Joseph’s story but because of its familiarity.”⁵⁰ Joseph was surely unaware of this shift in position—he had seen others experience spiritual manifestations, and surely expected the minister to welcome his own experience with God. The surprise at the minister’s reaction is evident even 18 years later in this writing.⁵¹

For his part, the minister surely reacted as poorly to the message as to the experience; Joseph was telling him that God was condemning the very church the minister supported and which supplied his income. The minister’s answer that: 1) it was of the devil; 2) there were no more visions and revelations; 3) that such things had ended after the New Testament; and, 4) there would never be any more, were all based on the common wisdom of the day and perhaps personal experience. After all, he had never seen a vision, so any such thing must be a lie from Satan.⁵²

21 all such things had ceased with the apostles. In our day as it was in Joseph’s, many in Christianity are confused about their own beliefs in this matter. They teach this as their doctrine—that revelation ceased with the apostles—but they also look forward to the day when it will come again, such as the two prophets in Revelation. In other words, they allow God the right to call more prophets, just not Joseph Smith.

22 great persecution...bitter persecution. Lucy Smith, Joseph’s mother, documented some of these persecutions, including Joseph getting shot at.⁵³ However, though the challenges of the time were very real, most of this persecution came later, so this is reflective on Joseph’s part of his whole life up to 1838. As he wrote this history, he had just spent several months in miserable jail cells with the sentence of death hanging over him. This persecution toward

him and his followers came from people of other Christian faiths, people who professed to believe in God as he did. After being rejected in Kirtland and Missouri, it certainly felt to Joseph like “all united to persecute me” (v. 22).

24 I felt much like Paul...before King Agrippa. Referring to Acts 26 where Festus calls Paul “mad” after he related the account of his vision on the road to Damascus. There is some irony that Paul left multiple, somewhat conflicting accounts of his ‘first vision’ on the road to Damascus, making their shared experience even more interesting.

25 I knew it, and I knew that God knew it. Joseph surely expected a more favorable reaction to his news that God is speaking again than he initially got, but regardless, he knew it was true and knew that he had a responsibility to God to act according to the commands and instruction he had received.

26 I had now got my mind satisfied. Not only had Joseph’s questions about salvation, forgiveness of sins, and which church had truth been answered, but in the 1832 account, he stated that after the vision, “my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the lord was with me.”⁵⁴

26 it was not my duty to join with any of them. Joseph followed the instructions he received and, like his father, did not associate himself with any religious organization. It’s not clear from the accounts of the First Vision that Joseph Smith had any idea of what his future mission would be at this time, only that “the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.”⁵⁵ It was not until the coming of Moroni in 1823 that he first hears directly his personal role in the latter-day restoration of divine truth.

26 I had found the testimony of James to be true. Though we may not have a vision like Joseph, James’ counsel is relevant to each of us—ask God and he’ll reply through a divine communication, the Holy Ghost.⁵⁶

The History of the Doctrine & Covenants

It’s very helpful when studying a book to know something of its origin. The Doctrine and Covenants has an interesting and long history, with significant changes to the book as little as three years ago. This section will briefly cover the history of the book. For more details, refer to the excellent

work *How We Got the Doctrine and Covenants* by Richard Turley and William Slaughter referenced in the “Works Referenced” section below, and the various references in the *Joseph Smith Papers* books and website. See also the

⁵⁰ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 41.

⁵¹ As Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 40, noted, “The preacher’s contempt shocked Joseph.”

⁵² Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 68-70; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 41.

⁵³ Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith*, 137-159.

⁵⁴ Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 41; *JSP*, H1, 13.

⁵⁵ From the 1842 account, Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 54; *JSP*, H1:494.

⁵⁶ See Hugh B. Brown, “The Profile of a Prophet,” *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 4 Oct 1955.

Church's excellent scripture history page on <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/history?lang=eng>.

In the early days of the Church, many members copied Joseph's revelations by hand, treasuring these latter-day words from heaven. Missionaries carried such copies with them and taught them to interested listeners. In some cases, missionaries without personal copies memorized revelations so they could recite them as needed. This enthusiasm for the written word led to a desire to publish the Prophet's revelations and other critical Church documents very early in the history of the Church. Later that effort added more revelations and historical documents. Though mostly containing documents related to Joseph Smith, some of his successors also had sections added, including Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith, and Spencer W. Kimball.

Unlike the Bible, where there are no original manuscripts (called "autographs"), or the Book of Mormon which had one original manuscript that was substantially destroyed when it was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, there are many revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants where the original manuscript is still available; most of these are on single sheets of paper in the form of dictation, journal entries, or letters. Many more are based on first-hand copies (made directly from the originals), including Joseph Smith's personal record books, journals, histories, and other writings.

1833 – The Book of Commandments

As early as July 1830, Joseph Smith began collecting his revelations for publication. He was assisted by both Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer in this work,⁵⁷ who were also his scribes for the early work on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, which began at roughly the same time (June 1830). The loose sheet revelations were copied into a record book called by the brethren "Book of Commandments and Revelations." For most of the revelations in this book, these early copies are the only source.⁵⁸

In May 1831, then 39-year-old William W. Phelps quit his job as editor of three newspapers in New York and moved to Kirtland, Ohio, to offer his services to the Church. He had read the Book of Mormon given him by Parley P. Pratt and been convinced of its truth, but had not yet been baptized. The next month, the Prophet received a revelation in Phelps' behalf, stating that he was called "to do the work of

printing, and of selecting and writing books for schools in this church" (D&C 55:4). He was baptized shortly after that revelation, and left with Joseph Smith and others for Missouri.⁵⁹ While there, the Lord said that Phelps should stay in Missouri to be "a printer unto the church" (D&C 57:11). Accordingly, he traveled to Cincinnati to purchase a press, took it to Independence, built a printing house, and began printing the first Church newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*. Some of the first things Phelps published in his paper were twenty-three of Joseph Smith's revelations.

