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## Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith

Author(s): Larry E. Dahl

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# Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith

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Larry E. Dahl

**J**ust what are the Lectures on Faith? Who prepared them? Who delivered them—to whom, where, when, and why? What is the history of their publication? Why have they not been included in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants since 1921? What benefit might we derive from acquainting ourselves with the content of the Lectures on Faith? This paper addresses these questions. It will not provide definitive answers to them all, but it will summarize the literature about them and propose some answers. A bibliography of the sources examined in the process of preparing this paper appears in Appendix B to this volume. This bibliography will facilitate and, hopefully, encourage others to check the reasonableness of the conclusions drawn in this paper, and it will stimulate further searching for more sources and more answers—and even more questions.

## What Are the Lectures on Faith?

Joseph Smith referred to the Lectures on Faith as “lectures on theology” (*History of the Church* 2:176; hereafter *HC*). There are seven of them. Lecture 1 explains what faith is; Lecture 2 describes how mankind comes to know about God; Lectures 3

and 4 make clear the necessary and unchanging attributes of God; Lecture 5 deals with the nature of God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost; Lecture 6 proclaims that the willingness to sacrifice all earthly things is prerequisite to gaining faith unto salvation; Lecture 7 treats the fruits of faith—perspective, power, and eventually perfection. In the original printing the lectures filled 74 pages. The lengths of the lectures differ, the longest being Lecture 2, and the shortest being Lecture 5. The format consists of numbered paragraphs in which principles are stated and scriptures quoted. Lectures 1 through 5 each sum up with a question and answer section, a kind of catechism pertaining to the principles stated in the lecture. These sections are often about as long as the lectures themselves. There are no questions and answers at the end of Lecture 6; rather, the following note appears: “This lecture is so plain and the facts set forth so self-evident that it is deemed unnecessary to form a catechism upon it. The student is, therefore, instructed to commit the whole to memory.” Lecture 7 ends with a simple “Amen.”

## Who Wrote the Lectures on Faith?

It is a common understanding that Joseph Smith wrote the Lectures on Faith. Often we hear or read statements like “The Prophet Joseph Smith taught” as an introduction to a quotation from the Lectures. Those who have carefully studied the historical sources agree to the Prophet’s close involvement with the Lectures, but acknowledge that others contributed heavily in their preparation, as the following representative quotations from Church leaders and others show:

1. The idea has been expressed that Sidney Rigdon wrote these lectures, but they were compiled by a number of the brethren and the Prophet himself had the final revision of them (Smith, *Church History* 137).
2. “Lectures on Faith” written by Sidney Rigdon and others . . . (Widtsoe 2).

3. Joseph Smith was not their sole author, but they were written by a committee over which he presided. . . . It is not known specifically which member, or members, of the committee put the *Lectures on Faith* in their written form. But there can be no doubt that the theological ideas which they contain came from Joseph Smith. All the major ideas within them can be found in his revelations and teachings before 1834 (Andrus 20 fn).

4. These statements that I now read were in part written by the Prophet and in whole approved by him and taught by him in the School of the Prophets (McConkie 4).

5. My analysis of the Lectures on faith [sic] leads me to three somewhat tentative conclusions: First, although Joseph Smith did not write the lectures as they appear in the 1835 version, his influence can be seen in images, examples, scriptural references, and phrasing. Second, Sidney Rigdon may well have prepared them for publication; however, the style throughout is not consistently his. Third, the lectures in their published version represent a compilation or collaboration rather than the work of a single person (Partridge 28).

