

# What of the Lectures on Faith?



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## Introduction

Latter-day Saint history is replete with historical questions, some of which pertain to what are termed the Lectures on Faith. What are the Lectures on Faith? How did they originate? Why were they taken out of the Doctrine and Covenants? Who wrote and delivered them? It is the purpose of this paper to examine these questions and to supply some plausible answers.

The Lectures in Faith are a series of seven theological presentations made to the School of the Elders held in Kirtland, Ohio, during the winter of 1834–35.<sup>1</sup> For more than eighty years these lectures were printed with the Revelation of God to Joseph Smith in every English edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>2</sup> Although never held to be on a par with the Revelation themselves, the lectures were widely used as doctrinal aids by members and missionaries during this period.<sup>3</sup>

In 1921, the lectures were removed from the Doctrine and Covenants for reasons later to be shown. Since that time, interest in and use of the lectures in the Church has waned considerably. As Joseph Fielding Smith once observed, “The rising generation knows little about the Lectures on Faith.”<sup>4</sup> Fewer still, it would seem, understand their doctrinal importance. It is not the intent of this paper, however, either to examine the doctrinal implications of the lectures or to speak at length concerning their present value for Later-day Saints. A thorough study of the teachings of the lectures would be the subject for another article.

The printed format for the lectures is a fairly simple one. Each of the first five lectures is divided into two parts: a formal argument and a catechism designed to test student understanding and retention of the basic information provided.<sup>5</sup> At varying intervals, the student is also urged to commit portions of his study to memory.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the discourses are laid out in an impressive, of somewhat redundant, manner, and each line of argument is thoroughly buttressed with supporting scripture.

Much evidence exists to show that the lectures were composed with care and precision. Each, except the first, begins with a brief paragraph summarizing the arguments of the one before. Then follows a second paragraph which sets forth the leading thought of that particular lecture. Each lecture builds in systematic fashion upon its predecessor until the final

conclusion is reached in lecture seven, namely, that faith in God is an essential feature of man's quest for eternal life.

### Historical Background

In order to understand the essential background of the lectures, it is necessary to know something about the School of the Elders and its predecessor, the School of the Prophets. Both were held in Kirtland, Ohio—the School of the Prophets from January to April 1833 and the School of the Elders from November 1834 to March 1835. Learning is, and always has been, a cardinal principle of the Latter-day Saint faith,<sup>7</sup> and the establishment and maintenance of schools have received much attention wherever the Church has gone.

The aforementioned schools were unique in that their attention was directed solely to the adult males of the Church, many of whom could neither read nor write.<sup>8</sup> When it is remembered that the early propagators of the faith were called upon to proselyte men whose academic attainments often exceeded that of the elders, the keenly felt need for educational growth and assistance will be readily apparent. One could scarcely recommend the Book of Mormon as the word of God of he, himself, could not read it.

The School of the Prophets was called into being by revelation. Although primarily intended for growth in things spiritual,<sup>9</sup> the School did not confine itself to such matters. Indeed, the revelation directing that the School be formed commanded its members to become “instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.” Members were also urged to study

. . . things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms.<sup>10</sup>

Sometime in April 1833 the School of the Prophets closed, in tending “to commence again in the fall.”<sup>11</sup> In the meantime, plans were laid to commence a school for the elders of the Church “who should come together to receive instruction preparatory for their missions, and ministry.”<sup>12</sup> Whereas the School of the Prophets was intended primarily for leaders of the Church only, the School of the Elders was open to all potential missionaries.

Neither school commenced as anticipated. By the fall of 1833, the Church was deeply involved in its Missouri troubles.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the winter and the next spring, members were busily engaged in raising an army (Zion's

Camp) to aid the stricken Missouri Saints. Plans for further schooling were temporarily set aside.<sup>14</sup>

The fall of 1834 saw in the Church the revival of educational interest. Near the end of October, writes Joseph Smith, "It was necessary to make preparations for the School for the Elders,<sup>15</sup> wherein they might be more perfectly instructed in the great things of God, during the coming winter." A special room, located in the recently completed printing office in Kirtland, was appointed as the classroom for instruction.<sup>16</sup> It was here that the Lectures on Faith were delivered to and carefully studied by the elders.