On 1 November 1831, at a conference of the Church held at the John and Elsa Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, Joseph Smith received a revelation commanding that "the book of my commandments" be published to the "inhabitants of the earth" (D&C 1:6). The Lord designated that revelation as "my preface" (also v. 6) to the book. After the revelation was received (which witnesses said was dictated by Joseph line by line in their presence while the Prophet gazed out the window and Sidney Rigdon wrote), Oliver Cowdery asked how many copies should be printed. It was optimistically determined by the conference that 10,000 was the goal,⁶⁰ twice as many as the Book of Mormon's first printing and an amount that would in truth impoverish the small Church. Such was their excitement and commitment to getting the revelations into the hands of Church members. Those attending the conference voted that the revelations were "worth to the Church the riches of the whole Earth."⁶¹ (Later, 30 April 1832, the Literary Firm, including Joseph Smith, determined to lower the print run to 3,000 because of the financial situation of the Church,⁶² still an ambitious goal.)

Asking those at the conference to seek a testimony of the revelations as the Three Witnesses had done for the Book of Mormon and provide a similar testimony, a discussion arose about the language of the revelations.⁶³ In response, a revelation on 2 November 1831 chided them for "fears in [their] hearts" which was why a Three Witnesses-like experience was not received (D&C 67:3), and gave them a test: pick the "least" among the revelations in the proposed Book of Commandments and the "most wise" man there, and have him attempt to write a similar revelation (D&C 67:6). William E. McLellan, a learned teacher (though "having more learning than sense," said Joseph Smith),⁶⁴ accepted the challenge, but failed to produce. This was tes-

⁵⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:2.

⁵⁸ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 12.

⁵⁹ Harper, *Making Sense*, 194-195; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 183-184.

⁶⁰ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 27.

⁶¹ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 32; *JSP*, MRB:xxvi-xxvii.

⁶² Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 46.

⁶³ Harper, *Making Sense*, 233.

⁶⁴ HC 1:226; Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:366; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=168>.

timony enough to many there, and their witness was written and added to the book—five that day and thirteen more later when the manuscripts arrived in Missouri for printing.⁶⁵ Later, that same testimony was included in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants but with the names of the Twelve Apostles attached instead of the original eighteen (see Introduction, 2013 Doctrine and Covenants).

W. W. Phelps went to work starting in December 1832. Many of the revelations he published in his newspaper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, and for many members of the Church, this was their first experience seeing Joseph’s revelations in print.⁶⁶ But he also worked on printing them in book form, under the title *Book of Commandments*. By the summer of 1833 he had five signatures, or about 160 pages of the book, nearly fully printed (a signature being a large single piece of paper with sixteen printed pages on it, ready to fold and cut; no cutting or binding was done because the plan was to send the printed signatures to Kirtland for binding).⁶⁷ That took the work up to what we today call D&C 64:36—ending in the middle of the verse. A sixth signature was planned but never printed. Upset by some of the things Phelps had printed in his newspaper, particularly about slavery (Missouri being a pro-slave state), and incensed by inflammatory articles and a tract called “Beware of False Prophets” written by a Reverend Benton Pixley,⁶⁸ a mob of several hundred gathered and attacked the printing house on Saturday, 20 July 1833, destroying the press, the printed pages, and Phelps’ home.⁶⁹ A few people jumped in and grabbed some of the pages, including the two teenage Rollins sisters, Mary Elizabeth and Caroline.⁷⁰ These few copies were later bound, thus producing a handful of copies of the Book of Commandments.⁷¹

1835 – The Doctrine & Covenants

With the press destroyed in Missouri, printing efforts shifted to Kirtland, led by Frederick G. Williams. After Oliver Cowdery purchased a press in New York for \$800, in December 1833, Williams picked up publishing *The Evening and Morning Star* and also started a new publication, *The Latter-Day Saint Messenger and Advocate*. Both publications printed more of the Prophet’s revelations.⁷²

⁶⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 236; JSP, MRB:xxviii.

⁶⁶ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 25-26.

⁶⁷ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 31-32; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:6.

⁶⁸ Allen and Leonard, *The Story*, 84; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:6.

⁶⁹ JSP, MRB:xxix; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 222-224; the mob also attacked the local Mormon store and blacksmith shop and tarred and feathered Edward Partridge and Charles Allen.

⁷⁰ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 35.

Joseph Smith asked the Saints to provide “all the means and money you can” to print both the New Translation of the Bible (the Joseph Smith Translation) and “all the revelations which God has been pleased to give us in these last days.”⁷³ Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams worked together to collect, edit, and prepare the revelations for publication.⁷⁴ In May 1835, W. W. Phelps arrived in Kirtland from Missouri, and was immediately given charge of printing the revelations, assisted by John Whitmer.⁷⁵ With a new title, the Doctrine & Covenants, many additional revelations from the Book of Commandments printing, and edits to existing revelations to bring up to date with the latest Church offices and responsibilities,⁷⁶ the new book went to press in June 1835. On 17 August 1835, with Joseph Smith out of town, the 284 pages of the book (printed but not yet bound) were presented by Oliver Cowdery to a conference for a sustaining vote. It was declared “as the rule of their faith & practice” and was accepted by each quorum voting in turn, followed by a general vote of all members.⁷⁷

John Whitmer testified that he had been present for many of the revelations “and was satisfied they come from God.” Levi Jackman, representing the high council in Zion (Jackson County) said that he had examined the revelations and “firmly believes them as he does the Book of Mormon or the Bible.” Newel K. Whitney testified that he knew they “were true, for God had testified to him by his holy Spirit, for many of them were given under his roof & in his presence through President Joseph Smith Junr.”⁷⁸ The Twelve Apostles, most of whom were on missions at the time, included their written testimony of the truth of the book, which is still printed today at the beginning of the Doctrine & Covenants.

