**DC 1                                                               Historical Background**

The first section of the Doctrine and Covenants is not placed chronologically. Rather, it comes 19 months after the organization of the church. By Nov. 1831, most of the members live in Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph has moved to nearby Hiram. The occasion was a church conference addressing the need to compile the revelations given to the Prophet. The response was a message from Jehovah to the ends of the earth.

“Initially, the Prophet did not record his revelations at the time he received them, but the Lord instructed him in July 1830 to ‘continue calling upon God in my name, and writing the things which shall be given thee’ (D&C 24:5). Joseph immediately began ‘copying and arranging the revelations received up to that time, evidently with a view to their publication in book form’ (D&C, 1921 ed., p. iii). Parley P. Pratt, who was present when several of these divine communications were given, described how the Prophet received them: ‘Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each, sufficiently long for it to be recorded, by an ordinary writer, in long hand. This was the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written. There was never any hesitation, reviewing, or reading back, in order to keep the run of the subject’ (*Autobiography,*p. 62)….

“Of the revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, some thirty-seven sections, more than one-fourth of the total, were received during 1831 alone. These revelations were copied by hand for the use of the early Saints, but demand for them grew. Therefore, at a conference in November 1831, the Church considered publishing the ‘Book of Commandments.’ During that conference the Lord revealed what is nowDoctrine and Covenants 1 to be ‘my preface unto the book of my commandments’ (D&C 1:6). An early Latter-day Saint cited Oliver Cowdery's account of what happened on that occasion: ‘A committee had been appointed to draft a preface, consisting of . . . O. Cowdery and, I think, Sidney Rigdon, but when they made their report . . . the Conference then requested Joseph to enquire of the Lord about it, and he said that he would if the people would bow in prayer with him. This they did and Joseph prayed.

“’When they arose, Joseph dictated by the Spirit the preface found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants while sitting by a window of the room [John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio] in which the conference was sitting; and Sidney Rigdon wrote it down. Joseph would deliver a few sentences and Sidney would write them down, then read them aloud, and if correct, then Joseph would proceed and deliver more, and by this process the preface was given’ (William Kelley, in *Saints Herald,*16 Jan.1882, p. 67). At this point, William E. McLellin voiced some concerns about the wording of the Prophet's revelations. In response, the Lord issued the challenge quoted in Doctrine and Covenants 67:5-8. ‘After the foregoing was received,’ Joseph wrote in his history, ‘William E. McLellin, as the wisest man, in his own estimation, having more learning than sense, endeavored to write a commandment like unto one of the least of the Lord's, but failed; it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord. The Elders and all present that witnessed this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ, renewed their faith in the fulness of the Gospel, and in the truth of the commandments and revelations which the Lord had given to the Church through my instrumentality’ (*History of the Church,*1:226). Consequently, the conference decided to print several thousand copies of the revelations.” (Milton V. Backman, Jr. and Richard O. Cowan, *Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992], 2 - 3.)

**DC 1                                                               Introduction**

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

We need to get a picture in our minds of the setting. Here was the leader of a little group of people in Ohio, numbering at the time perhaps three hundred, scattered through frontier communities where there was much bitterness and hatred. But with vision both prophetic and bold he declared in the name of the Lord:

   “Verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

   And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow. ….

   And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

   And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.” (D&C 1:2–5.)

Later in that same revelation, received in the humble Johnson home in the village of Hiram, there were set forth the grand objectives of this great latter-day work—

1. “That every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world.”

2. “That faith also might increase in the earth.”

3. “That mine everlasting covenant might be established.”

4. “That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers … that they might come to understanding.” (See D&C 1:20–24.)

These are truly remarkable objectives. It was not a country pastor who spoke these words. It was a prophet of the living God setting forth the depth and breadth and length of this great, restored kingdom that was to go over the earth. In that remarkable revelation, the truth of the Book of Mormon was declared and the validity of the revelations was affirmed. Bold as were these declarations, there was no apology. Said the Lord, without equivocation:

   “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.” (D&C 1:38.)

Some time ago I noted that a new book, put together by unbelievers as a “history” of the Church, was off the press. I have not read the book, but the conclusion, reported one reviewer, is that the future of the Church is dim. Without wishing to seem impertinent, I should like to ask what the authors know about that future. They know nothing of the prophetic mission of the Church! The future must have looked extremely dim in the 1830s. It must have looked impossible back in those Ohio-Missouri days. But notwithstanding poverty, notwithstanding robbing, notwithstanding murders, notwithstanding confiscation and drivings and disfranchisement forced upon the Saints in the ensuing years, the work moved steadily on. It has continued to go forward. Never before has it been so strong. Never before has it been so widespread. Never before have there been so many in whose hearts has burned an unquenchable knowledge of the truth.

