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Joshua Wheatley
Brigham Young University

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JOSHUA WHEATLEY

Joshua Wheatley is an undergraduate senior at Brigham Young University, majoring in History and minoring in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies. He hopes to pursue Religious Studies in a graduate school in the near future, and, in addition to his interest in Mormon Studies, is currently researching the

mythic importance of Jerusalem in Islam. He lived for two years as a service volunteer and missionary in Mongolia, where he picked up the Mongolian language and the ability to drink a bowl of fermented horse milk in under a minute. He is optimistic that there is room for those in the academy who, like himself, both believe and take a critical approach to their research. He feels that the growing amount of objective research being produced by such “believing scholars” will be of immense benefit to both scholars and believers of Mormonism.

Joshua Wheatley

THE PROPHET-EDITOR: JOSEPH SMITH'S REVISIONS TO TWO REVELATIONS

Fifteen years of extensive, written revelations charted Joseph Smith and his associates' course as they founded what became known as the religion of Mormonism. Faith in the revelations, not merely Smith's dynamic personality and prophecies, fed the rapid growth and nearly constant change of the fledgling Church of Latter-day Saints (soon to be renamed by one such revelation). The explanation for such a phenomenon was direct revelation from God, according to Smith and those who believed him. Skeptical neighbors, on the other hand, suspected that the young prophet's own needs and desires had everything to do with his supposedly divine revelations. From the *Book of Mormon* in 1829 to the treatise on plural marriage in the early 1840s, Joseph Smith's revelations were the inspiration and guiding force of the Church; for Mormons today, they are standard scripture and distinctive symbols of the faith.¹

While considering the *Book of Mormon* to be a volume of scripture on its own, Mormons also hold equally sacred a collection of revelations known as the *Doctrine and Covenants*. The collection numbers over one hundred revelations,

1. In acknowledgement of Dr. Grant Underwood, Professor of History at Brigham Young University, who introduced me to topic of "revelation-revision" and Joseph Smith, I would be remiss not to recognize his hours of guidance and advice, which, when combined with his trust to allow me to come to my own conclusions, were instrumental in my research process.

all of them from Smith (with the exception of three late additions from later successor-prophets). These revelations were received as early as 1828, during the revealing of the *Book of Mormon*, and continued up until shortly before Smith's assassination in 1844. They were markedly different in that they were considered instructions to a modern prophet, Smith, rather than miraculous translations of an ancient text. As such, they were almost always related to the Church's current concerns, questions and controversies, both theological and material.

Of course, the use of historical context is fruitful in the study of any religion, but Smith's revelations offer particularly rich opportunities for study, for several reasons. First, they are recent and well-documented, as is the surrounding church history. Even better, the revelator himself (and his close associates) often provided context by recording, in the preface to the revelation or elsewhere, the reason a revelation was given; it was sometimes a question Smith had asked the Lord, or it might merely mention problems or controversies that the Church faced at the time when the revelation came. Finally and most pertinent to this paper, there is an abundance of documented evidence that Smith edited the substance, style and grammar of the revelations, presumably in response to changing circumstances and needs of the Church. These revisions have attracted the attention of various scholars of Mormonism but have never been the subject of a comprehensive, systematic study. The revisions must form an integral part in textual criticism of Joseph Smith's revisions.

Moreover, the revisions should be of enormous interest and use to the larger realm of religious studies; in what other revelation are the early stages of the formative process of scripture so readily accessible? The immediately-dictated-in-writing nature of Smith's revelations make them of a different sort than revelations that were finally written down in the books of the Bible, the suras of the *Qur'an*, or the Buddhist sutras, all of which were initially revealed and remembered orally. While the "proto-scripture" that fell from the lips of the founders of most religions is shrouded in relative mystery, Smith began to leave a paper trail almost as soon as he had a revelation. Even more uniquely and compellingly, the prophet left behind clear evidence that on two occasions

he systematically revised his revelations in preparation for publishing them. It is a rare opportunity to pore over “rough-draft revelation,” an opportunity that scholars of religious studies will not want to miss. This paper, by examining all of the revisions to two revelations, is a prospectus of sorts, suggesting how this unusual and distinguishing aspect of Joseph Smith’s revelations could be comprehensively documented and analyzed.

