

LESSON 1
Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History
Explanatory Introduction; Section 1; Introduction to *Our Heritage*

OVERVIEW:

The revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants address the needs of our day. The Lord authored the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants. This course will discuss major events of the dispensation of the fullness of times. We can each help to move forward this great latter-day work.

This book has changed and evolved over time into what we have now. The original edition was destroyed by a mob before it could be completed. It has gone through several editions in both the United States and in Great Britain. When the committee was formed to make a new edition to the Book of Mormon, all of the Standard Works became part of that project and that is how we got a new edition in 1981.

In my judgment there is no book on earth yet come to man as important as the book known as the Doctrine and Covenants, with all due respect to the Book of Mormon, and the Bible, and the Pearl of Great Price, which we say are our standards in doctrine. The book of Doctrine and Covenants to us stands in a peculiar position above them all. I am going to tell you why. When I say that, do not for a moment think I do not value the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and the Pearl of Great Price, just as much as any man that lives; I think I do. I do not know of anybody who has read them more, and I appreciate them; they are wonderful; they contain doctrine and revelation and commandments that we should heed; but the Bible is a history containing the doctrine and commandments given to the people anciently. That applies also to the Book of Mormon. It is the doctrine and the history and the commandments of the people who dwelt upon this continent anciently. But this Doctrine and Covenants contains the word of God to those who dwell here now. It is our book. It belongs to the Latter-day Saints. More precious than gold, the Prophet says we should treasure it more than the riches of the whole earth. I wonder if we do? If we value it, understand it, and know what it contains, we will value it more than wealth; it is worth more to us than the riches of the earth. Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation 3:198-99)

(Ezra Taft Benson: The Doctrine and Covenants brings men to Christ's kingdom, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 'the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth [D&C 1:30]. The Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion, and the Doctrine and Covenants is the capstone, with continuing latter-day revelation. The Lord has placed his stamp of approval on both the keystone and capstone. CR, Apr 1987, p, 105.)

SCRIPTURES:

EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION

(This introduction is significantly different from previous editions of the D&C. This version was written for the 1981 edition.)

The Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of divine revelations and inspired declarations given for the establishment and regulation of the kingdom of God on the earth in the last days. Although most of the sections are directed to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the messages, warnings, and exhortations are for the benefit of all mankind, and contain an invitation to all people everywhere to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to them for their temporal well-being and their everlasting salvation.

Most of the revelations in this compilation were received through Joseph Smith, Jun., the first prophet and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Others were issued through some of his successors in the Presidency. (See headings to Sections 135, 136, and 138, and Official Declarations 1 and 2.)

The book of Doctrine and Covenants is one of the standard works of the Church in company with the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price. However, the Doctrine and Covenants is unique because it is not a translation of an ancient document, but is of modern origin and was given of God through his chosen prophets for the restoration of his holy work and the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth in these days. In the revelations one hears the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times; and the work that is initiated herein is preparatory to his second coming, in fulfillment of and in concert with the words of all the holy prophets since the world began.

Joseph Smith, Jun., was born December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont. During his early life he moved with his family to Manchester, in western New York. It was while he was living near Manchester in the spring of 1820, when he was fourteen years of age, that he experienced his first vision, in which he was visited in person by God, the Eternal Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. He was told in this vision that the true Church of Jesus Christ that had been established in New Testament times, and which had administered the fulness of the gospel, was no longer on the earth. Other divine manifestations followed in which he was taught by many angels; it was shown to him that God had a special work for him to do on the earth, and that through him the Church of Jesus Christ would be restored to the earth.

In the course of time Joseph Smith was enabled by divine assistance to translate and publish the Book of Mormon. In the meantime he and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist in May 1829 (D&C 13), and soon thereafter they were also ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood by the ancient apostles Peter, James, and John (D&C 27: 12). Other ordinations followed in which priesthood keys were conferred upon them by Moses, Elijah, Elias, and many ancient prophets (D&C 110; 128: 18, 21). These ordinations were, in fact, a restoration of divine authority to man on the earth. On April 6, 1830, under heavenly direction, the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Church, and thus the true Church of Jesus Christ is once again operative as an institution among men, with authority to teach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation. (See Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1: 1-75; D&C 20.)