It is the work of the Almighty. It is the work of his Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of salvation. Men and women may oppose now, just as others opposed in those days. But the work goes on because it is true and it is divine. (“Go Forward with Faith,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1986, 5)

**DC 1:1 Hearken ye people from afar**

**Elder Bruce C. Hafen** asked, “why doesn't the Lord send a great chariot across the sky every day at noon, drawn by flying white horses? The chariot could stop right above the earth and then a voice from the great beyond could say, ‘And now a word from our Creator.’” (*The Believing Heart,* 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990], 41.)

If the Lord opened the heavens and gave an announcement, what would he say? We don’t have to wonder! The answer is contained in Doctrine and Covenants 1. The message is a voice of warning, a testimony in support of the Lord’s servants, and a declaration that the church is true.

“In the Doctrine and Covenants, Jesus Christ—‘I the Lord’—addresses his people today personally. Through this modern-day book of revelations, he gives us a firsthand testimony of himself. The Doctrine and Covenants is our book, a record of revelations that gives us immediate, firsthand experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. We can testify as well as the ancient Nephites could testify (see Mosiah 24:13; Alma 9:20–21; 3 Ne. 10:3–7) that the Lord has spoken to our generation.” (Clark V. Johnson, “You Have Heard My Voice,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 7)

**DC 1:3 their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed**

There will come a day when all things will be revealed. That includes all of our weaknesses and secret indiscretions. What a horrifying thought—not just for the rebellious but for the faithful as well! The only way to protect ourselves from this ignominious day is to repent of every single one of our sins.

**Spencer W. Kimball**

My young folks, since the Lord said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), it would be well if all of us would take frequent inventory to see if hidden away under the rugs and in the corners of our lives there might be some vestige of hypocrisy and ugliness or error. Or could there be hidden under the blankets of personal excuse and rationalization some small eccentricities and dishonesties? Are there any cobwebs in ceilings and corners which we think will not be noticed? Are we trying to cover up the small pettinesses and the small gratifications we secretly allow ourselves-rationalizing the while that they are insignificant and inconsequential? Are there areas in our thoughts and actions and attitudes which we would like to hide from those we respect most? Are we certain that all of our innermost secrets are kept confidential? The Lord revealed in 1831, "The rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed." (D&C 1:3.)

Would a frequent house cleaning be in order for all of us? (Elder Spencer W. Kimball, February 25, 1964, *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 1964, p. 21)

**DC 1:4 the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples**

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

This was a God-given mandate, a millennial mandate. It rested upon a handful of Latter-day Saints living in the farming communities of Kirtland and its environs in the 1830s. They had very little money… It was in these distressing times, on Sunday, 4 June 1837, that the Prophet Joseph Smith came to Elder Heber C. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve, while Brother Kimball “was seated in front of the stand, above the sacrament table, on the Melchisedek side of the temple, in Kirtland, and whispering to [him], said, ‘Brother Heber, the Spirit of the Lord has whispered to me: ‘Let my servant Heber go to England and proclaim my Gospel, and open the door of salvation to that nation.’ ” (*History of the Church*, 2:490.)

Imagine, if you will, one man who had very little goods of the world telling another who had practically nothing, having just returned from a mission, that he was to go across the sea to open the work there. Wasn’t there enough to be done at home? less faithful might have asked. They were on the frontier of the nation, and the entire membership of the Church probably did not exceed 15,000 people.

But there was a vision in the hearts of these men. It was a millennial vision that the gospel was to be preached to every nation before the end should come. Some work had been done in Canada. But now they were speaking of crossing the sea to the British Isles. One can understand Heber C. Kimball’s response. Feeling his weakness he said, “O, Lord, I am a man of stammering tongue, and altogether unfit for such a work; how can I go to preach in that land, which is so famed throughout Christendom for learning, knowledge and piety; the nursery of religion; and to a people whose intelligence is proverbial!” (In Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945, p. 104.)