The name of the new book was selected because it included two parts. First were seven Lectures on Theology (later dubbed “Lectures on Faith”) that came from the instruction in the Kirtland School of the Prophets. This was the ‘doctrine’ part of the book. The second section included the

⁷¹ Woodford, Robert J., “The Doctrine and Covenants: A Historical Overview,” in Millet and Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, 6; Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 35-36.

⁷² Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 41-49; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:7.

⁷³ Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 363.

⁷⁴ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 51.

⁷⁵ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:9.

⁷⁶ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 56.

⁷⁷ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 55.

⁷⁸ All three quotes from JSP, MRB:xxx.

revelations, and was considered the ‘covenants’ part of the book.⁷⁹

The pages were sent to Cleveland, Ohio, for binding, and by the second week of September 1835, the Doctrine & Covenants was sold to members for the cost of one dollar.⁸⁰ Many of the printed books sold but not all, perhaps because of the sacrifices made to build the Kirtland temple and the general poverty of the Saints. When the print shop burned down in 1838, it probably took the unsold copies with it.⁸¹

1844 – Second Edition

In 1841, a member in Nauvoo, Ebenezer Robinson, who had published the third edition of the Book of Mormon and a Church hymnal, began to set type for a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁸² Seeking to know if having a private party print the book was the right direction, in January 1842, Joseph Smith received a revelation directing that the Quorum of the Twelve be put in charge of printing for the Church.⁸³ After a year delay, typesetting continued, and the new edition was ready for printing in June 1844.⁸⁴ But before it was completed, Joseph Smith was murdered in Carthage Jail and John Taylor was seriously wounded. When the volume finally came out later that year, it also included what is now Section 135, John Taylor’s testimony of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom.

This second edition was mostly the same as the 1835 edition,⁸⁵ but included seven additional revelations (today sections 103, 105, 112, 119, 124, 127, and 128) and John Taylor’s testimony (135), as indicated above.⁸⁶ Because it was set using stereotypes (permanent type), it could easily be reprinted, and it was in both 1845 and 1846.⁸⁷

Other Editions

1845

Wilford Woodruff published an edition in England, mainly to secure the copyright in that country before dissident Saints following after Sidney Rigdon could.⁸⁸ This version was the main one used for many years, however, as the Saints moved west and got established there.

⁷⁹ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 51-55.

⁸⁰ Robin and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:10; Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 56.

⁸¹ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 59.

⁸² Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 61-62.

⁸³ *JSP*, J2:38; the result was that Joseph Smith and John Taylor were put in charge of writing and editing, with Wilford Woodruff running the business of the print shop, that the Church acquired one week after the revelation from Ebenezer Robinson.

⁸⁴ *JSP*, R2:640.

Other European editions were published in 1849 and 1854 by Orson Pratt, but these were identical in text to the 1844 Nauvoo edition.⁸⁹

1876

Under direction from Brigham Young and the First Presidency, apostle Orson Pratt prepared a new edition that included extensive changes, resulting in a book much like what we use today. He added twenty-six more revelations, including one by Brigham Young (today Sections 2, 13, 77, 85, 87, 108-118, 120-123, 125-126, 129-132, 136). He put the real names in parentheses after the code names used in the earlier editions to protect the people involved. He changed the order of the revelations and divided them into smaller verses, resulting in the verse numbering we still use today.⁹⁰

1879

Orson Pratt published another version in England, using the text of the 1876 edition but adding footnotes, cross-references, and a full index. This was also published the next year (1880) in Utah using a second set of electrotype type-set as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Church. It was sustained in General Conference in October 1880 (along with the Pearl of Great Price) and became the standard edition of the Doctrine and Covenants for more than four decades.⁹¹

1908

Still using the text of the 1880 edition, the Church added President Wilford Woodruff’s declaration on plural marriage (the Manifesto) and a concordance for the 1908 edition.⁹²

1921

Following a new edition of the Book of Mormon, President Heber J. Grant asked several apostles who had worked on that project to create a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. This work was led by Elder James E. Talmage. They revised the footnotes, set the text in two columns, added introductory statements with each section and an up-

⁸⁵ The most notable change was the renumbering of sections after 66; the 1835 edition had inadvertently numbered two sections as 66 (*JSP*, R2:641).

⁸⁶ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 136 n20.

⁸⁷ *JSP*, R2:641.

⁸⁸ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 75-76.

⁸⁹ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 81.

⁹⁰ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:13; Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 81-82.

⁹¹ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 92-99.

⁹² Woodford, “A Historical Overview,” in Millet and Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, 16.

dated index and concordance, and changed section numbers from Roman numerals to Arabic, as it is today (1, 2, 3, etc.). Most significantly, they removed the seven Lectures on Faith which had been included since 1835 but had never been voted on as scripture. This became the standard text of the Doctrine and Covenants for sixty years.⁹³

1981

Under the direction of President Spencer W. Kimball and the Scriptures Publication Committee, led by apostles Thomas S. Monson, Boyd K. Packer, and Bruce R. McConkie, the Church first published an LDS edition of the King James Bible in 1979. Following that, it was determined to do the same effort for the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.⁹⁴

This new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants included extensive updates to footnotes, explanatory section headings, historical notes, maps and other study aids, and the addition of sections 137, 138 (both initially added to the

Pearl of Great Price in 1976 but now moved to the Doctrine and Covenants), and Official Declaration—2 (June 1978 revelation on the priesthood). Some textual changes were made the revelations, the most notable of which was the removal of ‘code’ names in many of the sections that were first included to protect Church leaders but which had long since lost their usefulness.⁹⁵

2013

Taking advantage of new scholarship and learning from the Joseph Smith Papers project, the Church issued a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants that updated chapter headings, dates, and other factual corrections.⁹⁶ The online (on lds.org) and electronic versions (available through Gospel Library apps on various platforms) are updated as needed without waiting for a major print run, so as new information is discovered or corrections on dates or other factors needed, these electronic versions are always the most up-to-date versions available.