It is instructive to review the evidence that links Joseph Smith and others to the writing of the Lectures. First, perhaps, it should be noted that a committee of four men—Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams (all presiding officers in the Church)—was appointed 24 September 1834 “to arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, for the government of the Church of Latter-day Saints. These items are to be taken from the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the revelations which have been given to the Church up to this date, or that shall be given until such arrangements are made” (*HC* 2:165). That committee reported to the priesthood councils of the Church nearly one year later, 17 August 1835, recommending the publication of a book they had prepared (*HC* 2:243-51). That book consisted of two parts. The first contained the Lectures on Faith; the second consisted of selected revelations and inspired declarations received since the beginning of this dispensation. The two parts together made up what were called the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church. The priesthood councils and other Church members assembled accepted the committee’s recommendation. The result was the publication of the first edition of

the Doctrine and Covenants, which came off the press about the middle of September 1835.<sup>1</sup>

## The First Edition of the Doctrine and Covenants

A photographic reproduction of the title page of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is on the following page. The heading to the first part of the book (the Lectures) reads like this:

THEOLOGY.  
LECTURE FIRST  
ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF THE  
LATTER DAY SAINTS.  
Of Faith.  
SECTION I.

The first lecture follows this heading. Lecture 2 is introduced simply as:

LECTURE SECOND.  
Of Faith.  
SECTION II.

This same simple pattern introduces the rest of the lectures.

The title page of the second part of the book, containing the revelations, is photographically reproduced on page 6. The revelations follow in order labelled SECTION II, SECTION III, etc., through SECTION CII (or 102).

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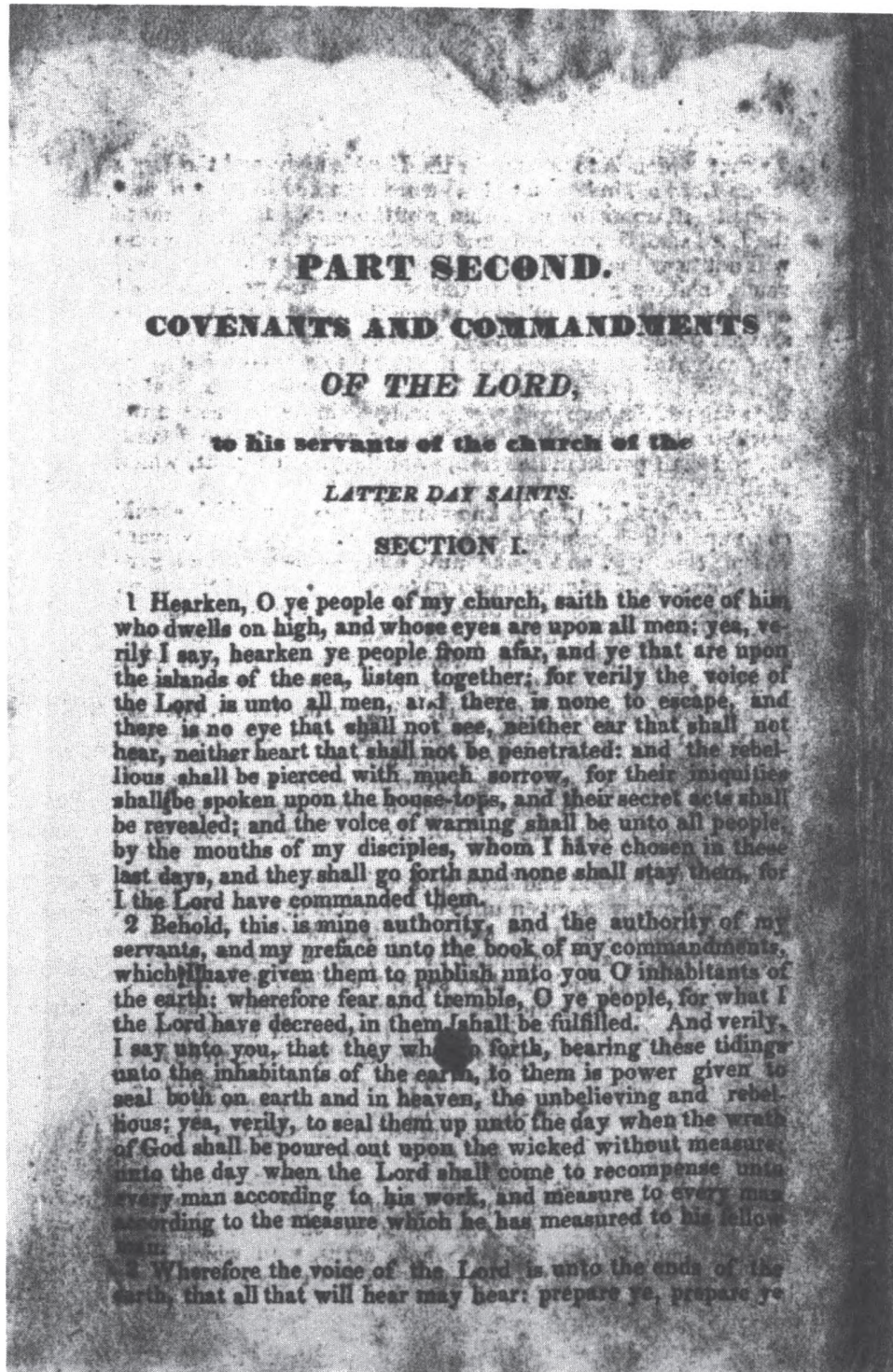
<sup>1</sup>Writing from Kirtland to the Saints in Missouri under the date of 16 September 1835, W. W. Phelps said, "We received some of the Commandments from Cleveland last week. I shall try and send 100 copies to the Saints in Zion this fall" (*Journal History* [16 Sep 1835]). An earlier compilation of revelations known as the Book of Commandments was being printed in 1833, when mobs destroyed the church press and all but a few copies of the book.