The call of Elder Heber C. Kimball and his associates to cross the sea to Britain was a declaration by the Prophet Joseph of the great destiny of this restored work. As I have read of the condition of the Saints in Ohio and Missouri at that time, and of the smallness of their number, I have marveled at the breadth of their vision. From that time forth there has never been a dimming of that vision. Through the years that followed, regardless of drivings, persecution, poverty, oppression, and every other force the adversary could exercise against them, the work has grown and expanded until today we have 203 missions and are teaching the gospel in 75 sovereign nations and 18 territories, colonies, and possessions. (“Taking the Gospel to Britain: A Declaration of Vision, Faith, Courage, and Truth,” *Ensign*, July 1987, 4–5)

**DC 1:5 they shall go forth and none shall stay them**

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

And so in fulfillment of these promises to the world, our missionaries go forth. No power has been able to stay their hands. It has been tried. Great efforts were made in the very beginning when there was only a handful of missionaries, but the progress of this work could not be stopped. It cannot be stopped now. It must and will go forth that the inhabitants of the earth may have the opportunity of repenting of their sins and receive the remission of their sins and come into the Church and kingdom of God, before these final destructions come upon the wicked, for they have been promised.

There is in the world today distress, turmoil, trouble, commotion, and contention among the nations. There is no peace. There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes to bring it. And his warning is to the world to repent… And these missionaries, mostly young men, untrained in the ways of the world, go forth with this message of salvation and confound the great and the mighty, because they have the truth. They are proclaiming this gospel; the honest and sincere are hearing it and are repenting of their sins and coming into the Church. (*Conference Report, April 1953*, First Day—Morning Meeting 20.)

**DC 1:6 this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants**

**Vaughn J. Featherstone**

The faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ bear their solemn and sacred witness that Jesus Christ has visited the earth in our day, that he has once again established his church on the earth. We know, as did certain devout Jews of every nation on the day of Pentecost, that Jesus who was crucified was both Lord and Christ. Ours is not a belief nor a hope, not a feeling nor a tradition. It is purely and simply a knowledge and a witness that there is only one authorized agency on the face of the earth that has the keys, gifts, and power to function as the Church of Jesus Christ. We have a special witness which we bear to Jew and Gentile alike to come unto Christ. Be not faithless but believing.(*Commitment*[Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 100)

**DC 1:6 my preface unto the book of my commandments**

“Out of the total millions of books written and published, (the Library of Congress alone has 7,304,181 books) the book of Doctrine and Covenants is the only book which the Lord has deemed of sufficient import to write a preface for. The Lord calls it ‘*my* preface’ and it has always been known to the Church as ‘The Lord's Preface.’

“The preface was ‘received by inspiration’ through the Prophet Joseph Smith on the afternoon of November 1, 1831, during the second session of a conference of elders at Kirtland, Ohio, when definite action was taken for the publication of the revelations. These were elders of strong convictions and unwavering testimonies who dared to print *ten* thousand copies only twenty months after the organization of the Church. Two years earlier the first edition of the Book of Mormon had reached only three thousand copies.

Even though some sixty-five revelations or sections were received, recorded, and selected for publication before it was given, the Lord's preface has always appeared as the first chapter or section in the book in its several editions.

The first edition was made up of some of the revelations, which had been selected by a committee, and was published in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833, under the title, *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*. Just as this edition was coming off the press, a mob destroyed the printing plant with most of its contents. Only a few copies of some of the forms of the unfinished book were saved. Two years later, a second edition, containing more revelations than the first edition, was published under the title, *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Christ*.” (“The Lord's Preface”, *Improvement Era, 1946*, Vol. Xlix. March, 1946. No. 3)

**DC 1:7 Wherefore, fear and tremble, O ye people**

**Joseph W. McMurrin**

I feel the truth of this announcement, in my whole being. This is not like what an imposter would write. Think of Joseph Smith who then stood alone, and without any following. Joseph Smith, the youth, in his loneliness and ostracism, and in his lack of training and power of leadership, from a human point of view, telling the inhabitants of the earth to “fear and tremble.” My brethren and sisters, it was not Joseph Smith it was the Lord of heaven, crying to the people to hearken to His voice, and to His proclamation.(*Conference Report, October 1909*, Overflow Meeting. 42 - 43.)

**DC 1:8-9 seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked**

In the parable of the wheat and tares, those harvesting are to “Gather… together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them” (Matt. 13:30). What is the power that binds them? It is the power of the Lord and his servants. It is the power of the priesthood. The same power which can seal us up unto eternal life can seal up the wicked unto the day of wrath (Mark 6:11; DC 75:19-22).

**DC 1:12-13 Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come**

**George Q. Cannon**

The Elders have traversed the islands and the continents warning the people. Our own nation has been warned incessantly, I might say, so much so that we have become odious in the eyes of those who have heard our talk. They have looked upon us as croakers and almost as traitors because we have lifted our voices in warning, telling them that there was evil coming upon the land unless there was repentance.