On November 8, 1831, a conference of elders, held in Far West, decided that Joseph Smith should “correct those errors or mistakes which [he] may discover by the holy Spirit while reviewing the revelations & commandments & also the fulness of the scriptures.”² Manuscript copies and the two earliest printed versions of the revelations, when compared, show that the process of revision went on for several years, until the printing of the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1835. Comparison of early versions also produces concrete proof that the editing process went beyond the mere correction of errors made by scribes. There is evidence of systematic changes that clarified or dignified wordings and modernized usage of pronouns. In addition to systematic proofreading, Smith made more substantive changes; some added significant information, while others more subtly changed a passage’s meaning. This introductory foray into text criticism of the revelations will illustrate the importance of these revisions and the possibilities for study that they offer.

The question, then, is how these revisions should be understood. Possibly, the above-cited official minutes conceal as much as they describe. Perhaps the council’s real concerns were hinted at in another of Smith’s revelations: “you have sought in your hearts that you might express beyond his [Smith’s] language.”³ Equally possible, Smith may have acted on his own; having decided to correct mistakes ostensibly made by scribes, he may have felt that he (or perhaps other, better-educated associates) should improve the language as well. In the end, Smith went beyond fixing scribal errors or elevating language; he

2. *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983); 29.

3. *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), 67:5.

was no more hesitant to revise the substance than the style. His treatment of his own revealed texts paralleled that of the Bible, which in 1830 he had begun to “translate,” his term for a process of revision that was based on receipt of revelation rather than knowledge of the original languages. This paper begins to make sense of the large number of revisions by classifying them by purpose into several categories, such as “additions,” “clarifications,” and “grammar and usage.” While Smith revised almost every revelation, two seminal revelations received his particular attention: the Articles and Covenants of the Church (hereafter referred to as the Articles), and the Law (these two revelations are known as Sections 20 and 42, respectively, in the current edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*).



A copy of a drawing of Joseph Smith, Jr. ca. 1880–1920.
(Courtesy The George Edward Andersen Collection of Brigham Young University.)

My purpose is twofold: first, to better document and classify the many manifestations of revelatory revisions that exist in extant early texts of the Articles and the Law, and second, to illuminate Joseph Smith’s revision process. His revisions are evidence for the theory that he saw himself as a revelator-reviser; in revising, his approach does not appear to be much different than the read-and-revise process he used in making his “new translation” of the Bible.

My focus is on the revision process that apparently occurred as a result of the aforementioned conference of elders. Although Smith made quite a few revisions at some time between November 1831 and the 1833 publication of the *Book of Commandments*, a much more extensive revision period occurred at some time in 1835, before the publication of the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* in that year. As my purpose is to reconstruct the revision process,

insights from research on both periods of revision are relevant; to avoid confusion, the dates of revisions will be carefully differentiated.

While classifying revisions into categories involves an element of subjectivity, this will be mitigated by clear definitions of categories. During both periods of revision, Smith (likely with the assistance of others) proofread the texts; in addition, he made substantial changes to meaning. Where proofreading revisions are concerned, I define significant revision to include any change to the wording but not changes in spelling or punctuation. As Grant Underwood has demonstrated in his analysis of the Law, some revisions changed the original meaning in order to improve it, while others improved the way the original meaning was communicated without changing that meaning.⁴ I have further subdivided these two categories of revision. Revisions that changed the original meaning did so in one of three ways: they elaborated on existing ideas or added new, related ones; or, they updated ideas or terms that were superseded by later revelations or official decisions; or, they removed or changed text that had provoked or was feared would provoke the hostility of outsiders and/or potential converts. On the other hand, revisions that retained the original meaning but improved the way that meaning was communicated may be divided into three additional categories: first, some revisions attempted to clarify the original meaning; second, other revisions restated the original meaning in an improved sentence structure; finally, some revisions corrected or modernized the grammar. I will discuss all six categories in detail below.