Classwork commenced somewhere between the middle and last of November. "The classes, being mostly Elders," wrote the Prophet, "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."<sup>17</sup> How often classes convened, or during which hours of the day, is not known,<sup>18</sup> but the School continued until the last week in March 1835, at which time the elders thus trained were given "opportunity to go forth and proclaim the Gospel."<sup>19</sup>

The Lectures on Faith were initially published in complete form in 1835 in the first edition of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>20</sup> A few years later, Parley P. Pratt republished the lectures in the newly founded *Millennial Star*, a British Mission publication. As editor of the new periodical, Elder Pratt informed his readers that he was presenting them with "a brief course of Lectures on the first principles of theology."<sup>21</sup>

The period between 1840 and 1900 can best be described as a "settling-in period," during which time use of the lectures solidified in the Church. In 1850, John Davis of Methyr Tydvil, Wales, made the lectures available in Welsh.<sup>22</sup> Later, in 1878, Orson Pratt wrote from England wondering whether or not to include the lectures in a new publication of the Doctrine and Covenants which he was preparing. John Taylor, then president of the Twelve and presiding officer of the Church, replied: "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 the present."<sup>23</sup> Two decades later in 1897, Edwin F. Parry, a missionary in England and a writer for the *Millennial Star*, penned a brief article in which he recommended the lectures as "an excellent study for missionaries. . . . The lectures," he wrote, "are plain and logical, and every assertion made in them is fully sustained by conclusive scriptural proof."<sup>24</sup>

Shortly after the turn of the century, the Doctrine and Covenants was adopted as a course of study for the Mutual Improvement Association of the Church. Prior to their study of the Revelation, however, students were treated to brief historical outline of the lectures by Elder John A. Widtsoe.

The review is largely a series of quotations which show the Genesis of the lectures and their relationship to the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>25</sup>

Later on, in 1921, the Lectures on Faith were removed from the Doctrine and Covenants. No edition since that time has carried them. A number of years later (the exact date is not known), Nels B. Lundwall, a compiler and publisher of books in the Salt Lake City area, reprinted the lectures. The 1906–07 historical sketch by Dr. John A. Widtsoe and a treatise on “True Faith” by Orson Pratt were included in the new publication. Lundwall entitled his work *A Compilation Containing the Lectures in Faith*. The pamphlet has current circulation in the Church.

### Why the Lectures Were Removed

Some have wondered why the Lectures on Faith were removed from the Doctrine and Covenants. The answer is not difficult to find. Their inclusion in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants had gained for the lectures a position of honor not likely intended by those who first placed them there. They were study helps, not revelations. When it became apparent that some in the Church were according these doctrinal aids dignity equal to, and sometimes surpassing, that of the Revelation themselves, the lectures were removed. Joseph Fielding Smith, one of three apostles appointed to look into the question of removing the lectures,<sup>26</sup> once explained: “The reason they were taken out [of the Doctrine and Covenants] was that they were not revelations; they were only ‘helps.’” Although he had personal regard for the lectures and often cited them in his spoken and written works, Elder Smith wished it distinctly understood that the lectures were removed, not because, as some had claimed, “they contained false doctrine”<sup>27</sup> but because they were “not now considered, and were not considered when they were placed in the Doctrine and Covenants, on a par with the Revelation.”<sup>28</sup>

Charles W. Penrose, member of the First presidency in 1921, was also in a position to know the facts. In a private letter, written prior to the deletion of the lectures, he stated:

The statement that the Lectures on Faith, which have been published from time to time in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants were never considered or published as Revelation is correct. . . . They were considered to be very excellent expositions of the doctrines contained therein, but never ranked as the word of the Lord which is contained in the real book of Doctrine and Covenants. . . .

There is no need of any regrets concerning the publication of the Lectures. They contain a great many very fine thoughts, well expressed, but they are not an essential part of the nook, and can be eliminated if necessary without any detriment to the Revelation contained in the book.<sup>29</sup>

The lectures did pose one significant doctrinal problem for the Church. It had long been accepted church doctrine that “the Father [i.e., God] has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> Lecture five contained a statement which seemed to contradict this view. It reads:

There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible, whither in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space. They are the Father and the Son—the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or rather man was formed after his likeness and in his image; he is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fullness of the Father, or the same fullness with the Father.<sup>31</sup>

Difficulty is occasioned by the statement that the Father is a “personage of spirit” while the Son is a “personage of tabernacle.” Such a statement needs clarification in view of the orthodox view that both the Father and the Son have bodies “as tangible as man’s.” Increased confusion results from a statement in the same lecture which asserts that Christ, as God’s Only Begotten Son, possesses “the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit.” Rightly understood, the statement might cause no difficulty, but the following line states that “these three [i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things.”<sup>32</sup> For Latter-day Saints, the third member of the Godhead is a “personage of Spirit” rather than simply “the mind of God.”