These sacred revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people. The Prophet and his associates sought for divine guidance, and these revelations certify that they received it. In the revelations one sees the restoration and unfolding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times. The westward movement of the Church from New York and Pennsylvania, to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, and finally to the Great Basin of western America, and the mighty struggles of the saints in attempting to build Zion on the earth in modern times, are also shown forth in these revelations.

Several of the earlier sections involve matters regarding the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon (see Sections 3, 5, 10, 17, 19). Some later sections reflect the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith in making an inspired translation of the Bible, during which many of the great doctrinal sections were received (see, for example, Sections 37, 45, 73, 76, 77, 86, 91, and 132, each of which has some direct relationship to the Bible translation).

In the revelations the doctrines of the gospel are set forth with explanations about such fundamental matters as the nature of the Godhead, the origin of man, the reality of Satan, the purpose of mortality, the necessity for obedience, the need for repentance, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the ordinances and performances that pertain to salvation, the destiny of the earth, the future conditions of man after the resurrection and the judgment, the eternity of the marriage relationship, and the eternal nature of the family. Likewise the gradual unfolding of the administrative structure of the Church is shown with the calling of bishops, the First Presidency, the Council of Twelve, and the Seventy, and the establishment of other presiding offices and quorums. Finally, the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power—makes this book of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth.

A number of the revelations were published in Zion (Independence), Missouri, in 1833, under the title *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*. Concerning this publication the elders of the Church gave solemn testimony that the Lord had borne record to their souls that these revelations were true. As the Lord continued to communicate with his servants, an enlarged compilation was published two years later in Kirtland, Ohio, with the title *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*. To this publication in 1835, the written testimony of the Twelve Apostles was attached as follows

TESTIMONY OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES TO THE TRUTH OF
THE BOOK OF DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

The Testimony of the Witnesses to the Book of the Lord's Commandments, which commandments He gave to His Church through Joseph Smith, Jun., who was appointed by the voice of the Church for this purpose:

We, therefore, feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of the earth, that the Lord has borne record to our souls, through the Holy Ghost shed forth upon us, that these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men and are verily true.

We give this testimony unto the world, the Lord being our helper; and it is through the grace of God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, that we are permitted to have this privilege of bearing this testimony unto the world, in the which we rejoice exceedingly, praying the Lord always that the children of men may be profited thereby.

The names of the Twelve were

Thomas B. Marsh	Orson Hyde	William Smith
David W. Patten	Wm. E. McLellin	Orson Pratt
Brigham Young	Parley P. Pratt	John F. Boynton
Heber C. Kimball	Luke S. Johnson	Lyman E. Johnson

In successive editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, additional revelations or other matters of record have been added, as received, and as accepted by competent assemblies or conferences of the Church.

Beginning with the 1835 edition a series of seven theological lessons was also included; these were titled the "Lectures on Faith." These had been prepared for use in the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834-1835. Although profitable for doctrine and instruction, these lectures have been omitted

from the Doctrine and Covenants since the 1921 edition because they were not given or presented as revelations to the whole Church.

In the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants three documents have been included for the first time. These are Sections 137 and 138, setting forth the fundamentals of salvation for the dead; and Official Declaration 2, announcing that all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.

It is evident that some errors have been perpetuated in past editions, particularly in the historical portions of the section headings. Consequently this edition contains corrections of dates and place names and also a few other minor corrections when it seemed appropriate (such as discontinuing the unusual names beginning with Section 78). These changes have been made so as to bring the material into conformity with the historical documents. Other special features of this latest edition include maps showing the major geographical locations in which the revelations were received, plus improvements in cross references, section headings, and subject-matter summaries, all of which are designed to help readers to understand and rejoice in the message of the Lord as given in the Doctrine and Covenants.

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS SECTION 1

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, during a special conference of elders of the Church, held at Hiram, Ohio, November 1, 1831. (This conference lasted 2 days) HC 1: 221—224. Many revelations had been received from the Lord prior to this time, and the compilation of these for publication in book form was one of the principal subjects passed upon at the conference. This section constitutes the Lord's Preface to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this dispensation. (Ezra Taft Benson: The Doctrine and Covenants is the only book in the world that has a preface written by the Lord Himself. In that preface He declares to the world that His voice is unto all men, that the coming of the Lord is nigh, and that the truths found in the Doctrine and Covenants will all be fulfilled. CR, Oct 1986, p. 101 Section 1 chronologically should be between sections 66 and 67.