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS  
OF  
THE CHURCH OF THE  
**LATTER DAY SAINTS:**  
CAREFULLY SELECTED  
FROM THE REVELATIONS OF GOD,  
AND COMPILED BY  
JOSEPH SMITH *Junior*,  
OLIVER COWDERY,  
SIDNEY RIGDON,  
FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS,  
[*Presiding Elders of said Church.*]  
PROPRIETORS.  

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**KIRTLAND, OHIO.**  
PRINTED BY F. G. WILLIAMS & CO.  
FOR THE  
PROPRIETORS.  
.....  
1835.

Title page — 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.  
*Courtesy of BYU Special Collections*



Title page — second part, 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

*Courtesy of BYU Special Collections*

The preface to the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) explains how the four committee members felt about the Lectures on Faith (see the preface on page 9). Although the preface is dated February 17, 1835, the book was not completed until August of that year.

A careful look at these divisions in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants shows that the Lectures on Faith were considered the “Doctrine,” and the revelations were viewed as the “Covenants,” or more precisely, “Covenants and Commandments.” In the 1921 edition and all subsequent editions, the title *Doctrine and Covenants* was retained, though the Lectures were not published with the revelations. The title is appropriate, however, for the revelations themselves contain much doctrine.

### *Historical Evidence Concerning Authorship*

The foregoing information demonstrates that preparing and printing the Lectures on Faith was an official, purposeful activity of the committee appointed to compile the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Their preface says that the Lectures contain “the important doctrine of salvation,” representing the belief of the committee members and what they perceived to be the beliefs of the Church as a body.

The question as to who actually wrote the Lectures then, may be of little consequence. However, we mortals are a curious lot, and sometimes pursue answers simply to have them, not because they are of great moment. Catering to that curiosity, we note now some historical evidence of Joseph Smith’s participation in their preparation, and acknowledge two recent authorship studies which conclude that others, particularly Sidney Rigdon, were also involved.

At the end of October 1834, Joseph’s history states, “It being the last of the month, and the Elders beginning to come in, it was necessary to make preparations for the school for the Elders, wherein they might be more perfectly instructed in the great things of God, during the coming winter. . . . No month ever



found me more busily engaged than November” (*HC* 2:169-70). It is possible, even probable, that some of the Prophet’s busyness during that month pertained to the writing of the Lectures on Faith. Two months later, in January 1835, we find this entry—“During the month of January, I was engaged in the school of the Elders, and in preparing the lectures on theology for publication in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, which the committee appointed last September were now compiling” (*HC* 2:180). These two entries clearly establish Joseph Smith’s close ties to preparing for the School of the Elders and to the content of the Lectures on Faith.