Hence it was that Joseph Fielding Smith, in an interview on 22 July 1940, is quoted as having assigned the following reasons for the removal of the lectures from the Doctrine and Covenants:

- (1) The Lectures were never received by Joseph Smith as revelation;
- (2) The Lectures are only instructions relative to the general subject of faith and are not the doctrine of the Church;
- (3) The Lectures are not complete as to their teachings the Godhead;
- (4) It was thought by Elder James E. Talmage, chairman of the committee responsible for their removal, that to avoid confusion and contention on this vital point of belief [i.e., on the Godhead], it would be better not to have them bound in the same volume with the commandments and Revelation.<sup>33</sup>

Since 1921, all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants have carried a brief explanation in relation to the removal of the lectures:

Certain lessons, entitled “Lectures on Faith,” which were bound in with the Doctrine and Covenants on some of its former issues, are not included in this edition. These 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 other than theological lectures or lessons.<sup>34</sup>

### Authorship and Delivery

Two important questions remain: (1) Who delivered the Lectures on Faith? and (2) Who wrote them? Unfortunately, no categorical answer based on unassailable historical evidence can be given to either question. Two immediate prospects, however, present themselves: Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. Claims for both have been made through the years.

There seems to be little question that Sidney Rigdon had something to do with the lectures. Charles W. Penrose, former member of the First Presidency, once wrote: “We learn by reading the history of the early times in the Church that the lectures were delivered by Sidney Rigdon when he was in full fellowship.”<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, President Penrose offers no hard evidence to support his claim that the lectures were, in fact, delivered by Elder Rigdon. Neither does an examination of historical sources for the 1834–1835 period reveal any Rigdon connection. The remark is merely an off-hand comment made in a personal letter written during the press of other Church business.

The statement of President Penrose does, however, reveal a persistent tradition in the Church that Sidney Rigdon delivered the lectures. Just how early this tradition gained acceptance is not known. Such a conclusion may have come from a statement made by Zebedee Coltrin in Salt Lake City in the 1880s. Coltrin, oldest and only survivor in 1883 of the original School of the Prophets, reported in a public meeting that the lectures were, given, not in the School of the Prophets, “but in a larger school on the hill afterwards, where Sidney Rigdon presided.”<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not know what Coltrin meant by his use of the word “preside.” Perhaps he intended to say that Sidney Rigdon taught the class; or he may have meant that Elder Rigdon was the school’s presiding officer.<sup>37</sup> What can be safely said is that by the turn of the century a tradition connecting Sidney Rigdon with the lectures was clearly established in the Church. In November of 1902, the *Deseret News* carried the following:

The inquiry is frequently made and one has just been received, as to “Who delivered the lectures on Faith. . . .” Those excellent addresses, which have furnished information and argument for many of the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints were delivered by Sidney Rigdon,



but they were subsequently examined and prepared for publication in the Doctrine and Covenants by the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>38</sup>

None of the foregoing is particularly helpful in answering the question of authorship, however. To deliver the lectures is not necessarily to compose them. Someone else could have written them and then Sidney Rigdon, widely known for his oratorical skills, could have delivered them.<sup>39</sup> Such appears to have been the point of view taken by Joseph Fielding Smith when he wrote:

The statement has been made that Sidney Rigdon wrote these lectures. Sidney Rigdon did not have an analytical mind, I am told. He was considered to be the leading orator of the Church in his day, but he could not sit down and analyze his thoughts and arrange and correlate them, as we find them arranged and correlated here.<sup>40</sup>

Still, there have been some who have insisted on Rigdon's authorship.<sup>41</sup> The lectures, wrote John Henry Evans in the 1920s, are

as unlike anything Joseph Smith ever wrote as was Ralph Waldo Emerson's writing different from that of his contemporary, Margaret Fuller. "Uninspired" is the only word that properly describes the pamphlet [i.e., the printed lectures]. It begins with a definition taken from Buck's [theological] dictionary, proceeds to tell us how our knowledge of God is derived, and goes on to describe the qualities of God as shown in the Bible. The treatment is just what any one of a thousand theologians of Rigdon's time could produce. It is said that Oliver Cowdery also aided in the composition of this document.<sup>42</sup>

