DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS COMMENTARIES

Commentaries on the Doctrine and Covenants follow the pattern of many biblical commentaries, supplying the historical context, that is, the time, circumstances, and situation of the revelations. In the most recent (1981) edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, headnotes for each section have been added or enlarged, with a brief synopsis of the historical setting. Additional notes and explanations are provided by the various separately published commentaries discussed here. Commentaries written by members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are given special consideration. Others are recommended as helps to the membership of the Church to provide historical insight to their study of the scriptures.

An early (1916) and still useful one-volume commentary was written by Hyrum M. Smith, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Janne M. Sjodahl. Doctrine and Covenants Commentary contains the text of the Doctrine and Covenants and gives historical background and commentary for each section. It is extensively footnoted with exegetical notes. The volume was later supplemented and expanded under the direction of Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve.

The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants (1969, edited by G. Homer Durham) is a published version of a series of lectures delivered at the University of Southern California by John A. Widtsoe, also of the Quorum of the Twelve. The author's scientific background is apparent in his references to nineteenth- and twentieth-century scientific theory.

T. Edgar Lyon, former director of the Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, published his Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price in 1948. He treats the work as a "connected message" and emphasizes the functional aspects of many topics, including priesthood, missionary work, Zion, gathering, ordinances, Christian teachings, economics, millennium, unique revelations, and literary value.

From 1947 through 1949 the Church published a series of manuals titled Church History and Modern Revelation, written by Joseph Fielding Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve. It was a study course for the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums of the Church. These volumes integrated each section of the Doctrine and Covenants with the life and times of the Prophet Joseph Smith. A more concise attempt at this approach was that of E. Cecil McGavin in a volume titled The Historical Background of the Doctrine and Covenants, published in 1949.

Sidney B. Sperry, longtime professor of Hebrew and ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, published A Doctrine and Covenants Compendium in 1960, which considered linguistic and doctrinal issues in depth.

A four-volume work titled The Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants (1963), by Roy W. Doxey, former dean of the College of Religious Instruction at Brigham Young University, includes statements of General Authorities on each section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It demonstrates applications of Doctrine and Covenants texts in homiletic settings.

A historical account is The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith by Lyndon W. Cook (1981), providing a compilation of background facts relevant to each section. Documented biographical profiles of the personalities mentioned in the text are included.

A commentary titled The Edwards Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants was written by F. Henry Edwards of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and published in 1946. This book provides a brief historical overview for each section and commentary on the major themes of the sections, as these relate and apply to the problems of that church.

A critical analysis of the earliest texts and publication of the Doctrine and Covenants is Robert J. Woodford's The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants, a Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1974. Other studies

H. DEAN GARRETT

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS EDITIONS

The Doctrine and Covenants contains revelations from God as given to the Prophet Joseph Smith and later Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and includes other inspired writings and doctrinal declarations accepted as scripture by the Latter-day Saints. The first edition appeared in 1835. Later editions incorporated additional revelations and reference aids. The Doctrine and Covenants has been translated into many languages, though the English edition is the official version.

By the fall of 1831, Joseph Smith had recorded seventy or more revelations, most of which contained instructions to Church members. In a special conference held November 1, 1831, in Hiram, Ohio, the Church decided to publish a selection of these revelations, or “commandments.” A new revelation was received on that occasion as “my preface unto the book of my commandments,” from which the title of the 1833 compilation, the Book of Commandments, may have been taken (D&C 1:6). This publication was never completed; a mob destroyed the Independence, Missouri, press and all but about a hundred unfinished copies in July 1833. These few copies of the Book of Commandments were circulated within the Church and were often called the “Book of Covenants,” in reference to the lead section, which had circulated widely in handwritten versions as “The Articles and Covenants of the Church.” Received the day the Church was organized, this revelation is now section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

THE 1835 EDITION. Shortly after the unsuccessful 1833 effort to print the Book of Commandments was stopped, plans were made to publish the revelations in Kirtland, Ohio. Renamed the *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, the book was presented to, and accepted by, the members of the Church in an August 1835 conference as the word of God. The change in name to Doctrine and Covenants reflected a change in content. Unlike the Book of Commandments, which contained revelations only, the Doctrine and Covenants was divided into two parts. The new first part consisted of seven theological presentations, now known as the *Lectures on Faith* but then titled “On the Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints.” The part including the revelations published previously, the original preface, and a number of new revelations not in the 1833 compilation, were titled “Part Second, Covenants and Commandments.” The title of the Doctrine and Covenants reflects the subtitles of these two parts.

In preparing the 1835 edition, Joseph Smith and a committee appointed to the task on September 24, 1834 (*HC* 2:165, 243–44) edited the revelations that had formerly appeared in the Book of Commandments. They corrected scribal and printing errors and occasionally clarified the text. They added explanations of the duties of officers that were new in the Church organization since the earlier revelations were received. They also combined some of the revelations to simplify publication and corrected grammatical problems.

The 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants contained 103 sections, though two sections were inadvertently numbered 66, so that the last one’s number was printed 102. Sections 1–100 were revelations to Joseph Smith. Section 101 prescribed practices for marriage. Section 102 stated the appropriate relationship of the Church to governments (see Politics: Political Teachings). These two sections were not revelations but were included as expressions of belief of the Church at that time. Oliver Cowdery (and possibly W. W. Phelps) wrote them, probably in response to critics of the doctrines and activities of the Church. Although Joseph Smith subsequently endorsed the statement on government, there is evidence that he opposed including the statement on marriage from the beginning, and it was eventually removed (see Cook, pp. 348–49, n. 11).

THE 1844 NAUVOO EDITION. By 1840 the Church needed a new edition of the Doctrine and