D&C 1

Setting

Joseph and Emma had moved from Kirtland, Ohio, to Hiram, Ohio, about 30 miles southeast of Kirtland, on 12 Sep 1831 (see Church History Map 3). There they lived with John and Elsa Johnson, and Joseph spent much of his time with Sidney Rigdon working on the translation of the Bible.⁹⁷ A conference of the Church convened on 1-2 Nov 1831, at the Johnson home, to discuss the publication of the revelations of Joseph Smith. Present at the conference were ten men: Joseph Smith, Jr.; Oliver Cowdery; Sidney Rigdon; William E. McLellin; David Whitmer; John Whitmer; Peter Whitmer, Jr.; Orson Hyde; Luke Johnson; and Lyman Johnson.⁹⁸

After deciding in the morning to publish 10,000 copies of the revelations (reduced in 1832 to 3,000 because of the expense) and during a recess before the afternoon session, Joseph Smith received a revelation that the Lord designated as “the preface” to the book, which is D&C 1 today.⁹⁹ John Whitmer noted simply in the minutes, “Preface received by inspiration.”¹⁰⁰

William E. McLellin, who was present, offered more details many years later. He said that a preface had first been drafted by himself, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery, but that it had not been satisfactory to the conference, and everyone asked Joseph to petition the Lord. Accordingly, between the morning and afternoon sessions, the group prayed, and then the Prophet “dictated by the spirit the preface found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants while sitting by a window in the room. Sidney Rigdon wrote it down. Joseph would deliver a few sentences and Sidney would write them down, then read them aloud, and if correct, then Joseph would proceed and deliver more, and by this process the preface was given.”¹⁰¹

Chronologically, this revelation falls between Sections 66 and 67 but has always been printed as the first section in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

⁹³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:13; Woodford, “A Historical Overview,” in Millet and Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, 17-18; Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 104-108.

⁹⁴ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 111.

⁹⁵ Turley and Slaughter, *How We Got*, 112-120.

⁹⁶ See a general description of the changes here: <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/adjustments?lang=eng>; with a detailed comparison of the 1981 and 2013 editions here:

https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/scriptures/scripture-comparison_eng.pdf?lang=eng.

⁹⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:17.

⁹⁸ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 26-27.

⁹⁹ *JSP*, D2:104.

¹⁰⁰ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 27.

¹⁰¹ William Kelley to the editor, 16 January 1882, in *Saints Herald*, 1 March 1882, quoted in Harper, *Making Sense*, 535, n3.

Documents and Publication

The original manuscript is no longer extant. The revelation was copied into Revelation Book 1 by John Whitmer, probably between 12 and 20 November 1831, just before he and Oliver Cowdery left for Missouri.¹⁰²

This section was first published in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, March 1833. It was included as Section I in the 1833 Book of Commandments and as the first section in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants since that time.¹⁰³

Outline

1. The Lord's Preface (1-6)
2. Babylon Should Fear and Tremble (7-16)
3. Joseph Smith's Mission (17-23)
4. Only True and Living Church (24-33)
5. Search These Commandments (34-39)

Commentary

Section 1 is the Lord's testimony of the truthfulness of the revelations but also a call to prepare for the Second Coming and recognize the Lord's hand in the work of the latter days. It contrasts Babylon, the world, which is doomed to destruction, with the Church, which is the means of salvation for the entire world. It invites—requires—us to choose between the two, and to share that message with others.

The Lord's Preface (1-6)

In John Whitmer's copy of this in Revelation Book 1, he included an introduction that is not part of the first printed version of the revelation in *The Evening and the Morning Star*,¹⁰⁴ though it was included in the 1833 Book of Commandments,¹⁰⁵ then dropped in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants¹⁰⁶ and all editions since. The source for this introduction is not known. It is:

A Preface or instructions upon the Book of Commandments which were given of the Lord unto his Church through him whom he appointed to this work by the voice of his Saints through the prayer of faith this church being organized according to the will of him who rules all things on the Sixth day of April in the year of our Lord 1830.

1 *Hearken.* “Hearken” means to listen and to act. The Lord often invites us to listen, hear, and hearken (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 1:2; 49:1). Note that the audience of this

command and revelation is both “my church” and “ye people from afar.”

1 *Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea.* This text closely resembles Isaiah 49:1, though reversed in its order.

2 *the voice of the Lord.* For thousands of years, people could escape the voice of the Lord as there were no prophets on the earth. Now this section declares that they cannot, and the promise is that everyone shall hear that voice. Given the subject of the conference—to publish the revelations—and the Lord's intention that this be the preface to that publication, the message is clear: the revelations of the prophets are not just for the converted members, but for the world, as a testimony of the need to repent and return to God and acknowledge Christ as the Savior of mankind and the truth of his word (Philippians 2:10-11).¹⁰⁷

3 *the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow.* This is the first hint that this revelation is more than just about printing a book. The language is eschatological, looking to the Second Coming when perhaps for the first time in the history of the earth, righteousness will be fully rewarded and wickedness will bring full sorrow. Like John's Revelation, D&C 1 is binary—we must choose if we're in the Lord's camp or the enemy's and face the consequences of that choice. There is no neutral ground.¹⁰⁸

4 *the voice of warning.* Equated with the voice of the Lord in v. 2, the charge to take a warning message to the whole world is given to this small band of disciples gathered in a farmhouse (see also v. 11). What an amazing challenge for these early converts and a great vision of what the Church would become.