It is not a pleasant duty for men to discharge, to have to warn their fellowmen of impending evil. It is much more pleasant to predict peace and to say, “You are all right, you are doing just what you ought to do. Keep on.” We are all pleased when we are praised and are told that our course is a proper one; but it has been the unpleasant duty of the Elders of this Church to bear a different testimony. They have been commanded to say to the people, “You are doing wrong; you are going to destruction; and you must turn round and repent or God will scourge you and remove you out of your place.” For saying these things the Latter-day Saints have been mobbed. For the first sixteen years of their organization they were driven from place to place, and in order to escape further trouble, after their leading men had been murdered for bearing this testimony, they had to flee into the desert… (Brian H. Stuy, ed., *Collected Discourses,* 5 vols. [Burbank, Calif., and Woodland Hills, Ut.: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987-1992], vol. 4, July 8, 1894.)

**DC 1:14 they who will not hear the voice of the Lord…shall be cut off from among the people**

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

“This in substance was quoted to the Prophet Joseph Smith by the Angel Moroni on the night of that visitation ninety-nine years ago, when he quoted the 22nd and 23rd verses of the third chapter of Acts, which reads similarly. The angel declared unto Joseph Smith that the time was near at hand when this scripture should be fulfilled, in which it says that they who will not hear the voice of that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Now that applies to the members of the Church as well as to those who are in the world. If we as members will not hearken unto the words of the apostles and the prophets and especially to this prophet referred to, who is Christ, then we shall take our places among the stubble and shall be destroyed by the brightness of his coming. The time is near at hand when the Lord will come in power, and shall cleanse the earth. We must not deceive ourselves.” (*Conference Report, October 1922*, Afternoon Session 75.)

**DC 1:15 they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant**

**Joseph Smith**

We may look at the Christian world and see the apostasy there has been from the apostolic platform; and who can look at this and not exclaim in the language of Isaiah, “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant?”

The plain fact is this, the power of God begins to fall upon the nations, and the light of the latter-day glory begins to break forth through the dark atmosphere of sectarian wickedness, and their iniquity rolls up into view, and the nations of the Gentiles are like the waves of the sea, casting up mire and dirt, or all in commotion, and they are hastily preparing to act the part allotted them, when the Lord rebukes the nations, when He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Lord declared to His servants, some eighteen months since, that He was then withdrawing His Spirit from the earth; and we can see that such is the fact, for not only the churches are dwindling away, but there are no conversions, or but very few: and this is not all, the governments of the earth are thrown into confusion and division; and *Destruction*, to the eye of the spiritual beholder, seems to be written by the finger of an invisible hand, in large capitals, upon almost every thing we behold. (*History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* 7 vols., introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951], 1: 314.)

**DC 1:16 every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god**

**Neal A. Maxwell**

Many of those comfortably situated say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17), while being confused about causality, saying, “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deut. 8:17). It is much today as in ancient Israel when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; Judg. 21:25). In our time, “every man walketh in his own way, and after … the likeness of the world” (D&C 1:16), which might be called everyman ethical relativism—and we are swamped by it in our time.

Shorn of spiritual memory, people thus “do their own thing,” resulting in an uninspired, unanchored individualism that rejects the need for spiritual submissiveness, which, after all, is one of the great purposes of life’s trek…Ignorant of the plan of salvation, many simply do not know what the journey of life is all about. (“The Richness of the Restoration,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1998, 9)

**Neal A. Maxwell**

Ours is a day when “every man walketh in his own way” (D&C 1:16). Thus there is also a special need to consider how dangerous pleasing oneself can be; it may be the most dangerous form of preening, lulling us into the fatal illusion one commentator aptly described:

“For if God is a socially conscious political being whose views invariably correspond to our own prejudices on every essential point of doctrine, he demands of us no more than our politics require. Besides, if God is finite, progressive, and Pure Love, we may as well skip church next Sunday and go to the movies. For if we have nothing to fear from this all-loving, all-forbearing, all-forgiving God, how would our worship of him constitute more than self-congratulation for our own moral standards? As an atheist, *I like this God. It is good to see him every morning while I am shaving*” (Eugene D. Genovese, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” *The New Republic*, 11 May 1992, p. 38; emphasis added).

Popularity detached from principle requires playing ever eagerly to the world’s gallery. One day, however, that currently popular place will be strangely empty, its occupants having departed to become part of that glorious but sober scene, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ! (“Popularity and Principle,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 15)

**DC 1:18 And also gave commandments to others**

“It is worthy of observation at this point to indicate that the ‘others’ in verse 18, unto whom the Lord ‘gave commandments’ are those persons who were to assist the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dispensation. Many of these had already been called and received commandments by revelation. Such men as Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, and many others make up the number.” (Roy W. Doxey, *The Doctrine and Covenants Speaks* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964], 1: 25.)