1—7, The voice of warning is to all people; 8—16, Apostasy and wickedness precede the Second Coming; 17—23, Joseph Smith called to restore to earth the Lord's truths and powers; 24—33, The Book of Mormon brought forth and true Church established; 34—36, Peace shall be taken from the earth; 37—39, Search these commandments.

1 ^aHEARKEN, O ye people of my ^bchurch, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose ^ceyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Harken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together. (These are the words of Isaiah: 49:1: The orange words are those from the Book of Mormon: AND again: Harken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel. ^aLISTEN, O isles, unto me; and ^bhearken, ye people, from far; The **LORD** hath ^ccalled me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.)

2 For verily the ^avoice of the Lord is unto all men, (This revelation and the entire compilation of revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants were intended to go to the world. Revelations of the Restoration, Joseph Fielding McConkie, p. 42) and there is none to ^bescape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ^cear that shall not hear, neither ^dheart that shall not be penetrated.

3 And the ^arebellious shall be ^bpierced with much ^csorrow; for their iniquities shall be ^dspoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.

4 And the ^avoice of warning shall be unto all people, (It is commonly thought that the prophecies announcing that the gospel will be taught to those of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people can somehow be filled through radio, television, computers, or other forms of mass communication. This, however, cannot be the case. Only an ordained servant of the Lord can receive a confession of sins, baptize, and confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. Though the mass media can greatly help in teaching of the gospel, it will never replace the need for missionaries to find, love, teach, and nurture those who are seeking the blessings of the gospel. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 43) by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have ^bchosen in these ^clast days. (Without question we are rapidly approaching the great day of the Lord, that time of "refreshing," when he will come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance upon the ungodly and prepare the earth for the reign of peace for all those who are willing to abide in his law. It is only just that the Lord would speak again from the heavens, before that great day shall come, and commission his servants and send them forth to proclaim repentance and once again say to the people, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Surely, the Lord would not depend entirely upon the predictions of his ancient prophets for this warning of his second coming. True it is, that the warnings given of old are to be heeded, but near the approach of these great events, it is right, and reason compels us to believe, that the Lord would again raise his voice through his appointed servants in a warning that the people might know that this great and dreadful day is even now at our doors. Joseph Fielding Smith, Restoration of All Things, p. 302-03)

5 And they shall ^ago forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them. (Joseph Smith: No power can prevent the gospel from going forth. It is destined to be taught to those of every nation, kindred, and tongue. "The Standard of Truth," Joseph Smith said, "has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (History of the Church, 4:540).)

6 Behold, this is mine ^aauthority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface (Section one in the Doctrine and Covenants is not the first revelation received, but it is so placed in the book because the Lord gave it as the preface to the book of his commandments. The Doctrine and Covenants is distinctively peculiar and interesting to all who believe in it that it is the only book in existence which bears the honor of a preface given by the Lord himself. This, however, is consistent and should be the case, for it is as he declares his book. It was not written by Joseph Smith, but was dictated by Jesus Christ, and contains his and his Father's word to the Church and to all the world that faith in God, repentance from sin and membership in his Church might be given to all who will believe, and that once again the New and Everlasting covenant might be established. Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:252) unto the book of my ^bcommandments, which I have given them to ^cpublish unto you, O ^dinhabitants of the earth.

7 Wherefore, ^afear and ^btremble, O ye people, for what I the Lord have ^cdecreed in them shall be ^dfulfilled.

8 And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to ^aseal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and ^brebellious; (As the sealing of someone to eternal life requires both priesthood and keys, so does the sealing of one to the wrath of God. Today such authority is held only by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve and any to whom they specifically give it. It is not held by missionaries generally. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 45)

9 Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the ^aday when the ^bwrath of God shall be poured out upon the ^cwicked without measure—

10 Unto the ^aday when the Lord shall come to ^brecompense unto every man according to his ^cwork, and ^dmeasure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man. (Everyone

will be held accountable for his actions.)

11 Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear:

(Contrary to the idea that some are born to heaven and others to hell, the announcement of heaven is that the gospel of Christ is "unto all men" (Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:46). No soul will be brought to judgment without having had the full chance to accept the saving truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All are entitled to hear the gospel declared, for all are capable of embracing it and receiving the fulness of its blessings. Were this not so we could not argue in behalf of the justice of heaven or the infinite nature of Christ's atonement. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 46)

12 Prepare ye, ^aprepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is ^bnigh; (This is like the words of John the Baptist. We are like an Elias in preparing the way for the Lord's Second Coming.)