Only a small percentage of the revisions can be classified as elaborations. In the Articles and the Law, such elaborations accounted for less than six percent of the total words that were added to or deleted from the revelation, but they caused several significant changes in meaning. Since the original manuscripts of the Articles or the Law are not known to exist, it is possible that early on, a scribe could have left out some phrases that were then added again by Smith as

4. Grant Underwood, "The Laws of the Church of Christ (D&C 42): A Textual and Historical Analysis," *Thirty-Seventh Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 109-137; 113.

he revised the text. However, most elaborations to both revelations occurred in 1835, four or five years after they were first recorded. While editing these two revelations, it is inconceivable that twelve phrases – totaling 104 words – could have been omitted by early scribes and overlooked by Smith during his first round of editing in late 1831 or 1832 (when he made many other changes to both revelations), but then rediscovered in 1835. These elaborations, then, must be considered new material that was not contained in the original record of the revelation. It appears as if re-reading the text prompted Smith to add more information to a given idea. As an example of an elaboration, let us look in the *Book of Commandments*, the beginning of the Articles related that he “truly repented” of his sins. When the *Doctrine and Covenants* was first published in 1835, Smith provided an elaboration of his experience; in addition to repenting, he added that he “humbled himself, sincerely, through faith” before he was visited by the angel Moroni.⁵ Perhaps Smith, as he read, remembered his vision and aftermath, and decided to characterize his attitude more clearly.

Since the Articles and Covenants and the Law contained important passages regarding Church policy, Smith made some revisions in order to reflect changes in policy that had occurred as a result of continuing revelation. After it came with a later revelation, Smith deemed the law of common consent important enough to merit inclusion in the Articles and Covenants.⁶ In connection with this and other revisions, it is worth remembering that the Articles in particular served as a working handbook of instructions for the elders. For example, after the receipt of the Law, which included instructions for the bishopric, the needs of and demands on the bishopric continued to evolve. Church leaders needed further instructions on how the bishop’s counselors should be supported, and also on the feasibility of traveling elders’ reliance on member families for support. Smith’s update of the relevant passage in the Law reflected

5. Compare *Book of Commandments* 24:7 with *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835) Section II and *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:6.

6. Compare *Book of Commandments* 24:44-45 with *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835) Section II verses 15-17 and *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:64-66.

how policy was adapted to rapidly changing circumstances.⁷ Such revisions differed from elaborations in that Smith used them to address a specific need to bring a revelation up to date with changes in the leadership structure or policies of the Church.

To counteract what was often acute hostility, Smith apparently felt that a few changes were necessary to avoid provoking embarrassing accusations or legal difficulties. In the Law, consecration of properties was enjoined; inevitably, some of those who had agreed to consecrate properties later reneged on their promise and sued for their money. In the course of subsequent lawsuits, the wording of this foundational document of consecration was found legally tenuous; charitable donations to the poor were sacrosanct and non-refundable, but the legality of communal holding of property for use in group projects was highly questionable. Early manuscripts of the Law did specify that consecration is to benefit the poor.⁸ But they also indicated that the money would also support other Church activities. In 1835, likely with an eye towards future efforts at consecration, Smith revised the revelation so that every part of the law of consecration was explicitly explained as being dedicated to the benefit of the poor; in all, 110 words were added to the Law, accounting for 14 percent of all the words deleted from or added to the revelation. Such revisions were not merely meant to elaborate, nor did they bring the revelation up to date; rather, these revisions represented an effort to present a revelation in a way that was more palatable. In essence, these presentational revisions were an early form of “public relations.”

Many revisions expressed more clearly concepts that Smith must have decided were in some way unclear in the earlier wording. Some clarifications were made to ensure that the revelation was correctly understood and applied. One such clarifying revision, also made in the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, was the systematic replacement of “he” with “he or she” in the Law. “He,” when used as a general term in several revelations, did mean all people of both sexes. However, in the part of the Law that deals with adultery, this revi-

7. Compare *Book of Commandments* 44:54 with *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835) Section XIII verse 19 and *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:70-73.

8. *Book of Commandments* 44:28-29.

sion was deemed needful to clarify an important concept; penalties for adultery were to be applied equally to men and women. For some reason, it was felt that in this passage on marital matters merited the mention of both genders; perhaps the fear was that a well-meaning church member could misinterpret the revelation as setting a standard for men, regarding adultery, that was different than the standard for women. In all, clarifications entailed the addition or deletion of 133 words, or 17 percent, of all revisions in the Articles and Covenants; in the Law, similar revisions entailed the addition or deletion of 184 words, or 18 percent, of all revisions to that revelation. Clarifications of this kind reflect the extent to which early Church members referred to a revelation on “the Law” as a practical guide for how to carry out Church policy. For example, Hyrum Smith recorded in his journal a visit to a newly baptized, divorced member, in which he questioned the new member as to his marital status. He described the interview using the language of the Law’s instructions regarding divorcees almost word-for-word.⁹ Such revisions differed from previously explained categories in that they did not affect the meaning of the revelation; rather, they clarified revelations that members at times depended on for practical guidance.