**DC 1:19 The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones**

**Joseph W. McMurrin**

I would like to call the attention of this congregation to the fact that in this very first revelation in the book of D&C the Lord has said that the weak things of the earth should be chosen to accomplish this marvelous work to which reference has been made. It may seem a little ridiculous in the eyes of those who do not believe that the Lord God of heaven has placed his hand to bring to pass in these latter times that marvelous work which has been sung about by all the prophets, that this revelation should say, “Fear and tremble, O ye inhabitants of the earth,” because of the weakness of the men and women who are called to represent the work of God in the preaching of the Gospel.

In my mind's eye I see standing in a little river, just fifty years ago this year, one of those weak missionary boys who had been appointed by his traveling companion to administer the ordinance of baptism to one who had been convinced of the truth. As he stood there in the river and thought of lifting his hand to make the declaration, “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” how weak that poor instrument was; and in his soul he cried out to God, “Father, if there be aught wrong in this act that I am about to perform, forgive thy servant, who believes that he is possessed of divine authority.”

There could not be a weaker instrument, it seems to me, on the face of the whole earth, and that humble and frightened instrument was Joseph W. McMurrin.(*Conference Report, April 1931*, Afternoon Meeting 125.)

**Spencer W. Kimball**

In these long weeks since July 8 [1943, the date Spencer W. Kimball was called to be an apostle] I can tell you that I have been overwhelmed and have felt that I was unable to carry on this great work; that I was unworthy; that I was incapable because of my weaknesses and my limitations. I have felt many times that I was up against a blank wall. And in that interim I have been out in the desert and in high mountains alone, apart, and have poured out my soul to God. I have taken courage from one or two scriptures that constantly came to my mind and of which people continued to remind me. One was from Paul, and as I felt so foolish, small, and weak, I remembered that he said: “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1 Corinthians 1:25-27, 29.)

When my feeling of incompetence wholly overwhelmed me, I remember the words of Nephi when he said: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” (1 Nephi 3:7.) I want to tell you that I lean heavily on these promises, that the Lord will strengthen and give me growth and fit and qualify me for this great work. (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], xvii.)

**DC 1:20 Four Reasons for the Restoration**

Students of the Apostasy can make their own list of reasons why a restoration was necessary. However, isn’t it more interesting to know why the Lord wanted one? What were his reasons for unfolding this last dispensation? The Lord’s reasons are listed as follows:

1. that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;
2. That faith also might increase in the earth;
3. That mine everlasting covenant might be established;
4. That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

**DC 1:20 that every man might speak in the name of God**

   And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto *all those* who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—

   And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

   And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

   Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants. (DC 68:2-4, italics added)

“It is an awesome responsibility. We must seek to think and speak and act as though we were the One whose blessed name we bear, so that our words and acts may become his words and acts.” (Robert L. Millet, “Honoring His Holy Name,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1994, 8)

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

God has blessed us, above all other people who have gone before us, with light and knowledge, with truth and understanding. We are a royal priesthood. Every worthy man in this Church is eligible to receive the priesthood of God, but his life must be in harmony with the principles of the gospel. The Lord has said that one of His purposes in restoring the gospel was so that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world. We are, in very deed, a royal priesthood. We do not receive the priesthood on the basis of wealth or standing in the community. We receive it on the basis of personal worthiness, and every man is a potential priesthood holder. If there is any man here tonight who does not hold the priesthood of God, let him from this day forward put his life in order, live up to the high standards of the gospel, and make himself worthy to receive His royal priesthood, to act in the name of God, to speak in His holy name in accomplishing His great and singular purposes.(*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 474 - 475.)

**Russell M. Nelson**

Remarkable! He chose to honor us with His priesthood. So we honor Him by honoring His priesthood—both its power and those who bear it. By so doing, men, women, and children throughout the world will be blessed. Honoring the priesthood fosters respect, respect promotes reverence, and reverence invites revelation. (“Honoring the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 38)

**DC 1:24 commandments…were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language**

“Although the elders who attended this conference testified that the revelations were true, some of them recommended that the language of certain revelations be improved prior to their publication.” (Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* [Salt Lake City: Desert Book Co., 1983], 91.)

“Those assembled quickly demonstrated that they had minds of their own, and in essence they confronted the twenty-five year old prophet with the challenge: ‘How do we know that the revelations are of God? The language sounds so very much like the language of Joseph Smith.’