13 And the ^aanger of the Lord is kindled, and his ^bsword is bathed in heaven, (This phrase comes from Isaiah 34:5 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon ^aIdumea, and upon the people of my ^bcurse, to judgment.) and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth. (I prophesy, in the name of the Lord God of Israel, anguish and wrath and tribulation and of the Spirit of God from the earth await this generation, until they are visited with utter desolation. This generation is as corrupt as the generation of the Jews that crucified Christ; and if he were here today and should preach the same doctrine He did then they would put Him to death. HC 6:58, October 15, 1843)

14 And the ^aarm of the Lord shall be revealed; (Again, this is imagery from Isaiah 52:10: The LORD hath made ^abare his holy ^barm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall ^csee the ^dsalvation of our God.. Missionaries, those commissioned of the Lord to gather scattered Israel to the covenants of salvation, are the arm of the Lord. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 47) and the ^bday cometh that they who will not ^chear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his ^dservants, neither give ^eheed to the words of the prophets and ^fapostles, shall be ^gcut off from among the people; (Joseph Fielding Smith: "This in substance was quoted to the Prophet Joseph Smith by the Angel Moroni on the night of that visitation ninety-nine years ago, when he quoted the 22nd and 23rd verses of the third chapter of Acts, which reads similarly. The angel declared unto Joseph Smith that the time was near at hand when this scripture should be fulfilled, in which it says that they who will not hear the voice of that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Now that applies to the members of the Church as well as to those who are in the world. If we as members will not hearken unto the words of the apostles and the prophets and especially to this prophet referred to, who is Christ, then we shall take our places among the stubble and shall be destroyed by the brightness of his coming. The time is near at hand when the Lord will come in power, and shall cleanse the earth. We must not deceive ourselves." (Conference Report, October 1922, Afternoon Session 75.) George Q. Cannon: God has chosen His servants. He claims it as His prerogative to condemn them, if they need condemnation. He has not given it to us individually to censure and condemn them. No man, however strong he may be in the faith, however high in the Priesthood, can speak evil of the Lord's anointed and find fault with God's authority on the earth without incurring His displeasure. The Holy Spirit will withdraw itself from such a man, and he will go into darkness. This being the case, do you not see how important it is that we should be careful? However difficult it may be for us to understand the reason for any action of the authorities of the Church, we should not too hastily call their acts in question and pronounce them wrong. (Oct. 6, 1896, DW 53:609))

15 For they have ^astrayed from mine ^bordinances, and have ^cbroken mine ^deverlasting covenant;

16 They ^aseek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man ^bwalketh in his ^cown ^dway, and after the ^eimage of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth ^fold and shall perish in Babylon, even ^gBabylon the great, which shall fall.

17 Wherefore, I the Lord, ^aknowing the calamity which should come upon the ^binhabitants of the earth, ^ccalled upon my ^dservant Joseph Smith, Jun., and ^espake unto him from heaven, and gave him ^fcommandments;

18 And also gave commandments to others, (Why did the Lord call Joseph Smith and others? These next

few verses explain why this was done. If we add the word “so” in front of each phrase, we can see why it was done. So) that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this (so) that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—

19 (So) The ^aweak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, (so) that man ^bshould not counsel his fellow man, neither ^ctrust in the arm of flesh—

20 But (so) that every man might ^aspeak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; (Along with the restoration of the gospel comes the restoration of the priesthood, which is the power and authority to speak in the name of God. In the providence of God all men are entitled to hold the priesthood and preside over their family in righteousness. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 51)

21 (so) That faith also might increase in the earth;

22 (so) That mine everlasting ^acovenant might be established; (The restoration of the gospel centers on the restoration of the "everlasting covenant," not in the restoration of the organization of the New Testament church. Salvation is found in making and keeping covenants, not in the organizational structure of the Church. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 51-2)

23 (so) That the ^afulness of my ^bgospel might be ^cproclaimed by the ^dweak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before ^ekings and ^frulers.