5 *none shall stay them.* The Lord's promise that nothing can stop the work from going forward gave strength to the small group of disciples there and to us today, as we work to continue to fulfil the command to warn the world.

6 *mine authority, and the authority of my servants.* Like v. 38, the voice and the authority of the Lord and his designated servants are the same; the servants act at the command of the Lord (v. 5) and so have his authority and speak his words.

6 *my preface.* So was this section designated by Jesus Christ; it was not written by men at the conference but given by direct revelation from the Lord himself.

6 *the book of my commandments.* The name of the book was taken from this passage.

¹⁰² *JSP*, D2:104.

¹⁰³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:18; Cook, *The Revelations*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *JSP*, R2:279.

¹⁰⁵ *JSP*, R2:15.

¹⁰⁶ *JSP*, R2:385.

¹⁰⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:19.

¹⁰⁸ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 43.

6 *publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth.* The ‘target audience’ for the Book of Commandments was not just the young Church and its members, as great as their desire was for the printed revelations, but the entire earth who all need to hear that voice of God speaking again in our day.

Babylon Should Fear and Tremble (7-16)

7 *fear and tremble.* Sometimes we say in the Church that to ‘fear God’ means to give him reverence, and in some scriptures that could be the meaning of the term. But there are many instances, including this one, which are clearly intended to teach that all of us truly need to be afraid of the consequences of our wicked choices, because “the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked” (v. 9) and his “anger...is kindled” (v. 13).

7 *what I the Lord have decreed in them shall be fulfilled.* “Them” refers to the revelations given to Joseph Smith planning to be published by this conference, which are promised to all come to pass.

8 *power given to seal.* Here the brethren were told they have power to “seal” the wicked up to judgment. In a meeting held less than a week previous, Joseph Smith stated, “the order of the High priesthood is that they have power given them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life.” Then in a revelation given the same day as this one, the brethren were also told that they would have power to “seal [the righteous] up unto eternal life” (D&C 68:12). The reference here to the sealing power appears to extend it to the wicked as well.¹⁰⁹ This is not a direct reference to temple ordinances, which will not be revealed for many years, but to the power to ‘bind’ or ‘secure’ someone or something, just as seals (wax or clay impressions) were used anciently to confirm the truth of a document and secure it for delivery to another.¹¹⁰

8 *the unbelieving and rebellious.* Unbelievers are those who hear the message of truth and refuse it, which the rebellious are those who know it is true but choose not to live accordingly. Neither title applies to someone who has not at least heard the gospel message.¹¹¹

9 *the wrath of God shall be poured out.* Compare 1 Nephi 14:15, 17; 22:16; Revelation 14:10; 16:1; Moses 7:1. Revelation 16:1 is especially relevant with the metaphor of wrath being literally poured out from vials (or better translated, bowls) by the angels upon the wicked.

10 *text note.*

RB1: unto every man according to his works

EMS: unto every man according to his work

1833: unto every man according to his work

The original copy in Revelation Book 1 has “works,” which makes more sense in the context than the singular “work.” The

singular was in the first printing in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the Book of Commandments, probably as a typesetting error, but has been maintained in every edition since.

10 *to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man.* Each of us is judged based on how we treat others, showing that the ‘golden rule’ (Matthew 7:12) is not just a nice way of treating others but an eternal law. See also Matthew 7:21-23.

11 *unto the ends of the earth.* Consider the audacity of the declaration: a handful of men in a small town in Ohio are being tasked to taking God’s message to the entire world! Yet their foundation has enabled millions to embrace the Restoration in all parts of the world today, and more will continue to join themselves to the cause of truth.

12 *Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come.* Joseph Smith had already received several revelations outlining events of the last days preceding the Second Coming, such as D&C 29 and 45. The brethren were counseled in the strongest terms to prepare against these events.

12 *the Lord is nigh.* The early Saints believed that the Second Coming was very close. Perhaps one of our challenges today is to maintain that same sense of anticipation and effort, even though the warning to prepare seems less urgent given the passage of time?

13 *his sword is bathed in heaven.* Compare Isaiah 34:5, the only other place this image is used in scripture. The Hebrew word in Isaiah for “bathed” means to be saturated or drunk, and is a parallel to the next verse, where the Lord’s sword is “filled with blood.” The sword is thus poised to strike, already soaked in the blood of hypocritical sacrifices of lambs, goats, and rams, offered by the wicked, and it will now be used in a sacrifice of those same wicked people.

14 *the arm of the Lord shall be revealed.* This phrase also comes from Isaiah, at the beginning of the final servant song (Isaiah 53:1). Abinadi (Mosiah 14:1) and John (John 12:38) both quoted it. Abinadi used all of Isaiah 53 to demonstrate that Christ will come down among the people, becoming subject to the flesh and to the Spirit (Mosiah 15:1-5), and then sacrificing himself for us in compassion and mercy (Mosiah 15:6-9). John sees the arm of the Lord revealed in Jesus’ many miracles. D&C 90:10 also uses the phrase to indicate that through missionary work in the last days, the power of the Lord will convince the nations of the truth. Thus the “arm of the Lord” (holding the sword of judgment from v. 13) is manifest through Christ and his chosen servants to the salvation of many.

14 *text note:*

RB1: the voice of the Lord neither

his servants

¹⁰⁹ *JSP*, D2:105 n196; also *JSP*, D2:82.

¹¹⁰ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 44.

¹¹¹ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:20.