“Here is an excellent opportunity to view historically another incident that gives insight to what Joseph Smith was like. He did not appear to be offended. He took the question in stride. I feel he was honestly perplexed. He knew the revelations were from God. I have wondered if he truly ever thought of why they sounded as they sounded. He did not become defensive. He did not rebuke them for questioning a prophet of God. But he very simply suggested an approach to the problem which he had utilized numerous times before. In essence his reply to the question was a candid ‘I don't know’ followed by the words, ‘Let's ask the Lord.’ They knelt with him and he petitioned God for the answer. The answer was received in an effective, forceful, but most unpretentious way. No angel appeared; no audible voice was heard. The Prophet simply said to his scribe, ‘Please record the following.’ And then, speaking in measured sentences slow enough for a man to record the revelation in longhand, Joseph dictated the revelation as given to him by the Lord. But the answer sought is part of a comprehensive revelation of both warning and hope to the whole earth—a revelation which was to be known as the preface to the Book of Commandments and today is Section One of the Doctrine and Covenants. Verses 24-27 are the verses that directly answer the question Joseph asked of God:

   Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.

   And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known;

   And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

   And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent. . . . (D&C 1:24-27)

“One would think that this amazing demonstration of the receiving of such a reasonable and satisfying answer would have silenced his questioners. But it did not, at least not all. William E. McLellan had had more formal education than any of the others. He was an impressive man. He continued to question Joseph. Again the Prophet sought the help of God. The revelation he received is a classic example of the principle stated by the Lord in the first revelation given that day to his servant. The Lord is interested in communicating with his children so they can understand and, if necessary, change their ways. The second revelation of the day (DC 67) is also in the Doctrine and Covenants and says rather simply:

   Your eyes have been upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and his language you have known; and his imperfections you have known; and you have sought in your hearts knowledge that you might express beyond his language; this you also know.

   Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you;

   Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true;

   But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true. (D&C 67:5-8)

“William E. McLellan was selected as being, by the standards of the world, the wisest in the group, and his assignment was to write a revelation that would sound as good and make a contribution equal to the ‘least’ revelation presented by Joseph Smith. Brother McLellan was a complete failure; he could not write anything that sounded like a revelation. The next day he manifested an attitude of meekness as he offered his sustaining vote and his apologies to the youthful prophet. Now, with the approval of the body of the priesthood, plans were quickly made and put into action for the publication of the new book of scripture.” (Leon R. Hartshorn, *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration,* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970], 76-77.)

**DC 1:30 to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness**

**David B. Haight**

As part of [D&C 1], the Lord explained how He had given Joseph Smith the power, inspiration, and direction from heaven to translate the Book of Mormon and to bring the Church “forth out of obscurity and out of darkness” (see D&C 1:29–30).

Just reflect in your minds today what is happening with President Hinckley as he travels the world and as he goes out meeting with people. When we talk about bringing the Church out of obscurity and out of darkness, just think what he is doing out in the world with the press, the media, with people of all types. Think of how they have an opportunity to see God’s prophet and to hear him testify and to explain what has taken place. Many influential newspapers and magazines and other publications have had many favorable stories about the Church. (“Live the Commandments,”*Ensign*, May 1998, 8)

**Henry B. Eyring**

Even the world can see the emergence of a power beyond what might have been reasonably predicted. Yet few seem to recognize that the power stems not from organization or programs or wealth. Rather, it comes from individual hearts changed by faith to keep the commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (“Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 9)

**DC 1:30 the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth**

**Boyd K. Packer**

This doctrine often generates resistance and repels the casual investigator. Some have said, “We want nothing to do with anyone who makes so presumptuous a claim as that.”

The early Latter-day Saints were bitterly persecuted for holding to this doctrine. They were the butt of many clever stories. We, of course, are not free from that today. Should we not then make one accommodation and set this doctrine aside? …Some have recommended that we confine ourselves strictly to evidences of the gospel: happy family life, and temperate living, and so on. Could we not use the words *better* or *best*? The word *only* really isn’t the most appealing way to begin a discussion of the gospel.