Others disagree. Edwin Parry, writing in the *Millennial Star* in 1897, refers directly to the Prophet Joseph Smith as "the author of the lectures."<sup>43</sup> Charles C. Richards, first counselor in the Ogden Stake Presidency in 1910, said: "Before these schools [the School of the Prophets and the School of the Elders], in the fall of 1834, the prophet delivered 'Lectures on Theology,' which were afterwards published in the Doctrine and Covenants, and called 'Lectures on Faith.'"<sup>44</sup>

Elinore Partridge and Alan J. Phipps, who have both analyzed the lectures by statistically comparing them with known works of Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, take a different point of view.<sup>45</sup> Partridge concludes:

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.<sup>46</sup>

Phipps' work is the most complete effort to establish authorship for the lectures thus far attempted by statistical analysis. He concludes that

Sidney Rigdon authored lectures one and seven, while Joseph Smith was responsible for lecture five. Lectures two, three, four and six possess elements of both men's styles, indicating a collaboration. Phipps theorizes as follows:

It is possible the lectures were produced by discussion, with Sidney Rigdon as scribe or as the reworker of the rough draft. After reading the new draft, Joseph Smith could have suggested changes and decided to author his own lecture, the fifth, to round out the series. . . . If they had been entirely Joseph Smith's or Sidney Rigdon's or any other person's, it seems probable their authorship would have been divulged.<sup>47</sup>

It is important in assessing the lectures to know that their published form is not necessarily the precise form in which they were delivered at the School of the Elders. a Special committee, formed on 24 September 1834 by the high council in Kirtland, was appointed "to arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ" for publication. These items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ" for publication. These items were "to be taken from the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the Revelation which have been given to the Church." Members of the committee were the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams.<sup>48</sup> Sometime during their deliberations, the committee decided to publish the lectures with the above "items."

Whatever may be the truth with respect to the authorship or delivery of the lectures, there is good historical evidence to show that Joseph Smith's connection with them was more than superficial. In recording his activities for late October 1834, the Prophet states in his journal: "It now 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."<sup>49</sup> The account does not reveal the nature of those "preparations," and we are left to wonder if they had anything to do with the Lectures on Faith.

Other statements in the Prophet's journal cause similar questions to arise. For example, of his activities in November of 1834, the journal states: "No month ever found me more busily engaged than November; but as my life consisted of activity and unyielding exertions, I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it.*"<sup>50</sup> Later that same month the record states: "I continued my labors daily, preparing for the school"<sup>51</sup>

These questions naturally present themselves: What was the nature of Joseph Smith's "preparation" during this period? Why was he so "busily engaged," more so than in any other month of his life to that point? Of what did his "daily" labors consist as he prepared for the school? What had he been commanded of the Lord to do? Part of the answer to these interrogatories may have been provided by the Prophet himself. Of his activities in early December, following the opening of the School, the Prophet wrote:

“Our school for the Elders was now will attended, and with the lectures on theology, which were regularly delivered, absorbed for the time being everything else of a temporal nature.”<sup>52</sup> Why should attendance at the School and the “lectures on theology” absorb all other things of a temporal nature unless Joseph Smith was somehow intimately connected therewith. Granted that attendance at the School would take time, why would the Prophet mention the lectures as a specific time-consumer if all that were necessary was to attend school and listen? The evidence, while admittedly not conclusive, argues most persuasively, of not for Joseph Smith’s delivery of the lectures, at least for his hand in the authorship of the same.

But even if it could be shown that the Prophet did not write or deliver the lectures personally, it cannot be denied that he had much to do with their final published form. As a member of the committee appointed to oversee the printing of the Revelation, Joseph Smith could have busied himself with their preparation. Why, then, did he choose to involve himself with the Lectures on Faith instead? Writing under date of January 1835, the Prophet states: “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 D&C, which the committee appointed last September were now compiling.”<sup>53</sup> Note that while others on the committee were “compiling” the Revelation, Joseph Smith was busy “preparing” the lectures for publication. Why? The Prophet alone appears to have determined the “shape and texture” of the lectures in their published form. Sidney Rigdon was also a member of the publication committee. Had he been the sole author of the lectures, it would seem that he, not Joseph Smith, would have been the logical one to edit and to prepare them for publication.<sup>54</sup> Is it not possibly that Joseph Smith, realizing that the lectures were to be published in an official church record, felt the finished document should have his official sanction as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator?