EMS: the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants
1833: the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants
The phrase “the voice of” added to the statement about the servants is not present in the original in RB1 but was added in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the Book of Commandments and all subsequent editions, making the phrase parallel to “the voice of the Lord.” This also parallels the next phrase, “the words of the prophets and apostles” and more significantly matches the phrasing in v. 38, which equates the voice of the Lord and the voice of his servants.

14 cut off from among the people. This is a common Old Testament phrase,¹¹² with only one other usage in the D&C, in a revelation that was given just two days after this one (D&C 133:63). To be cut off from among the people means a serious and perhaps permanent separation from family, friends, and fellow Saints; today this would be considered the equivalent of excommunication. An even greater application is in the Book of Mormon, where to be “cut off from the presence of the Lord” means to suffer “spiritual death” or a separation from the Lord.¹¹³

15 strayed from mine ordinances. To stray is usually a gradual process more than an abrupt departure.¹¹⁴ For example, you can imagine how baptism by immersion as a critical covenant could stray over time to become less important, change its form (perhaps when water was at a premium), and finally lose its meaning and covenantal power. At first, the changes were subtle and those making the changes felt fully justified in such minor adjustments. But in the end, the power of the ordinance was lost just the same.

15 broken mine everlasting covenant. The people who reject the prophets (v. 14) have strayed from the Lord’s everlasting covenant. While the phrase “everlasting covenant” is found many times in the scriptures, only in Isaiah 24:5 and here is it described as broken. In Isaiah’s case, the earth is defiled because of the actions of its inhabitants. In this revelation, such actions by the people bring about a “calamity” that causes the Lord to call new prophets (v. 17) to once again establish the everlasting covenant (v. 22).

16 seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness. The Lord’s “righteousness” is his just-ness, truth, virtue, perfection, and right-ness.¹¹⁵ To establish that in the world doesn’t change the nature of the Lord in any way but it does change the world as those attributes of God are respected, appreciated, and worshipped by mankind.

16 after the image of his own god. To misunderstand the nature of God is to make salvation impossible—so the

¹¹² Some examples include Exodus 31:14; Leviticus 17:4, 9; 18:29; 19:8; 20:18; 23:29; Numbers 9:13; 15:30; 19:20; Ruth 4:10.

¹¹³ Alma 42:9; Helaman 14:16-18.

¹¹⁴ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:21.

Lord told Joseph Smith in the first vision that the creeds that misrepresented the Father and the Son are “an abomination” to him (Joseph Smith—History 1:19). The image of God had by many in the world is “in the likeness of the world” and is “that of an idol,” meaning that men worship something that they create, like idols of old times.¹¹⁶

16 *Babylon the great, which shall fall.* Verses 14-16 describe the state of the wicked world, labeled “Babylon” by the Lord. Several allusions to Isaiah are evident, including 21:9; 24:5-6; 52:10; and 34:1-10. The language of Revelation 14:8 and 18:2 (which draw on Isaiah 21:9) is also evident in this verse. Babylon, of course, represents all that evil, and the Saints all called to come out of her and bring as many others as possible along (D&C 133:5, 7).

Joseph Smith’s Mission (17-23)

17 the calamity which should come. There have been many troubling times in the world’s history, but the time ahead of the Second Coming will likely be second to none in terms of destructive force, except for the flood at the time of Noah. Those who do not give heed to the warning voice will suffer disaster and tragedy.

17 text note.

RB1: called upon my Servants Joseph

EMS: called upon my servant Joseph

1833: called upon my servant Joseph

1835: called upon my servant Joseph Smith jr.

In the earliest recording and printing of this verse, the name Joseph was all that was needed to know who this was. But in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, they likely felt the need to include his full name, so it would be clear to all readers who was the servant of the Lord spoken of. That full name has been retained in all subsequent editions. The same issue occurs in v. 29 again, with “Joseph” in the original and first printings later being changed to Joseph Smith, Jun.

17 *Joseph Smith, Jun.* The Lord’s servant in the last days to carry the message to the earth is the Prophet of the Restoration. Others have a role (v. 18) but we sing “Praise to the Man” because of the singular contribution of this man to whom the Lord spoke from heaven and gave commandments.

18 they should proclaim these things. The role of most of us in the Church is to announce and declare truth to others around us, that the words of latter-day prophets will be amplified by our individual voices. Most of the earliest revelations were calls to people to proclaim the gospel message and call others to have faith, repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost.

¹¹⁵ Various meanings of the Hebrew term *tsedeq* and the Greek *dikaio suné*, both of which are generally translated “righteous” or “righteousness.”

¹¹⁶ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 48-49; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:22.

19 *text note.*

RB1: the w{a\weak} things of the world should come forth
EMS: the weak things of the world should come forth
1833: the weak things of the world should come forth
1835: the weak things of the world shall come forth
“Should” in this phrase matches the next phrase, “that man should not counsel his fellow man.” It persisted in the first two publications in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the Book of Commandments. But the 1835 edition changed it to the future tense “shall,” making the result more certain. It has persisted in all editions.

19 ***The weak things of the world.*** We don’t think of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other early Church leaders as weak, but the world does not generally view them as great leaders or men of influence, especially not at this time in Church history. This small group of humble farmers, merchants, and teachers were called upon to perform great miracles. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:23-29.

Verses 19-23 call out what the “weak things” will accomplish with the Lord’s help.

20 ***that every man might speak in the name of God.*** Moses tried to get his people to this state, declaring that he “would God that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29).

21 ***faith also might increase.*** Faith in the divine is very low today and continues to decline as a secular perspective dominates. This is the first of several reasons that the Lord speaks to prophets today and wants every person to speak in God’s name (through v. 28).