If we thought only in terms of diplomacy or popularity, surely we should change our course. But we must hold tightly to it even though some turn away. (“The Only True Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 80-81)

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

That is not my statement. That is the statement of the Lord himself. A minister once said to me, “Aren’t you very arrogant to make a statement concerning such magnitude as that?” I said, “I didn’t say it. The Lord said it, and because He said it, I believe it is true.” (“Inspirational Thoughts,”*Ensign*, July 1998, 4)

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

This is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” according to the word of revelation. Here lies the truth. Here lies the priesthood. Hold to the Church. Do not ever lose sight of the fact that the Church must ever remain preeminent in your lives if you are going to be happy as the years pass. Never let yourselves be found in the position of fighting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You cling to it and be faithful to it. You uphold and sustain it. You teach its doctrine and live by it. And I do not hesitate to say that your lives will be the richer and the happier because of that. You cannot find happiness fighting the work of God. Those who have done so have gone down to a dismal end. (“Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 72–73)

**DC 1:31 I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance**

“This seems a harsh scripture, for it clearly states that God cannot tolerate sin or sinfulness in any degree. He can't wink at it, or ignore it, or turn and look the other way. He won't sweep it under the rug or say, ‘Well, it's just a little sin. It'll be all right.’ God's standard, the celestial standard, is absolute, and it allows no exceptions. There is no wiggle room.

“Many people seem to have the idea that the Judgment will somehow involve weighing or balancing, with their good deeds on one side of the scales and their bad deeds on the other. If their good deeds outweigh their bad, or if their hearts are basically good and outweigh their sins, then they can be admitted into the presence of God. This notion is false.

“As Doctrine and Covenants 1:31 and other scriptures illustrate, God cannot, will not, allow moral or ethical imperfection in any degree whatsoever to dwell in his presence. He cannot tolerate sin ‘with the *least* degree of *allowance*.’ It is not a question of whether our good deeds outweigh our sins. If there is even one sin on our record, we are finished. The celestial standard is complete innocence, pure and simple, and nothing less than complete innocence will be tolerated in the kingdom of God.

“…the solution to the Great Dilemma, to the alienation of imperfect humans from their perfect God, is precisely what all the scriptures bear witness of in one way or another. And that solution is called the atonement of Jesus Christ.” (Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992], 1-7.)

**Spencer W. Kimball**

**Elder Joseph Fielding Smith** made this comment: “No unrepentant person who remains in his sins will ever enter into the glories of the celestial kingdom.” (*Improvement Era*, July 1955, p. 542.) This statement is consistent with all we read in the scriptures on the subject, which is perhaps summed up in Alma’s words: “There can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain.” (Alma 5:21.) (“God Will Forgive,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1982, 5)

**M. Russell Ballard**

You must be honest with yourself and remain true to the covenants you have made with God. Do not fall into the trap of thinking you can sin a little and it will not matter. Remember, “the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.” (D&C 1:31.) Some young men and women in the Church talk openly about sexual transgression. They seem to forget that the Lord forbids all sexual relations before marriage, including petting, sex perversion of any kind, or preoccupation with sex in thought, speech, or action. Some youth foolishly rationalize that it is “no big deal” to sin now because they can always repent later when they want to go to the temple or on a mission. Anyone who does that is breaking promises made to God both in the premortal life and in the waters of baptism. The idea of sinning a little is self-deception. Sin is sin! Sin weakens you spiritually, and it always places the sinner at eternal risk. Choosing to sin, even with the intent to repent, is simply turning away from God and violating covenants. (“Keeping Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 7)

**DC 1:32 he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven**

**Spencer W. Kimball**

What a farce it would be to call people to repentance if there were no forgiveness, and what a waste of the life of Christ if it failed to bring the opportunity for salvation and exaltation!

Sometimes a guilt consciousness overpowers a person with such a heaviness that when a repentant one looks back and sees the ugliness, the loathsomeness of the transgression, he is almost overwhelmed and wonders, “Can the Lord ever forgive me? Can I ever forgive myself?” But when one reaches the depths of despondency and feels the hopelessness of his position, and when he cries out to God for mercy in helplessness but in faith, there comes a still, small, but penetrating voice whispering to his soul, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

The image of a loving, forgiving God comes through clearly to those who read and understand the scriptures. Since he is our Father, he naturally desires to raise us up, not to push us down, to help us live, not to bring about our spiritual death. (“God Will Forgive,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1982, 4)

**Neal A. Maxwell**

Given the divine sorrow each of us has caused our God and our Savior, what a divine comfort to know that “he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42). No more reassuring and important words could be said to any of us.

What ineffable love! What stunning patience! How wrenching it would otherwise be to be resurrected and forever wincing over having displeased Him. Oh, the marvel of His divine mercy and His plan of happiness! (“Becoming a Disciple,” *Ensign*, June 1996, 17–18)

**DC 1:33 he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received**

Sister Lorraine Karren related an interesting story which underscores this principle. In 1943, it was not uncommon for apostles to speak at the ward level upon invitation. Accordingly, Elder Richard R. Lyman, then an apostle, was invited to speak at a youth fireside in sister Karren’s ward. After his remarks, the youth and their leaders began asking him doctrinal questions, but Elder Lyman couldn’t answer their questions. He replied that they should request Elder Joseph Fielding Smith for their next fireside and that he would answer all of their questions.