24 Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these ^acommandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their ^blanguage, (so) that they might come to ^cunderstanding. (“Although the elders who attended this conference testified that the revelations were true, some of them recommended that the language of certain revelations be improved prior to their publication.” (Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* [Salt Lake City: Desert Book Co., 1983], 91.) “Those assembled quickly demonstrated that they had minds of their own, and in essence they confronted the twenty-five year old prophet with the challenge: ‘How do we know that the revelations are of God? The language sounds so very much like the language of Joseph Smith.’ “Here is an excellent opportunity to view historically another incident that gives insight to what Joseph Smith was like. He did not appear to be offended. He took the question in stride. I feel he was honestly perplexed. He knew the revelations were from God. I have wondered if he truly ever thought of why they sounded as they sounded. He did not become defensive. He did not rebuke them for questioning a prophet of God. But he very simply suggested an approach to the problem which he had utilized numerous times before. In essence his reply to the question was a candid ‘I don't know’ followed by the words, ‘Let's ask the Lord.’ They knelt with him and he petitioned God for the answer. The answer was received in an effective, forceful, but most unpretentious way. No angel appeared; no audible voice was heard. The Prophet simply said to his scribe, ‘Please record the following.’ And then, speaking in measured sentences slow enough for a man to record the revelation in longhand, Joseph dictated the revelation as given to him by the Lord. But the answer sought is part of a comprehensive revelation of both warning and hope to the whole earth—a revelation which was to be known as the preface to the Book of Commandments and today is Section One of the Doctrine and Covenants. Verses 24-27 are the verses that directly answer the question Joseph asked of God: Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding. And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known; And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed; And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent. . . . (D&C 1:24-27) One would think that this amazing demonstration of the receiving of such a reasonable and satisfying answer would have silenced his questioners. But it did not, at least not all. William E. McLellan had had more formal education than any of the others. He was an impressive man. He continued to question Joseph. Again the Prophet sought the help of God. The revelation he received is a classic example of the principle stated by the Lord in the first revelation given that day to his servant. The Lord is interested in communicating with his children so they can understand and, if necessary, change their ways. The second revelation of

the day (DC 67) is also in the Doctrine and Covenants and says rather simply: Your eyes have been upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and his language you have known; and his imperfections you have known; and you have sought in your hearts knowledge that you might express beyond his language; this you also know. Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you; Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true; But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true. (D&C 67:5-8)

“William E. McLellan was selected as being, by the standards of the world, the wisest in the group, and his assignment was to write a revelation that would sound as good and make a contribution equal to the ‘least’ revelation presented by Joseph Smith. Brother McLellan was a complete failure; he could not write anything that sounded like a revelation. The next day he manifested an attitude of meekness as he offered his sustaining vote and his apologies to the youthful prophet. Now, with the approval of the body of the priesthood, plans were quickly made and put into action for the publication of the new book of scripture.” (Leon R. Hartshorn, *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970], 76-77.) It is the duty of the members of this Church to make themselves familiar with the revelations as they have been given and with the commandments as they have been taught in these revelations, or have been presented in them and given to the people, that they might know the truth which makes us free. And if we will study them, if we will put them into practice, if we will keep the commandments of the Lord, we will know the truth and there shall be no weapon formed against us that shall prosper. [Sec. 71:9-11.] There shall be no false doctrines, no teaching of men that will deceive us. There are many cults and many false faiths, there are many strange ideas in the world, but if we will search these revelations then we will be fortified against errors and we will be made strong. False teachings will have no effect upon us, for we will know the truth which makes us free. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants*, p. 12-13)

25 And inasmuch as they ^aerred it might be made known; (The scriptures and the Spirit will tell us what we are doing wrong so we can repent.)

26 And inasmuch as they sought ^awisdom they might be ^binstructed;

27 And inasmuch as they sinned they might be ^achastened, that they might ^brepent; (We do not believe in the infallibility of prophets or any other set of men. All men err, sin, and are invited to repent (Romans 3:23). Lorenzo Snow observed: "I can fellowship the President of the Church if he does not know everything I know. . . . I saw the . . . imperfections in [Joseph Smith]. . . . I thanked God that He would put upon a man who had those imperfections the power and authority He placed upon him . . . for I knew that I myself had weakness, and I thought there was a chance for me. . . . I thanked God that I saw these imperfections" (quoted by Maxwell, in Conference Report, October 1984, 10). Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Revelations of the Restoration*, p. 52)

28 And inasmuch as they were ^ahumble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive ^bknowledge from time to time.

29 And after having received the record of the Nephites, yea, even my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., might have power to ^atranslate through the ^bmercy of God, by the power of God, the ^cBook of Mormon.