In most cases, however, Smith used clarifying revisions in order to provide clearer doctrinal instruction. For example, the Articles and Covenants declared that men would “receive” the restored gospel “either to faith and righteousness, or to the hardness of heart in unbelief, to their own condemnation.”¹⁰ In 1835, Smith changed “receive” to the more precise “come to a knowledge of.” Further, “either to faith and righteousness” became “and those who receive it in faith and work righteousness.” In this passage, the word “receive” was originally used in the sense of receiving a summons, but apparently because “receive” may also have connoted acceptance of truth, Smith decided to clarify. In addition, this revision clarified that for one to receive the restored gospel in righteousness, one had to “work righteousness.” Finally, “or to the hardness of heart in unbelief” became “but those who harden their hearts in unbelief and reject it.” Rejec-

9. Grant Underwood, “The Laws of the Church of Christ (D&C 42): A Textual and Historical Analysis,” *Thirty-Seventh Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, 109-137.

10. *Book of Commandments* 24:12.

tion of the gospel had been implied before, but Smith now stated it outright so as to mitigate the possible ambiguity of the word “receive” by providing the contrasting verb “reject.”¹¹ In another example found in the Law, he clarified the phrase “unto you the kingdom has been given,” by adding to the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* an explanation of what “the kingdom” meant: “or in other words, the keys of the church, have been given.”¹² This revision may be classified as a clarification rather than as an elaboration because the earlier wording already echoed New Testament language related to church leadership.¹³ In the most likely scenario, the early wording had the same approximate meaning for Smith, but he determined that more instruction on “the kingdom” would be appropriate.

In contrast to the aforementioned types of revisions, all of which served to change or clarify meaning, many of Smith’s other revisions seem to have served no distinct purpose other than to make the revelation more aesthetically pleasing. He often reworded an awkward sentence to make it sound more elegant, or replaced a colloquial word or phrase with an equivalent but more elegant one. Or a complicated wording might be replaced by a simpler one. On occasion, the only change was in the order of two phrases, sentences, or even whole verses. In the Articles, Smith flipped the order of two verses, producing no change in meaning; the only difference is a literary effect that changes the order of information about the coming forth of the *Book of Mormon*.¹⁴ Revisions that do not fix an obvious grammar mistake, but perhaps provide a slightly more proper word, are also counted in this category, rather than in the category of grammatical revisions. Aesthetic revisions comprise 48 percent of all revisions to the Articles and 25 percent of all revisions to the Law.

Explanation of the final category, grammatical revisions, offers the opportunity to take a more in-depth approach to a type of revision the importance of

11. *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835) Section II or *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:13-15.

12. Compare *Book of Commandments* 44:53 with *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835) Section XIII and *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:69.

13. See Jesus’s statement to Peter in *Matthew* 16:19.

14. Compare *Book of Commandments* 24:9-11 with corresponding verses in *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835) Section II or see *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:9-11.

which might be easily overlooked. Smith, probably with a great deal of help from some of his associates, carefully edited the revelations for grammar prior to the publication of the *Book of Commandments*; however, some corrections were also made later, during the effort to publish the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Many of the revisions reflect a wrestling between “modern” and “scriptural” language, rather than correction of careless errors. Most frequently, the words “hath,” “unto,” “thee,” “thou,” “thy,” or “thine” were changed to “has,” “to,” “you,” and “your,” respectively. The large number of grammatical corrections (267 instances in 68 revelations) indicates systematic revision rather than correction of a few scribal errors.¹⁵ In 13 instances, however, someone changed a “modern” passage into an archaic one; these latter revisions are evidence that, even as many passages were modernized, some passages were intentionally kept in uniformly archaic English. The two seminal revelations, the Articles and the Law, present excellent examples of how Smith struggled with the question of how revelations that address a latter-day people should sound.