22 ***That mine everlasting covenant might be established.*** See v. 15 above.

23 ***the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed.*** The gospel message must be taught in the earth to those who will listen. The “fulness” of the gospel is found in the Book of Mormon (D&C 20:9; 27:5; 42:12), telling us that it does not refer to every doctrine revealed today. Rather, the fulness is what is required to experience celestial glory,¹¹⁷ which Nephi calls “the doctrine of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:2) and explains in terms of faith, baptism, repentance and remission of sins, and being changed by the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Nephi 31:2-21).

21-23 Reasons that the Lord speaks to prophets today.

Only True and Living Church (24-33)

24 ***in their weakness, after the manner of their language.*** The Doctrine and Covenants and Joseph Smith-History are our only scriptures that are not a translation. The Lord spoke in English to the mind of Joseph Smith and we received it in a language that we can understand. Still, it must

be expressed in human language, which is not as clear and meaningful as divine language, spoken by the power of the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith spoke of “the little narrow prison almost as it were total darkness of paper, pen and ink and a crooked broken scattered and imperfect language.”¹¹⁸ The Lord taught less than six months before this revelation that when people “preach it [the words of truth] by the Spirit of truth” and it is received by the same Spirit, then “both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:17-22). So it is with our study of scripture: as we read it with the Spirit guiding us, we can better understand its meaning in our lives.

But we should not be surprised to find imperfections or things that need correcting in scripture, because the Lord will always speak to us at our level of understanding, in our language of communication. Inspiration does not guarantee perfect spelling, punctuation, vocabulary choice, or interpretation.¹¹⁹ With greater knowledge and experience later, we may see things differently or larger. We learn “line upon line” (Isaiah 28:10) until we at last come to a “perfect understanding” (Alma 48:11).

Verses 24-28 explain the purpose and power of scriptures, from the Lord’s perspective.

25 ***inasmuch as they erred it might be made known.*** How easy it would have been for Joseph Smith, who was corrected and chastened in early revelations, to just leave those out in the printing of the Book of Commandments. Why put things out to the world that were embarrassing and could hamper the work? But the Prophet showed both his humility and his obedience by including even the revelations that must have caused him pain, so that all could see where he had erred—and repented, learned, and grown. Likewise, we can be confident that as the Lord teaches us in our mistakes and sins, he will continue to love us and work with us, as he did Joseph Smith, and we can all learn from each other’s mistakes (Mormon 9:31).

26 *text note.*

RB1: & in as much as they sought wisdom it might be ~~made known~~ instructed

EMS: And inasmuch as they sought wisdom, they might be instructed

The initial wording in RB1 matches that of the previous phrase, “in as much as they erred it might be made known.” It’s seems likely that Whitmer’s eye strayed and picked up that phrase as he copied this one, then he recognized his mistake and crossed it out (strikeout was made before he wrote the next word) but didn’t realize he also needed to change “it” to “they.” The error was caught in the first printing in *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the correction kept in all subsequent editions.

¹¹⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:23-24.

¹¹⁸ Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 287.

¹¹⁹ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:25.

26 *as they sought wisdom they might be instructed*. While echoing a great principle of humbly seeking help from the Lord, this wording also echoes back to the First Vision and Joseph's being prodded by James 1:5 to seek wisdom and be taught by the Lord.

27 *were humble they might be made strong*. Humility is a strength, not a weakness. A truly humble person will learn to rely on the Lord and not on themselves, which will always result in greater strength than trusting in the arm of flesh (v. 19).

28 *from time to time*. Sometimes we are impatient with the Lord's timetable for answers to our own questions and challenges, but even to Joseph Smith, he received revelations and answers "from time to time," not as a constant flow of divine information.

29 *having received the record of the Nephites*. The Book of Mormon is not a record of everything that ever happened in the New World. As the Lord explains here, it is the record of a single group of people, the Nephites, and some of their history, leaders, prophets, wars, failures, and successes.

29 *text note*.

RB1: the mercy of God by the power of the Book of
{m\<M>}ormon

EMS: the mercy of God, by the power of God, the book of
Mormon

1833: the mercy of God, by the power of [G]od, the book of
Mormon

1835: the mercy of God, by the power of God, the book of
Mormon

Whitmer skipped over the word "God" in the description of the power by which the Book of Mormon was translated but got the capitalization correct on the book's name. The word "God" was correctly included in *The Evening and the Morning Star* publication but in the Book of Commandments, the "G" in God was missing (the letter is partially there so it probably was an inking issue). In 1835, it was finally correctly rendered, though the name of the Book of Mormon was still mis-capitalized.

29 *through the mercy of God, by the power of God*. Joseph Smith's only declaration in his lifetime about how the Book of Mormon was translated was that it was done "by the gift and power of God."¹²⁰ The Lord echoes and confirms that statement here, adding that it was done through God's mercy, something Joseph Smith would certainly and heartily agree with.

30 *power to lay the foundation of this church*. The revelations to be published also show that Joseph and Oliver, in particular, had power and authority to organize the church.

30 *out of obscurity and out of darkness*. From Isaiah 29:18 (also 2 Nephi 27:29), where a book would be heard by the deaf and the blind would see. So the Book of Mormon fulfills that chapter, according to Nephi's inspired interpretation: "they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel" (2 Nephi 22:12).¹²¹

30 *the only true and living church*. There is a purpose to a church, tied to priesthood and ordinances. The church is "true" because it is founded on correct authority and teaches the doctrines of Christ. It is "living" because it has an open communication line to the source of its truth, just like a plant is only living when it is growing with strong roots and an ongoing source of nourishment.¹²²

31 *cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance*. As mentioned earlier, this is why we need to fear the Lord (v. 7). But in the same breath, he promises relief and comfort by assuring the repentant of forgiveness (v. 32).