### *Authorship Studies*

One of the authorship studies of the Lectures on Faith was done by Alan J. Phipps as a master’s thesis in 1977. He compared the frequency of use of certain “function words” in the Lectures with the use of the same words in the writings of several persons who may have had a hand in writing the Lectures, ie, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, William W. Phelps, and Parley P. Pratt. He concludes:

The study showed that Sidney Rigdon’s use of function words corresponded very closely with that in Lectures One and Seven, and fairly well with Two, Three, Four, and Six. Joseph Smith’s use of function words matched closely those in Lecture Five, with some evidence of his having co-authored or edited Two, Three, Four, and Six. . . . The data and tests appear, therefore, to assign the authorship of the Lectures on Faith mainly to Sidney Rigdon, with Lecture Five and perhaps some parts of the other lectures, except One and Seven, to Joseph Smith (66-67).

Using the same data as Phipps, but applying a somewhat different word-print analysis, Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher report: “Our conclusions largely support his results, with some differences . . .” (183-84). Both studies conclude that Sidney Rigdon was heavily involved, and that Joseph Smith was probably the author of Lecture 2. The differences suggest that Joseph Smith had less to do with Lectures 3, 4, and 6 than the Phipps study

## PREFACE.

To the members of the church of the Latter Day Saints—

DEAR BRETHREN:

We deem it to be unnecessary to entertain you with a lengthy preface to the following volume, but merely to say, that it contains in short, the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe.

There may be an aversion in the minds of some against receiving any thing purporting to be articles of religious faith, in consequence of there being so many now extant; but if men believe a system, and profess that it was given by inspiration, certainly, the more intelligibly they can present it, the better. It does not make a principle untrue to *print* it, neither does it make it true not to print it.

The church viewing this subject to be of importance, appointed, through their servants and delegates the High Council, your servants to select and compile this work. Several reasons might be adduced in favor of this move of the Council, but we only add a few words. They knew that the church was evil spoken of in many places—its faith and belief misrepresented, and the

way of truth thus subverted. By some it was represented as disbelieving the bible, by others as being an enemy to all good order and uprightness, and by others as being injurious to the peace of all governments civil and political.

We have, therefore, endeavored to present, though in few words, *our* belief, and when we say this, humbly trust, the faith and principles of this society as a body.

We do not present this little volume with any other expectation than that we are to be called to answer to every principle advanced, in that day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed, and the reward of every man's labor be given him.

With sentiments of esteem

and sincere respect, we subscribe  
ourselves your brethren in the bonds of  
the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

JOSEPH SMITH jr.  
OLIVER COWDERY.  
SIDNEY RIGDON.  
F. G. WILLIAMS.

Kirtland, Ohio, February 17, 1835.

showed, and that William W. Phelps and/or Parley P. Pratt could have had at least some editorial influence on Lecture 5.<sup>2</sup> In fairness it should be recognized that Larsen's and Rencher's work with the Lectures on Faith was a peripheral, almost incidental glance, in a study of Book of Mormon authorship. If they were to focus primarily on the Lectures, perhaps they would adjust both the selection of data and perform additional tests and comparisons.

### *Conclusions About Authorship*

What then can we conclude about authorship of the Lectures on Faith? It is clear that several of the brethren participated in writing them. It is also clear that Joseph Smith and perhaps others prepared them for publication after they were written. Undoubtedly, the Lectures were, in the words of President John Taylor, "published with the sanction and approval of the Prophet Joseph Smith" (Woodford 1:87). It would therefore seem appropriate to attribute the ideas, principles, and doctrines in the Lectures on Faith to the Prophet Joseph.

### Who Delivered the Lectures—To Whom, When, Where, Why?

Trying to identify who delivered the Lectures on Faith is as difficult as trying to decide who wrote them. Contemporary historical records are scarce. Yet, official histories, books, and articles generally agree that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were the primary teachers, noting that others of the brethren may also have been involved (see Appendix B). Interestingly, however, there are seldom source citations for these conclusions, or the sources cited do not provide adequate historical data to clearly

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<sup>2</sup>There is some historical evidence that W. W. Phelps could have had an editorial influence on the Lectures on Faith. *The History of the Church* (2:227) records that W. W. Phelps arrived in Kirtland from Missouri in May, 1835, lived in the Prophet Joseph's home, and "assisted the committee in compiling the Book of Doctrine and Covenants."

establish the point being made. It becomes at times a case of authors citing one another with no one having compelling documentary evidence.