30 And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have ^apower to lay the foundation of this ^bchurch, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of ^cdarkness, the only true and living ^dchurch upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well ^epleased, ^fspeaking unto the church collectively and not individually— (We as individuals are not doing all that could be done, all that should be done. I have no concern for the Church as a whole; its destiny is foretold, it is going on to glorious victory. [Sec. 65.] But that does not say that each of us who are members of the Church will go on to glorious victory; we may be left behind entirely. What are we doing individually? I repeat. (James E. Talmage, CR, October 1928, p. 118.))

31 For I the Lord cannot look upon ^asin with the least degree of allowance;

32 Nevertheless, he that ^arepents and does the ^bcommandments of the Lord shall be ^cforgiven; (If the

time comes when you have done all that you can to repent of your sins, whoever you are, wherever you are, and have made amends and restitution to the best of your ability; if it be something that will affect your standing in the Church and you have gone to the proper authorities, then you will want that confirming answer as to whether or not the Lord has accepted of you. In your soul-searching, if you seek for and you find that peace of conscience, by that token you may know that the Lord has accepted of your repentance. [Mosiah 4:2-3.] Satan would have you think otherwise and sometimes persuade you that now having made one mistake, you might go on and on with no turning back. That is one of the great falsehoods. The miracle of forgiveness is available to all of those who turn from their evil doings and return no more, because the Lord has said in a revelation to us in our day: ". . . go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth [meaning again] shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God." (D&C 82:7.) Have that in mind, all of you who may be troubled with a burden of sin. (Harold B. Lee, CR, April 1973, pp. 177-78.)

33 And he that ^arepents not, from him shall be ^btaken even the light which he has received; for my ^cSpirit shall not always ^dstrive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts. (Now, the Lord has withdrawn His Spirit from the world. Now, do not let this thought become confused in your minds. The Spirit He has withdrawn from the world is not the Holy Ghost, for they never had that, but it is the light of truth, the Spirit of Christ, which is given to every man that comes into this world, as you find it so recorded in the 84th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Now, because of the wickedness of the world that Spirit has been withdrawn; and when the Spirit of the Lord is not striving with men, the spirit of Satan is. Therefore, we may be sure that the time has come spoken of in the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein the Lord says: For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion." Peace has been taken from the earth. The devil has power over his own dominion, and the Spirit of the Lord has been withdrawn. Not because the Lord desires to withdraw that Spirit; but because of the wickedness of mankind, it becomes necessary that this Spirit of the Lord be withdrawn. Joseph Fielding Smith, Remarks made by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, November 11, 1942, in Barratt Hall.)

34 And again, verily I say unto you, O inhabitants of the earth: I the Lord am willing to make these things ^aknown unto ^ball flesh;

35 For I am no ^arespecter of persons, (The Lord is no respecter of persons. However, let us not misinterpret this saying. It does not mean that the Lord does not respect those who obey him in all things more than he does the ungodly. Without question the Lord does respect those who love him and keep his commandments more than he does those who rebel against him. [Sec. 76:5; 1 Nephi 17:35.] The proper interpretation of this passage is that the Lord is not partial and grants to each man, if he will repent, the same privileges and opportunities of salvation and exaltation. He is just to every man, both the righteous and the wicked. He will receive any soul who will turn from iniquity to righteousness and will love him with a just love and bless him with all that the Father has to give; but let it not be thought that he will grant the same blessings to those who will not obey him and keep his law. If the Lord did bless the rebellious as he does the righteous, without their repentance, then he would be a respecter of persons. His justice and his mercy are perfect. Justice, says Alma, "Exerciseth all her demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly repentant are saved. What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God." (Alma 42:24-25.) (Joseph Fielding Smith, CHMR, 1948, 2:27.)) and will that all men shall know that the ^bday speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when ^cpeace shall be taken from the earth, and the ^ddevil shall have power over his own dominion.

36 And also the Lord shall have ^apower over his ^bsaints, and shall ^creign in their ^dmidst, and shall come down in ^ejudgment upon ^fIdumea, (Idumea was the name given to the land of Edom by the Greeks and Romans. Since Israel had to pass through Idumea to obtain the promised land, it became a symbol of the world, or the worldly, through which we must pass to obtain our divine inheritance. Joseph Fielding

McConkie, Revelations of the Restoration, p. 57) or the world.