The youth and their leaders were left in wonder and amazement that this apostle could not answer any questions. The next month Elder Joseph Fielding Smith spoke to the same youth group. When the group asked him the same questions, he answered them all without the least difficulty or hesitation.

It was only a few weeks later (Nov. 12, 1943), when it was announced that Elder Richard R. Lyman had been excommunicated for transgressing the law of chastity. Then it became clear why this apostle was not able to answer any gospel questions. His mind had become darkened. The light that had once filled his soul had been taken from him. The Spirit he had once enjoyed in abundance had left him in utter darkness—taking “even the light which he” had once received. (personal communication)

**DC 1:37 Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful**

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

Moreover, it is the duty of the members of this Church to make themselves familiar with the revelations as they have been given, and with the commandments as they have been taught in these revelations, or have been presented in them and given to the people, that we might know the truth which makes us free. And if we will study them, if we will put them into practice, if we will keep the commandments of the Lord, we will know the truth and there shall be no weapon formed against us that shall prosper. There shall be no false doctrines, no teaching of men that will deceive us. There are many cults and many false faiths, there are many strange ideas in the world, but if we will search these revelations then we will be fortified against errors and we will be made strong. False teachings will have no effect upon us for we will know that truth which makes us free. (*Conference Report, October 1931*, First Day—Morning Meeting 16.)

**Heber J. Grant**

I wish that I possessed the power to impress upon the hearts and the minds of the Latter-day Saints the necessity of becoming familiar with the commandments contained in the D&C, and not only becoming familiar with them, but that I might have the power to impress upon their hearts and souls a determination to keep those commandments, to live them in very deed and in their every-day lives.(*Conference Report, October 1928*, 7.)

**DC 1:38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself**

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

When critics mock, when enemies deride, when cynics belittle this work, there comes into my mind this tremendous statement of the Almighty. The Lord does not excuse Himself for what He has said or done. Every promise shall be kept, every prophecy fulfilled, “and the truth abideth forever and ever.” (“The Order and Will of God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1989, 4)

**DC 1:38 whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same**

**John E. Fowler**

Do the members of the Church truly understand the importance of the messages spoken from this pulpit in general conference sessions and other special meetings held in the Tabernacle? Do they understand their responsibility to “hear the voice of the Lord” through the voice of his servants? (D&C 1:14.) For certainly, “whether by [the Lord’s] voice or by the voice of [his] servants, it is the same.” (D&C 1:38.)

Do our members understand that the inspired counsel and direction they receive from the leaders of the Church come as a voice of warning from a loving Heavenly Father who knows the various calamities that “should come upon the inhabitants of the earth”? (“Becoming Wise unto Salvation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 78)

**James E. Faust**

I do not believe members of this Church can be in full harmony with the Savior without sustaining His living prophet on the earth, the President of the Church. If we do not sustain the living prophet, whoever he may be, we die spiritually. Ironically, some have died spiritually by exclusively following prophets who have long been dead. Others equivocate in their support of living prophets, trying to lift themselves up by putting down the living prophets, however subtly.

In our lifetime we have been favored with ongoing communication from the heavens, which have been open to the prophets of our time…This process of revelation comes to the Church very frequently. President Wilford Woodruff stated, “This power is in the bosom of Almighty God, and he imparts it to his servants the prophets as they stand in need of it day by day to build up Zion” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 56). This is necessary for the Church to fulfill its mission. Without it, we would fail. (“Continuing Revelation,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1996, 5)

**Joseph B. Wirthlin**

**Elder Bruce R. McConkie** defined living water as “the words of eternal life, the message of salvation, the truths about God and his kingdom; it is the doctrines of the gospel.” He went on to explain, “Where there are prophets of God, there will be found rivers of living water, wells filled with eternal truths, springs bubbling forth their life-giving draughts that save from spiritual death.”

The Lord has declared that “whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.” We are blessed to live in a day when prophets and Apostles live on the earth. Through them we are refreshed continually by an abundant stream of eternal truth that, if obeyed, brings the living water of the Lord into our lives. Echoing those Samaritans who listened to the Savior at Jacob’s well, we, too, can say with faith and with firm conviction, “We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” (“Living Water to Quench Spiritual Thirst,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 19)