Some information from two men who were at the scene in 1834 is available and of particular interest. Zebedee Coltrin, in an 1883 remembrance, differentiated between the 1833 School of the Prophets which was held in the Prophet's home above the Whitney store—and located in the valley—and the 1834 School for the Elders in which the Lectures on Faith were studied. He said, "It was in a larger school on the hill afterwards, where Sidney presided that the lectures on faith that appear in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants were given" (*Salt Lake* [11 Oct] 44). His reference to "the school on the hill" points to the printing office built on a lot near the temple site, on land of much higher elevation than the valley where the store was located. The printing office was a 30- by 38-foot two-story building completed in November 1834. The lower story of the printing office was used for the School for the Elders (*HC* 1:417-418; 2:169-170). Even though Brother Coltrin said that Sidney Rigdon "presided" at the school where the seven lectures were given, it is likely that it was Joseph Smith and not Sidney Rigdon who "presided" over the school in the sense of being in charge of it because Joseph Smith organized and attended the school, and was the President of the Church. Perhaps Zebedee Coltrin's "presided" meant "taught."

Heber C. Kimball tells us something of how the school was conducted and who the teachers were:

In the winter of 1834-5...I attended the Theological School established in Kirtland, in which the lectures on faith, contained in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, originated.

A certain number were appointed to speak at each meeting. On one occasion I was called upon to speak on the principle of faith. Several brethren spoke before me and quoted every passage mentioned in the scriptures on the subject. I referred to an original circumstance which took place in my family. My daughter had broke a saucer; her mother promised her a whipping, when she returned from a visit on which she was just starting; she went out under an apple tree and prayed that her mother's heart might be softened, that when she returned she might not whip her; although

her mother was very punctual when she made a promise to her children to fulfil it, yet when she returned she had no disposition to chastise her child. Afterwards the child told her mother that she had prayed to God that she might not whip her.

Joseph wept like a child on hearing this simple narrative and its application (*Journal History* [22 Dec 1834]).

In addition to being instructed by their presiding officers, it appears that the elders taught one another in the school. The School for the Elders began sometime between 25 November and 1 December 1834. Under the date of 25 November the Prophet records, “I continued my labors daily, preparing for the school” (*HC* 2:170). On 1 December he says,

Our school for the Elders was now well attended, and with the lectures on theology, which were regularly delivered, absorbed for the time being everything else of a temporal nature. The classes, being mostly Elders gave the most studious attention to the all-important object of qualifying themselves as messengers of Jesus Christ, to be ready to do His will in carrying glad tidings to all that would open their eyes, ears and hearts (*HC* 2:175-76).

The Lectures on Faith phase of the School for the Elders evidently ended sometime before 22 December because on that date the Elders were joined by a number of sisters and also children—some one hundred thirty people total—and they all attended a grammar school with Sidney Rigdon and William E. McLellin as teachers (*HC* 2:200).<sup>3</sup> Heber C. Kimball explains: “On the 22nd of December a Grammar school was opened in Kirtland, under the superintendence of Sidney Rigdon and William E. McLellin teachers, —and nearly all the elders and myself, and many of the sisters commenced going to school” (Kimball 6:868). Evidently the grammar school was also held in the printing office where the elders had met to study the Lectures on Faith. The curriculum for this grammar school consisted of “penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography . . . and writing” (*HC* 2:200), and according to Heber C. Kimball,

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<sup>3</sup>In reporting to the trustees of the “Kirtland School” in February 1835, W. E. McLellin indicated that because of overcrowding, they had dismissed the “small students,” reducing the number to one hundred.

nearly all the elders were in attendance. In his February 1835 report to the school trustees, William E. McLellin made no mention of the Lectures on Faith or other missionary training in connection with the grammar school. Since the Prophet was busy in January preparing the Lectures for publication, we could assume that by then they had already been delivered. If the elders as a group did continue to study the Lectures on Faith after 22 December, the School for the Elders and the Kirtland Grammar School would necessarily have been two separate entities meeting at different times, but there is no specific mention of any such arrangement in the historical sources.

