

PREFACE AND NEW MANUSCRIPT SOURCE

Revelation is so central to Mormonism one might assume the study of original texts is an exhausted field. The truth is that, with few exceptions, such a study has yet to begin. What makes this all the more surprising is that the "Upgrading [of] revelations and retrospectively editing the past are hallmarks of early Mormonism."¹ Mormon books and scriptures give primacy to emended texts, while the originals remain largely ignored. An analysis of the earliest texts helps us better understand the original setting and intention of the revelation, which in many instances is altered—sometimes greatly—by later textual modifications.

The historical study of the texts not only helps us interpret it better but assists in appreciating the richness of a living text as it is transformed over time. Scriptures do not exist without a community of believers that cherishes them as the word of God. Thus the history of scriptural texts reveals the changing world view of the Mormon community. By knowing more of the history of the early church, including events that effected alterations of texts, we hope to reveal important, fundamental vistas regarding the nature of early Mormonism and its canon.

This book arranges in chronological order the revelations received by Mormonism's founding prophet, Joseph Smith. Important textual revisions from the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants are included at the end of the revelation effected. If the basic word in the revision is the same or if there is a minor spelling difference, the text is not marked. Word(s) in *italics* represent new language added for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

A commentary for some of the revelations received prior to 1835 is included at the end of pertinent messages. I have not commented on every textual change but have highlighted the most significant—those which elucidate how people understood these revelatory pronouncements at the time they were first given. Where manuscripts are available and relevant to this study, I provide transcriptions of the complete documents. Transcriptions of the manuscripts were made from photographic reproductions and microfilm copies. For revelatory texts recorded in the Book of the Law of the Lord, I have consulted the transcription by Dean C. Jessee in *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Journal, 1832-1842*. I have retained the style and spelling of the original scribes.

My selection of "revelations" follows the canonical tradition. It includes not only foundational doctrinal assertions and visions but also pronouncements regarding the duties of church leaders. Specific instructions to church members were an important aspect in early Mormonism, as were explanations of scriptures, epistolary advice, and decisions about practical matters regarding property and money. These items have been formally called revelations or commandments (156), questions and answers relating to the "pure language" (1), letters (4), explanations of scripture (3), visions (3), prophecies (2), testimony (1), a song in the gift of tongues (1), instruction (1), and the Articles and Covenants (1). Over one half of the revelatory documents were written during the formative period of the church before the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was organized in 1835 (128 documents, 73.9 percent). The revelations were given to the general membership, to elders and high priests, to church conferences, or in response to individual inquiries. The revelations were mainly for men. Only five documents are directly related to women: to Emma Hale Smith, Vienna Jacques, Mary Bailey Smith, Nancy Marinda Hyde, and Sarah Ann Whitney.

¹ Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 129n5.

In September 2009 the Church Historian's Press of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books, Facsimile Edition*.² Besides including color photographs and transcriptions of pages in the Kirtland Revelations Book (RKB) it contained the oldest known record book in Latter-day Saint Church history. The original title indicates the initial purpose of the manuscript volume: "A Book of Commandments & Revelations of the Lord given to Joseph the Seer & others by the Inspiration of God & gift & power of the Holy Ghost which Beareth Re[c]ord of the Father & Son & Holy Ghost which is one God Infinite & eternal World without end Amen." The handwritten work is just over 200 pages. It contains copies (not originals) of the majority of the revelations of Joseph Smith Jr. from July 1828 to June 1834 during the early formation of the restored Church of Christ. Eight pages were obtained by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ) in 1903. I published these pages in *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* in 1999. This book has been guided by my earlier work.

The Book of Commandments and Revelations (BCR) is missing eighteen pages that would have been copies of divine pronouncements (revelations) received by Joseph Smith during April- June 1829, at the time of the dictation of the Book of Mormon. The two scribes for the volume were John Whitmer, Church historian, and a few copies written by Oliver Cowdery, associate to Joseph Smith and second elder in the Church. Because of the recent publication of the manuscript book some earlier manuscript copies of revelations are now available. This has given me the opportunity to compare and update some of the text where appropriate. I have used those complete revelations transcribed in the BCR for the period July 1828 through April 26, 1832 not in other early manuscripts.

The BCR was retained by the church after the publication of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. After one hundred and seventy-four years it was made available to the public in color photographic reproduction. It is most fortunate to have the volume made available. I have tried to recover the underlining text behind the revisions made after the revelations were copied and corrected by John Whitmer. Two items in the BCR of interest are the Canadian copyright revelation and some questions and answers relating to the "pure language."

Changes have been made in the perception of what occurred at the three conferences held at Hiram, Ohio in November 1831. Rather than a manuscript being prepared at that time by John Whitmer we find that Whitmer already had a manuscript book containing revelations. Also various revisions were made at this time by Joseph Smith and especially by Sidney Rigdon. The book was taken by Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer to make selections for the forthcoming volume known as the Book of Commandments.

For the most part Sidney Rigdon's editorial readings onto the text of the BCR were not incorporated when setting the type for *The Evening and the Morning Star* or the Book of Commandments, both Cowdery and Whitmer worked on the press in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Below are the words, in alphabetical order, which Rigdon proposed to change in the copied revelations. There are thirty-three examples, with the equal sign (=) indicating the word to substitute. In this book I have followed the earlier reading and not Sidney Rigdon's modifications.

² The book was edited by Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper. First volume of the Revelations and Translation series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. General editors: Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009. The originals are housed in the LDS Church History Library (CHL) in Salt Lake City, Utah.

art = are
art thou = are you
hast = have
hath = has
hath = have
him that = he who
his = your
is = are
shalt = shall
that = who
that hath = who has
that hath = who have
that is = who are
thee = you
they that = them who
they that = those who
thine = his
thine = thy
thine = yours
thou = ye
thou = you
thou art = you are
thou hast = you have
thy = thine
thy = your
ye = they
ye = thou
ye = you
you = thee
your = their
was = were
which = that
which=who

Versification in this book has been supplied using the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. While those documents not in the canon have no verses added. References to current editions of the scriptures are given at the beginning of each document. Brackets are used for editorial insertions, to make fragmentary or misspelled words intelligible. Sometimes the manuscripts were difficult to read, especially the endings of words. Rather than complete the intended word, brackets were added. Brackets are also included to identify individuals mentioned. Two words (servant and verily) that are misspelled are retained rather than corrected. Unless otherwise indicated, words that were crossed out by the original scribes are omitted.

In a number of instances where the meaning is ambiguous, punctuation and capital letters are supplied within brackets to facilitate readability. The Book of Commandments had a few obvious typographical errors that have been corrected. The first word of each revelation, which appeared in capital letters, has been rendered in lower case. In manuscripts, words that appear above lines are included if they were part of the original manuscript and were not late additions.

Most of the manuscripts have been divided into short paragraphs for easier reading. Source notations for the texts are at the beginning of each document. Footnotes are given where appropriate. References to Mormon scripture are usually provided in their standard abbreviations; thus BC refers to the Book of Commandments, D&C to the Doctrine and Covenants (usually preceded by LDS or RLDS), etc.

I would like to give a special thanks to the three major repositories containing manuscripts relating to the Restoration movement: the Church History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (CHL), Salt Lake City, Utah; the Community of Christ Library-Archives (CCLA), Independence, Missouri; and L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Research was conducted at the LDS Family History Library; Manuscripts Division, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah; and the Utah State Historical Society library, all in Salt Lake City; the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka; the Mercantile Library Association and Missouri Historical Society, both in St. Louis; and the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio. I express my appreciation to these institutions and their staffs.