For these reasons, as well as the spirit contained in the lectures themselves, some of the Church’s finest scholars have supported the view of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s authorship. Joseph Fielding Smith, widely known for his gospel scholarship, was of the opinion that “we must give the Prophet Joseph Smith credit” for the lectures.<sup>55</sup> Elder Bruce R. McConkie, longtime student of the lectures, and known to cite them on occasion, has written that the lectures “were prepared by the Prophet for study in the school of the elders on Kirtland in 1834–1835, and also for publication in the Doctrine and Covenants.”<sup>56</sup>

These same scholars also disagree with the statement that the lectures are uninspired. Joseph Fielding Smith, for example, insisted: “In my own judgment these Lectures on Faith are of great value in the study of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>57</sup> Elder McConkie has added: “. . . In them is to be

found some of the best lesson material ever prepared on the Godhead; on the character, perfections, and attributes of God; on faith, miracles, and sacrifice. They can be studied with great profit by all gospel scholars.”<sup>58</sup> Charles W. Penrose, a leading theologian of his own day, likewise referred to the lectures as “very excellent expositions of the doctrines contained therein.”<sup>59</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

Conclusive historical evidence for an answer to the question of who wrote the Lectures on Faith is lacking. Careful searches through letter-books and other papers of Joseph Smith and early Church leaders, as well as scrutiny of numerous diaries, journals, and autobiographies for the 1834–1835 period, have revealed nothing of a definitive nature concerning the identity of either the writer or the deliverer of the Lectures on Faith. What has been discovered is that the lectures were presented to the School of the Elders in December of 1834 and formed the basis for much of the theological study undertaken at the school during its tenure.

Whereas the lectures were very popular in the early days of the Church, owing, it would seem, to their place of importance in the Doctrine and Covenants, they are little known and seldom used by the younger or newer members of the Church. Their removal from the Doctrine and Covenants on 1921 is felt to be largely responsible for this fact.

The question of authorship, however, is a moot one since Joseph Smith personally prepared the lectures for publication. The condition in which we have them today, while not necessarily their original state, is precisely as he approved them and sent them forth. They are as suitable for study today as they ever were.

The very spirit of the lectures is the spirit of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Who wrote them is surely of lesser importance than the great benefits to be derived from a careful study of the same. If the ancient aphorism that a tree is known by the fruit it bears is still a valid test, Latter-day Saints would be well advised to acquaint themselves more fully with the Lectures on Faith.

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1. The lectures were first given in December 1834 and appear to have borne the title “lectures on theology.” Later, at or near the time of their publication, the title was changed to Lectures on Faith (Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1959–60], 2:176, 180 [hereafter cited as *HC*]).

2. Some of the earliest revelations given to Joseph Smith were initially published in 1833 under the title, *A Book of Commandments, For the Government of the Church of Christ* (Zion [Independence, Mo.]: W. W. Phelps and Co., 1833). In August 1835, a new edition, containing many more revelations, was published in Kirtland, Ohio. This new publication, *Doctrine & Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams and Co., 1835), also included the Lectures on Faith.

3. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), p. 194.

4. Ibid.

5. The catechismal portions of the lectures are labeled “Questions and Answers on the Foregoing Principles.” Queries such as “What is theology?” or “How old was Noah when Shem was born?” form a part of each catechism. Each question is followed by an answer taken from the lecture and is accompanied by appropriate scriptural citations. In assigning a reason for including the catechism with the lectures themselves, the *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio) 1 (May 1835): 122 states: “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 proofs, it was preserved in compiling.”

6. Nels B. Lundwall, comp., *A Compilation Containing the Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: N. B. Lundwall, n.d.), pp. 47, 53, 60.

7. Such Mormon aphorisms as “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36), “It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6), and “A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge,” *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959), p. 217. while uttered in contexts having definite spiritual application, have long been employed to induce Church members to seek secular learning.