In answer then to the questions of who delivered the Lectures to whom, when, where, and why, I would say they were delivered by the presiding officers of the Church and some of the elders themselves to a School for the Elders, in the printing office in Kirtland, during November and December 1834, for the purpose of preparing the elders to be effective missionaries.

### Publication History of the Lectures

The first publication of any of the Lectures on Faith was that of Lectures 5 and 6 in the May 1835 edition of the *Messenger and Advocate*, the Church monthly paper published in Kirtland. They were introduced with the following comments:

The following are two short lectures which were delivered before a Theological class, in this place last winter. These lectures are being compiled and arranged with other documents of instruction and regulation for the church, titled "Doctrine and Covenants of the church of the Latter Day Saints," &c. It may be well, for the information of the churches abroad, to say, that this book will contain the important revelations on doctrine and church government now extant, and will, we trust, give them a perfect understanding of the doctrine believed by this society. Such a work has long been called for, and if we are prospered a few weeks, shall have this volume ready for distribution. A full detail of its contents will be given hereafter.

In giving the following lectures we have thought best to insert the catechism, that the reader may fully understand the manner in which this science was taught. It was found, that by annexing a

catechism to the lectures as they were presented, the class made greater progress than otherwise; and in consequence of the additional scriptural proofs, it was preserved in compiling (Cowdery 122).

The next publication of any of the lectures was a broadside containing Lecture 1, probably published in June 1835.<sup>4</sup>

The first printing of all seven lectures was in September 1835, when they were printed as part of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Between 1835 and 1921 the Lectures were printed in almost all of the English language editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, and in many, but not all non-English editions.<sup>5</sup> The issue of why the Lectures have not been printed in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants since 1921 will be discussed later. But first, let us review instances when the Lectures on Faith were published by themselves.

Between 1840 and 1843, Parley P. Pratt printed all seven lectures in the *Millennial Star* in England.<sup>6</sup> Lecture 1, printed in September 1840, was introduced with the following comment: “We purpose to present our readers with a brief Course of Lectures on the first principles of Theology, or the Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and commence our quotations from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, p. 5” (Pratt, “Lecture on Theology” 129). Lecture 5 was printed in December 1842 with this note: “We have thought [it] proper to give this month in our Star the fifth lecture on Faith, extracted from the above work (Doctrine and Covenants). The four lectures preceding it were given in the first volume of the Star. Having often heard the desire expressed for the publication of the remaining lectures, it is our intention to give them forthwith. -Ed” (Pratt, “Lecture on Faith” 135). As promised, Lectures 6 and 7 were published in the next two issues of the *Millennial Star*.

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<sup>4</sup>A comparison of the broadside and Lecture 1 as printed in the 1835 D&C by Wm. M. Powell is available in the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU—Mor/M208/Ala/#568.

<sup>5</sup>Evidently some English language pocket editions published in the early 1900s also did not contain the Lectures on Faith (see Lambert).

<sup>6</sup>See Appendix B under *Millennial Star* for editions containing the Lectures on Faith.

All the lectures were published in 1845–46 by Sidney Rigdon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He had left the Church after the death of Joseph Smith and started his own organization called the “Church of Christ.” In Pittsburgh he published a paper also called *Messenger and Advocate*, in which he published the lectures serially each month from October 1845 through March 1846. Lectures 5 and 6 both appeared in the February 1846 issue. Rigdon did not include the catechisms at the end of each lecture except for Lecture 1. As he began publishing the Lectures, he explained:

There will be found in this paper a lecture on faith copied from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which is the first of a course delivered before a theological class in Kirtland, O. in the winter of 1834 & 5. Faith being the first principle of action in all intelligent beings, and those lectures setting forth that principle in a clear and interesting manner, we thought perhaps we could not interest our readers more than by giving place to one of them at this time; we may copy others of them hereafter, if our space will admit (Rigdon 360-61).