32 *text note*.

RB1: he that repenteth & doeth the commandments

EMS: he that repenteth and doeth the commandments

1833: he that repenteth and doeth the commandments

1835: he that repents and does the commandments

The Biblical style of language was included first in this verse (also in v. 33 with "he that repenteth not" and v. 35 with "willeth that all men") and persisted in the first two publications. However, in 1835 and all subsequent editions, the language was modernized to "repents" and "does" (and "repents" and will" in vv. 33 and 35), though in v. 35, the -eth form has persisted through all editions in the phrase "the day speedily cometh" (this is true for several other verses as well that use the -eth form). This modernization matches a later noticeable but not consistent trend in the Joseph Smith Translation to replace the -eth verbs with more modern versions.

33 *taken even the light*. The light of the gospel truth will quickly depart when we do not repent and turn back to God on a daily basis. We may grow line upon line, but sin can cause us to fall back very quickly into darkness.

33 *my Spirit shall not always strive with man*. "Striving" is work, requiring effort on the part of the Spirit. We can make choices in a way that drives that Spirit away or makes it impossible for him to continue working with us (see 2 Nephi 26:11).¹²³

¹²⁰ From the 1830 Book of Mormon and an 1842 *Times and Seasons* article, as quoted in MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, 71.

¹²¹ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 53.

¹²² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:25-26.

¹²³ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:26.

Search These Commandments (34-39)

34 *text note*.

RB1: inhabitants of the Earth for I the Lord am willing
EMS: inhabitants of the earth, for I the Lord am willing
1833: inhabitants of the earth, for I the Lord am willing
1835: inhabitants of the earth, I the Lord am willing
“For” makes the wording awkward in this phrase and grammatically should be removed. It remained through the first two printings but was corrected in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

34 *willing to make these things known*. By God’s grace and love for us, he gives us ample warning and prompting to prepare us for what is to come.

35 *text note*.

RB1: for I am no respecter to persons
EMS: for I am no respecter to persons
1833: for I am no respecter to persons
1835: for I am no respecter of persons
The phrase “respecter to persons” is not found in the Bible but is in the Book of Mormon in Moroni 8:12; James 2:9 does include the phrase “respect to persons” as does Alma 1:30, but that works with respect as a verb. But the more typical phrase is “repect(er) of persons” (e.g., Proverbs 24:23; 28:21; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; James 2:1; 1 Peter 1:17; Alma 16:14). There is strong evidence that this language is Old English style, something which pervades the Book of Mormon translation.¹²⁴ That indicates that in the earliest version in Revelation Book 1 and the first two printings, the “respecter to persons” language was acceptable, because it matched at least one instance in the Book of Mormon. But starting in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, this phrase was updated to the more modern and Biblical phrase “respecter of persons” and has persisted in that format in subsequent printings.

35 *I am no respecter of persons*. God does not give one personal special treatment over another. The offer of salvation and all its attendant blessings are available to all. It doesn’t mean we are not all treated exactly the same, because our choices and our personal needs and mission require different actions from the Lord, but the same opportunities for joy, peace, and salvation are available to all on the same terms.

35 *peace shall be taken*. We have experienced many wars and contentions, but peace still is dominant on the earth today. It will not be so as we get closer to the Second Coming and the devil exerts more “power over his own dominion.”

36 *the Lord shall have power over his saints*. Though the promise of protection may not apply to all mortal situations, the Lord has nevertheless promised to care for and be

with his faithful covenant people. The Lord has power over the church through its appointed leaders.¹²⁵

36 *come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world*. In contrast to the power he will exert over the Church, he will bring judgment upon the wicked in the world. “Idumea” is the Latin term for the nation of Edom (Mark 3:8), a perennial enemy of Israel. Here the Lord uses the term to represent wickedness in the world in general, the only reference with that usage (see Bible Dictionary, “Idumea”).

37 *Search these commandments*. We are to carefully search (not just read or browse) the revelations provided by the Lord in these last days, as published in the Book of Commandments and Doctrine and Covenants, for they are “true and faithful” and will “all be fulfilled.”

38 *it is the same*. The meaning of “apostle” is ‘one who is sent,’ and implies that the sent one has authority to speak and act in the same of the person who sent him. The word “prophet” means a ‘spokesperson’—again, one who has authority to speak on behalf of another (God, in this case). How blessed we are to have the words of prophets and apostles who speak the voice and mind of the Lord!

39 *text note*.

RB1: the Spirit beareth record & the is true
EMS: the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true
This was evidently a copying error by John Whitmer into the Manuscript Revelation Book where his eye jumped over the second instance of the word “record” in the original recording of the revelation. It was quickly caught and corrected in *The Evening and the Morning Star* publication and all subsequent editions.

39 *the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true*. One role of the Holy Spirit is to testify of truth (John 15:26; Mormon 3:16; D&C 20:26). What we learn from the Spirit, we can be assured is true.

Results

The brethren took this revelation and the previous revelations received by Joseph Smith and took them to Missouri to publish them to the world. As a result of this preface given by revelation and a previous failed effort by William McLellin to try and write a revelation from the Lord, many were willing to put their names to this Book of Commandments, declaring that they came from God and were his voice to the world today. This section announces that God speaks to man again, and that man must pay attention, listen, and act to avoid the destructions coming ahead of the return of Jesus to the earth.

¹²⁴ See Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 3:1596-1597 and his forthcoming Volume 3 (in several parts), where multiple instances of this pattern of Old English language usage are well documented.

¹²⁵ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:27.

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EMS – The Evening and the Morning Star, June 1832-May 1833, from *JSP*, R2:202-299.

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