8. Joseph Smith’s schooling consisted of training in reading, writing, and basic arithmetic, most likely received at home. Joseph’s father, Joseph Smith, Sr., had taught school in Vermont prior to moving to New York, and it may have been from him that Joseph Smith, Jr., received his early education. (See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958], p. 46.) Joseph Smith’s situation was by no means unique. Brigham Young had gone to school only eleven days before he joined the Church in 1832. (See *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855–85], 13:176.) On the other hand, there were exceptions. Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, William E. McLellin, and Orson Hyde had all taught school prior to 1830, and each played an important role in the early efforts of the Saints to increase their education. Orson Hyde had attended Burton Academy near Kirtland, Ohio, where he studied grammar, geography, arithmetic, and rhetoric. William E. McLellin had taught in five states prior to his move to Kirtland. (History of Orson Hyde, MS, pp. 3–4, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; see also *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* [Kirtland, Ohio], 1 [February 1835]:80.)

9. Meetings of the School of the Prophets were “solemn assemblies” in which “light speeches . . . laughter . . . lustful desire . . . pride and light-mindedness” were excluded (D&C 88:121). Meetings began about sunrise and continued until about 4 P.M. Each member was required to appear for study in “clean linen” and was to have bathed beforehand. How often the School met is not known, but each time it did meet, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered according to the pattern set forth in the New Testament (John 13). (See Minutes Regarding the School of the Prophets, Utah Phase, MS, 3 October 1883, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.)

The information provided about this school was furnished by Zebedee Coltrin, only surviving member of the 1833 school; (hereafter this source will be cited as “Coltrin’s Testimony”).

10. D&C 88:78–79. Orson Hyde served as teacher in the School, but Sidney Rigdon also lectured on grammar (“Coltrin’s Testimony,” 11 October 1883). Another source states that “F. G. Williams, M. D., Sidney Rigdon, William E. McLellin, M. D., Orson Hyde and Joseph Smith are said to have instructed from time to time in the common academic branches” (H. S. Salisbury, “History of Education in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Journal of History* 15 [1922]:263). A brief but illuminating survey of this phase of Mormon history may be obtained by consulting Orlen Curtis Peterson, “A History of the Schools and Educational Programs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio and Missouri, 1831–1839” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972), chap. 3.

11. *Times and Seasons* [Nauvoo, Illinois], 5 (1 January 1844):753. See also *HC* 1:340. Precisely why the School closed at this time is not known. A revelation given to Joseph Smith on 1 June 1833 reports that “my servants sinned a very grievous sin; and contentions arose in the school of the prophets, which was very grievous unto me, saith your Lord; therefore I sent them forth to be chastened” (D&C 95:10). But it was also the spring and time to begin spring work. The pattern in all of the schooling offered in Kirtland during the Latter-day Saint sojourn there was for the elders to use their winters in educating themselves and their springs and summers for plowing, planting, and preaching. Coltrin claims that the school closed, however, so that the brethren could go to work to obtain funds for the purchase of three farms in Kirtland which were needed in order to complete the Kirtland Temple,” 11 October 1883.) It is possible that all three factors operated to bring the School to a close.

12. *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 January 1844):754–55. See also *HC* 1:342.

13. In July of 1833, hostilities threatened to break out in Jackson County, Missouri, between the Mormons and their Missouri neighbors. Matters calmed somewhat, however, until late October and early November, when an estimated 1,000 Saints were forcibly evicted from their homes. Thereafter, attention centered on how to help the exiles in their efforts to recover their lands, and this left little time for the pursuit of educational matters. For an account of the Missouri difficulties, their causes and results, see Warren A. Jennings, “Zion Is Fled” (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1962), chaps 4 and 5.

14. See D&C 101:55–60; 103:22–34. For a brief account of this episode in LDS Church history, see Wilburn D. Talbot, “Zion’s Camp” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973), and Peter Crawley and Richard L. Anderson, “Zion’s Camp,” *BYU Studies* 14 (Summer 1974): 406–20.

15. A similar school of the same name was held during the summer of 1833 in Missouri, with Parley P. Pratt as teacher and president. For Elder Pratt’s interesting account of the school and his personal relationship thereto, see his *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), pp. 92–93. He was commended by revelation for his part in the school. (See D&C 97:3–6.)

16. *HC* 2:169–70. According to one source, the building was hastened to its completion through the efforts of Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith’s mother. (See Salisbury, “History of Education in the Church,”: 15:264.) Precisely how many elders attended the School is not known, though Joseph Smith reports that it was “well attended” (*HC* 2:175–76). The numbers could not have been too many, however, for the meeting place was a small room, a mere 30 by 38 feet, and was also used for Sunday worship services.