Space did “admit,” and all seven lectures were published as indicated above, without further editorial comment.

There are three other separate publications of the Lectures, all of them appearing in the 20th century, we need to mention. N. B. Lundwall of Salt Lake City published the Lectures on Faith along with a number of other items about 1940. We get the date from John W. Fitzgerald’s master’s thesis (346). Lundwall’s is probably the most widely known publication of the Lectures in the Church. In 1952 the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints published the Lectures on Faith with an interesting preface written by their president, Israel A. Smith.<sup>7</sup> The Deseret Book Company of Salt Lake City also published a hardbound edition of the Lectures on Faith in 1985. This edition was the first to incorporate references to the book of Moses, much

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<sup>7</sup>The title page reads “LECTURES ON FAITH delivered in Kirtland Temple in 1834 and 1835 by the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . with the Revelation on the Rebellion as an appendix published in 1952 by Herald House, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri.” See Appendix A for the full text of Israel A. Smith’s preface. The



of which corresponds with the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis.

As an endnote to the discussion of publication history, it is interesting to learn of the changes that have appeared in the titles through the years. In 1835, they were originally referred to as “Lecture First—Of Faith,” “Lecture Second—Of Faith,” etc. When Parley P. Pratt published them in England in the 1840s, he called them “Lecture 1—On Faith,” “Lecture 2—On Faith,” etc. All Liverpool editions of the Doctrine and Covenants thereafter used the “On Faith” label, while the American editions kept the “Of Faith” designation until 1876. For some reason Sidney Rigdon in 1845 in Pittsburgh also called them lectures “On Faith.” The 1985 Deseret Book edition carries the title *Lectures on Faith*, but inside, the lectures are referred to simply as “Lecture First,” “Lecture Second,” “Lecture Third,” etc., with no reference to “of” or “on.” This 1990 edited version uses the common reference of *Lectures on Faith* and refers to each lecture by its number, such as Lecture 1, Lecture 2, etc.

## Why No Lectures with the D&C Since 1921?

When a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was prepared in 1921, the Lectures on Faith were not included.<sup>8</sup> The answers proposed as to why the Lectures were not included are

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RLDS published the Lectures on Faith in their editions of the Doctrine and Covenants from 1863 through 1896. Of their 1897 edition, Richard P. Howard writes: “The 1897 edition was somewhat of a departure from the previous format. The Lectures on Faith, printed in every edition through 1896, were removed. The background of this decision has not been established, but it seems reasonable to consider that the extensive quotations from the New Translation of the Bible taken from the unpublished manuscripts were unacceptable in the light of the work as published in 1867. Also, the materials in these pages (being simply outlines of the lectures given in a strictly local situation to a class of elders) had lost much of their relevance to the circumstances of the church over half a century later” (Howard 236).

<sup>8</sup>This was not the first time the question of omitting the Lectures had been raised. Orson Pratt proposed to President John Taylor in 1879 that they perhaps be published separately rather than in the Doctrine and Covenants. President Taylor’s response was that “The Lectures on Faith were published with the sanction and approval of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and we do not feel that it is desirable to make any alteration in that regard, at any rate, not at present” (see Woodford 1:86-87).