37 ^aSearch (more than read and study) these ^bcommandments, for they are true and ^cfaithful, and the prophecies and ^dpromises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. (Joseph Fielding Smith: Moreover, it is the duty of the members of this Church to make themselves familiar with the revelations as they have been given, and with the commandments as they have been taught in these revelations, or have been presented in them and given to the people, that we might know the truth which makes us free. And if we will study them, if we will put them into practice, if we will keep the commandments of the Lord, we will know the truth and there shall be no weapon formed against us that shall prosper. There shall be no false doctrines, no teaching of men that will deceive us. There are many cults and many false faiths, there are many strange ideas in the world, but if we will search these revelations then we will be fortified against errors and we will be made strong. False teachings will have no effect upon us for we will know that truth which makes us free. (Conference Report, October 1931, First Day—Morning Meeting 16.) Heber J. Grant: I wish that I possessed the power to impress upon the hearts and the minds of the Latter-day Saints the necessity of becoming familiar with the commandments contained in the D&C, and not only becoming familiar with them, but that I might have the power to impress upon their hearts and souls a determination to keep those commandments, to live them in very deed and in their every-day lives. (Conference Report, October 1928, 7.))

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my ^aword shall not pass away, but shall all be ^bfulfilled, whether by mine own ^cvoice or by the ^dvoice of my ^eservants, it is the ^fsame. (When a servant of the Lord speaks by the power of the Holy Ghost, it is the same as though the Lord were speaking.)

39 For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the ^aSpirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the ^btruth abideth forever and ever. Amen.

OUR HERITAGE Introduction

The central message of this book is the message declared by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since its beginning. Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation, taught:

“The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”

Every prophet who has succeeded Joseph Smith has added his personal witness of the divine mission of the Savior. The First Presidency affirmed:

“As those who are called and ordained to bear witness of Jesus Christ to all the world, we testify that He was resurrected on that Easter morning nearly two thousand years ago, and that He lives today. He has a glorified, immortal body of flesh and bones. He is the Savior, the Light and Life of the world.”

Millions of faithful Saints have also had testimonies of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This knowledge has motivated them to make the sacrifices necessary to build The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the kingdom of God on the earth. The story of the establishment of the Church is one of faith, consecration, and joy. It is the story of living prophets who taught the truths of God to the modern world. It is the story of men and women from all walks of life who sought for the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, upon finding it, were willing to pay the price of becoming the Savior’s disciples. These stalwart Saints pressed on through sufferings and hardships, witnessing even in their darkest

hours of the goodness of God and the joy of his love. They have left a legacy of faith, courage, obedience, and sacrifice. (James E. Faust: "Some years ago president David O. McKay told from this pulpit of the experience of some of those in the Martin handcart company. Many of these early converts had emigrated from Europe and were too poor to buy oxen or horses and a wagon. They were forced by their poverty to pull handcarts containing all of their belongings across the plains by their own brute strength. President McKay relates an occurrence which took place some years after the heroic exodus: "A teacher, conducting a class, said it was unwise ever to attempt, even to permit them [the Martin handcart company] to come across the plains under such conditions.[According to a class member,] some sharp criticism of the Church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting any company of converts to venture across the plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded. An old man in the corner ... sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it, then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity. In substance [he] said, 'I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there, too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church, because everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities. 'I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it.' He continues: 'I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there. 'Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company.' (Relief Society Magazine, Jan. 1948, p. 8.) Here then is a great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner's fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. In this way the divine image can be mirrored from the soul. It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd. Into every life there come the painful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. The thorns that prick, that stick in the flesh, that hurt, often change lives which seem robbed of significance and hope. This change comes about through a refining process which often seems cruel and hard. In this way the soul can become like soft clay in the hands of the Master in building lives of faith, usefulness, beauty, and strength. For some, the refiner's fire causes a loss of belief and faith in God, but those with eternal perspective understand that such refining is part of the perfection process....The proving of one's faith goes before the witnessing, for Moroni testified, 'Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith' (Ether 12:6). This trial of faith can become a priceless experience." (Conference Report, May 1979 Ensign, "The Refiner's Fire"))

The heritage of faith continues today. Latter-day Saints throughout the world are modern pioneers in their own homelands, where they live with faith and courage in a time fraught with new challenges and opportunities. There are pages of history yet to be written. We each have an opportunity to leave a heritage for generations to follow that will help them understand the joy of living and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we learn more about the faith of those who have gone before us, we can better understand those with whom we have joined hands in bearing witness of the Savior and helping to establish his kingdom. We can determine to live more righteously as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