It was so small that those who appeared for worship on the Sabbath sometimes had to be turned away, and it gradually became the practice for members to take turns staying home so that all could have an equal chance in attending. (Caroline B. Crosby's Journal, MS, Church Historical Department.)

17. *HC*2:176.

18. The Elders' School of 1835–1836 met from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. each day. This may have been the pattern of the 1834–1835 school also, since both schools had a similar intent, namely, to qualify the elders as “messengers of Jesus Christ” (Ibid., pp. 176, 218, 430–33, 476). See also Erastus Snow's testimony in Minutes of the School of the Prophets, Utah Phase. One can gather an idea of how busy the elders were during the 1835 session from Oliver Cowdery's answer to a proposal from Sampson Avard that the latter bring a series of philosophical lectures to Kirtland in the fall of the same year. Cowdery replied by letter that the elders were much too “busily engaged in other studies” to attend. (Letter of Cowdery to Avard, 15 December 1835, Oliver Cowdery Letters, Church Historical Department.)

19. *HC*2:218.

20. Shortly after the Doctrine and Covenants was published, various quorums of the priesthood met in Kirtland to express themselves regarding the book. Many of those present testified that the book was true and its contents were “the doctrine and covenants of their faith.” Nothing, however, was said concerning the lectures except by John Smith who, representing the Kirtland High Council, “bore record . . . that the lectures were judiciously arranged and compiled, and were profitable for doctrine.” (*HC*2:244.)

21. *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* [Manchester, England] 1 (September 1840): 129. The first four lectures appeared in volume 1, pp. 129–33, 137–50, 169–74, and 241–45; the last three lectures appeared in volume 3, pp. 135–38, 150–52, 165–69. A careful check shows that the lectures were published by Parley P. Pratt precisely as they stood in the original publication without emendations of any sort. It is possible that the delay in the publication of the last three lectures was occasioned by the soon-to-be-printed Doctrine and Covenants in Liverpool. This was the first foreign edition of the Doctrine and Covenants and did not make its appearance until 1845.

22. Journal History, 31 December 1850, p. 2, Church Historical Department. The Journal History is a day-to-day scrapbook history of the Church. It should not be confused with the *Journal of History*, a publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

23. Letter of John Taylor to Orson Pratt, First Presidency, Letterpress Copybooks, vol. Z, 1877–1949, 1 April 1879. These letterbooks are housed in the Church Historical Department.

24. *Millennial Star* 59 (August 1897):522.

25. General Board of the YMMIA, *Modern Revelation: The History and Message of the Doctrine and Covenants*, MIA Manual, 1906–07 (Salt Lake City: Skelton Publishing, 1906), pp. 31–37. Elder Widtsoe was, at this time, teaching at Brigham Young University. The course he wrote covered two years of study for the Mutual Improvement Association young men and women (John A. Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1952], p. 93).

26. The committee was composed of Joseph Fielding Smith, John A. Widtsoe, and James E. Talmage, with Elder Talmage as committee chairman.

27. Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly*, p. 194.

28. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 2:304. See also 3:194.

29. Letter of Charles W. Penrose to Mrs. Oscar Perry (Arco, Idaho), 21 March 1921, Heber J. Grant Letterbooks, p. 860, Church Historical Department. President Penrose, just advanced from second to first counselor ten day before, was writing in behalf of President Heber J. Grant, who was out of town.

30. D&C 130:22.

31. Lundwall, *Compilation Containing the Lectures on Faith*, p. 48.

32. Ibid. Elder Bruce R. McConkie and President Charles W. Penrose have given interpretations of the Prophet's meaning in the lectures. (See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], pp. 319–20, and *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:6, fn. 18. See also Charles W. Penrose's explanations in the *Liahona: The Elders' Journal* 18 [1920–1921]:485 and the *Ninety-Second Semi-Annual Conference Report*, pp. 23–99, and Heber J. Grant Letterbooks, p. 860.) President Penrose's comments are significant in that they were made at the very time that the question of removing the lectures from the Doctrine and Covenants was being considered.

33. John William Fitzgerald, "A Study of the Doctrine and Covenants" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1940), pp. 343–45.

34. *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921), p. v.