varied. Many have pointed to the content of Lecture 5 concerning the Godhead, suggesting that it contains incomplete, if not erroneous doctrine—doctrine which was corrected or clarified in 1843 by Joseph Smith (D&C 130:22-23). The argument is that the Lectures were removed to avoid these inconsistencies. Some have claimed that the removal of the Lectures from the Doctrine and Covenants constitutes decanonization of material once affirmed by the Church as scripture. Those who take this view see the 1834 vote of the priesthood quorums and the general assembly to accept as true and to publish both the Lectures on Faith and the revelations of Joseph Smith in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, as putting the Lectures on a par with the revelations, considering both to be canonized scripture (Van Wagoner, et al 72-77). Leaders of the Church, however, have consistently maintained that from the beginning a distinction was made between the Lectures on Faith and the revelations (see Penrose 16; *Modern Revelation* 34; Smith, *Essentials* 186). They also appeal to the occasion when the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was voted upon, citing the testimony of Elder John Smith, who represented the High Council in Kirtland. The minutes read as follows: Elder Smith “bore record that the *revelations* in said book were true, and that the *lectures* were judiciously arranged and compiled, and were profitable for doctrine. Whereupon, the High Council of Kirtland accepted and acknowledged them as the doctrine and covenants of their faith by a unanimous vote” (HC 2:244; emphasis added). Similarly, “Elder Levi Jackman, taking the lead for the High Council of the church in Missouri, bore testimony that the *revelations* in said book were true, and the said High Council of Missouri accepted and acknowledged them as the doctrine and covenants of their faith, by a unanimous vote” (HC 2:244; emphasis added). The minutes relative to the other quorums’ acceptance of the work do not distinguish “revelations” from “lectures.” They say only that these quorums gave testimony in favor of “*the book*” (HC 2:244; emphasis added).

It can be reasoned then that a distinction was made early between the seven lectures and the revelations, and that the vote

to accept the lectures as “judiciously arranged . . . and profitable for doctrine” was not to equate them with the divine revelations. Such is the message in the “Explanatory Introduction” of the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Certain lessons, entitled “Lectures on Faith,” which were bound in with the Doctrine and Covenants in some of its former issues, are not included in this edition. Those lessons were prepared for use in the School of the Elders, conducted in Kirtland, Ohio, during the winter of 1834-1835; but they were never presented to nor accepted by the Church as being otherwise than theological lectures or lessons (v).

Church leaders have acknowledged that the decision to omit the Lectures on Faith in the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was based not only on the fact that they are not revelations, but it also had to do with some of the teachings about the Godhead in Lecture 5, as I mentioned earlier. Elders James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, and Joseph Fielding Smith served as a committee to consider whether to continue to publish the Lectures on Faith with the revelations (Fitzgerald 345). Fitzgerald reports that he was told in a 22 July 1940 interview with Elder Joseph Fielding Smith:

They are not complete as to their teachings regarding the Godhead. More complete instructions on this point of doctrine are given in section 130 of . . . The Doctrine and Covenants.

It was thought by Elder James E. Talmage, chairman, and other members of the committee who were responsible for their omission that to avoid confusion and contention on this vital point of belief, it would be better not to have them bound in the same volume as the commandments or revelations which make up The Doctrine and Covenants (345).<sup>9</sup>

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the doctrinal issues raised by Lecture 5. Professor Millet’s paper will address that subject. It is sufficient to note here that Lecture 5 was one of

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<sup>9</sup> Elder Smith is also reported to have said in this same interview that the Lectures are explanations of the principle of faith “but are not doctrine.” In this statement he may have been comparing certain items in the Lectures (perhaps Lecture 5) with doctrine as understood in 1940, and not making an “historically erroneous” statement as has been suggested by some.

the matters of concern influencing the decision not to publish the Lectures on Faith with the Doctrine and Covenants from 1921.

The Lectures on Faith were written and published in the Doctrine and Covenants by men called of God to lead the Church in 1834. The decision not to print them in the Doctrine and Covenants was made by men called of God to lead the Church in 1921. I submit that both actions were appropriate.

## Summary and Conclusion

This paper has attempted to shed some light on the authorship and history of the Lectures on Faith by bringing together and briefly discussing information that is available in an array of histories, books, and articles. The motivation for preparing the paper and the bibliography in Appendix B has been to stimulate an interest in the Lectures—to encourage people to study them carefully.

I love the Lectures on Faith. For me they carry a special spirit. They are a rich source of doctrinal treasures couched in clear and powerful language. One can drink as deeply from them as he has a mind to. I commend them to you.

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Larry E. Dahl is professor and chairman of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University.