35. Heber J. Grant Letterbooks, p. 860.

36. "Coltrin's Testimony," 11 October 1883. Judging from the detail furnished by Coltrin in two sessions with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, his memory was excellent considering he was nearing eighty years of age. Coltrin was born 7 September 1804 (Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901], 1:190). Several Schools of the Prophets were held in Utah under the administrations of Presidents Brigham Young and John Taylor during the 1860s–1880s. For an excellent study of these schools, see John R. Patrick, "The School of the Prophets: Its Development and Influence in Utah Territory" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970).

37. The latter possibility seems unlikely, particularly if Joseph Smith, the Church's presiding officer, were in constant attendance at the School. (See *HC* 2:176.)

38. *Deseret News*, 8 November 1902, p. 2.

39. Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon—Early Mormon" (Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1931), chap. 5; F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer, 1793–1876* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1971), pp. 16, 18, 26, 123. Neither biographer says a word about Rigdon's connection with the lectures.

40. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:303.

41. Sidney Rigdon, still in favor with the Church in 1834–35, was considered the likely candidate. Following his excommunication from the Church founded by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon began his own organization. There may be some significance to the fact that although Sidney Rigdon later published the lectures in his own church's periodical, he made no claim to authorship. (See *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ* [Pittsburgh], 15 October 1845, pp. 364–66; November 1845, pp. 385–89; December 1845, pp. 405–07; January 1846, pp. 422–24; February 1846, pp. 443–45.) Rigdon's publication is not to be confused with that of similar name edited by Oliver Cowdery in Kirtland some ten years before.

42. John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 95–96. This writer, anxious to present Joseph Smith in the most favorable light possible, and considering the lectures to be a most inferior product, sought to disassociate Joseph Smith from them.



43. *Millennial Star* 59 (August 1897):522. Edwin Parry was born in 1860 and was too young to have known, firsthand, precisely who authored the lectures. The same can be said of Charles W. Penrose who, although born in 1832, did not join the Church until 1850 and did not emigrate to Utah until 1861 (Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:645, 246).

44. *Improvement Era* 14 (1909–1910):18.

45. Stylistic analysis attempts to determine authorship by means of comparing known writings of a given author with those in doubt. Comparison is based on the use of “function” or high-frequency words (e.g., “for,” “and,” “but,” etc.) as well as the use of “content” or lesser-used words. Words in both categories are counted, tallied, and compared. Comparison is also based on the assumption that writers habitually used similar patterns of expression in their written work. Results are held by some experts to be as revealing as, say, one’s fingerprints.

46. Elinore H. Partridge, “Characteristics of Joseph Smith’s Style and Notes on the Authorship of the Lectures on Faith,” Task Papers in LDS History, No. 14, December 1976, p. 28.

47. Alan J. Phipps, “The Lectures on Faith: An Authorship Study” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977), pp. 67–68.

48. *HC* 2:165. Phipps’ study considered Oliver Cowdery, Frederick G. Williams, Parley P. Pratt, and W. W. Phelps as potential authors also. The evidence was overwhelmingly in favor of Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith.

49. *HC* 2:169.

50. *HC* 2:170.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *HC* 2:175–76.

53. *HC* 2:180.

54. If it is argued that the Prophet Joseph Smith should have been the logical one to review and prepare the revelations for publication also, since he was the one who originally received them from the Lord, let it be remembered that the Prophet had already performed that function two years earlier in connection with the Book of Commandments. Under assignment from a Conference of the Church in November 1831, Joseph Smith was appointed to “arrange and get them [the revelations] in readiness” by 15 November 1831 (*HC* 1:229). Later we read that “my time was occupied closely in reviewing the commandments and sitting in conference, for nearly two weeks” (*HC* 1:235). These comments are very like those made later in connection with preparing the Lectures on Faith for publication.

55. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:304.

56. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 439. This idea was later modified by Elder McConkie in a speech at Brigham Young University. He said: “These statements that I now read were *in part* written by the prophet and in the whole approved by him. . . . They are taken from the ‘Lectures on Faith.’” “The Lord God of Joseph Smith,” *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1971), p. 4. Italics added.

57. Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly*, p. 194.

58. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 439. At least two other LDS scholars, Hyrum Andrus and Sidney B. Sperry, have studied the lectures and used them extensively. Andrus write: “There can be no doubt that the theological ideas [in the lectures] . . . came from Joseph Smith. All the major ideas within them can be found in his revelations and teachings before 1834.” (Andrus, *Principles of Perfection* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970], p. 20; see also Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 580.)

59. Heber J. Grant Letterbooks, p. 860.