One phrase in the Articles parallels a phrase in 2 Nephi 31:21 that refers to the “doctrine of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is one God.”¹⁶ The revelation, as printed in the *Book of Commandments*, contains a similar phrase: “the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and of the Son, which Father and Son and Holy Ghost, is one God.” In 1835, the end of this phrase was revised to “are one God.” Interestingly, the wording in 2 Nephi was not changed at the same time, or anytime thereafter.¹⁷ This revelation could have been merely meant to correct the verb to agree with a plural subject rather than modernize the phrase, but other revisions must have been intentional modernizations of language that previously had reflected similar *Book of Mormon* phrases. For example, compare the earlier wording of what is now *Doctrine*

15. Fifteen such modernizations were made to the Articles and Covenants (Section 20); eleven were made to the Law (Section 42).

16. Perhaps reflecting grammatical uncertainty as to whether the Godhead should take the singular or the plural form, Mormon 7:7 promises that the faithful will “sing ceaseless praises unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, *which are one God*” (emphasis added).

17. See *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 2 Nephi 31:21.

and Covenants 20:75, “it is expedient that the Church meet together oft,” with Moroni 6:5, “the church did meet together oft.” In 1835, the “oft” of *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:75 was revised to “often.” The wording of the baptismal and sacrament prayers in the earlier version of the Articles had exactly reproduced the prayers in the *Book of Mormon*, but Smith or an associate carefully modernized them. Before 1835, the beginning of the baptismal prayer read, “Having had authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize thee.” For the 1835 edition, the language of the prayer was changed to “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you.” It is interesting to note that similar changes were never made to the identical passages in the *Book of Mormon*, presumably because modernizing revisions were unnecessary for a translation an ancient volume of scripture. As for the Articles and the Law, Smith, and associates who may have participated, considered them to be a different kind of revelation that called for less traditionally scriptural wording.

Other phrases in the Articles were not quotations from the *Book of Mormon*, but were expressed using archaic grammar. The editors modernized many of these phrases, while at the same time perpetuating some *Book of Mormon* phrases. In the Articles, the qualifications to be met by converts before their baptisms formerly read, “Behold, whosoever humbleth himself before God and desireth to be baptized,” but was revised to “All those who humble themselves before God and desire to be baptized.” However, the archaic phrase “come unto Christ” was preserved.¹⁸ We may surmise that this preservation was intentional because several early manuscripts have “come to Christ,” but the phrase was actually changed to “unto” in the *Book of Commandments* and was not changed back for the 1835 edition.¹⁹

The focus on modernization of grammar is particularly evident in the revision of a phrase that was very similar to a prominent phrase in the Ten Commandments: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all

18. See *Book of Mormon*: Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; and Moroni 10:30, 32. Also see *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:59.

19. Compare *Painesville Telegraph*, 19 April 1831 with *Book of Commandments* 24:41. Also see current *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:59

that in them is, and rested the seventh day”²⁰ (Exodus 20:11 see also Mosiah 13:19). In an early formulation of articles of faith for the Church, the *Book of Commandments* text of the Articles affirmed God to be the “maker of heaven and earth and all things that in them is,” while the phrase was revised in 1835 to read, “framer of heaven and earth and all things which are in them.” Perhaps Smith did not realize the manifest influence of the phrase from Exodus on his wording, and was concerned instead with revising the verb to agree with the plural “things,” which his revelation had added to the biblical phrase. If he had realized where the phrase came from and wanted it to echo the wording from Exodus, he could have deleted “things” and been grammatically correct, but less modern.

The Articles was not the only section to be modernized; the Law was also extensively edited in favor of modern grammar. Comparison of several surviving early manuscripts with the *Book of Commandments* indicates that the editors made most of the modernizing revisions to the Law before printing of that book began.²¹ In passages where the Law touches on more administrative and thus modern matters, there was clearly an effort to make the language uniformly modern. Modern matters included the requirement for an elder to be “regularly ordained” and “known to the Church” before he could preach the gospel, and specific instructions regarding how to implement the law of consecration. For example, the earlier reading, “except he be ordained by someone who hath authority” was revised to “has” for the *Book of Commandments*.²² Similarly, several early versions have “the residue shall be kept to administer to him that hath not,” while the *Book of Commandments* reads “him who has not.”²³

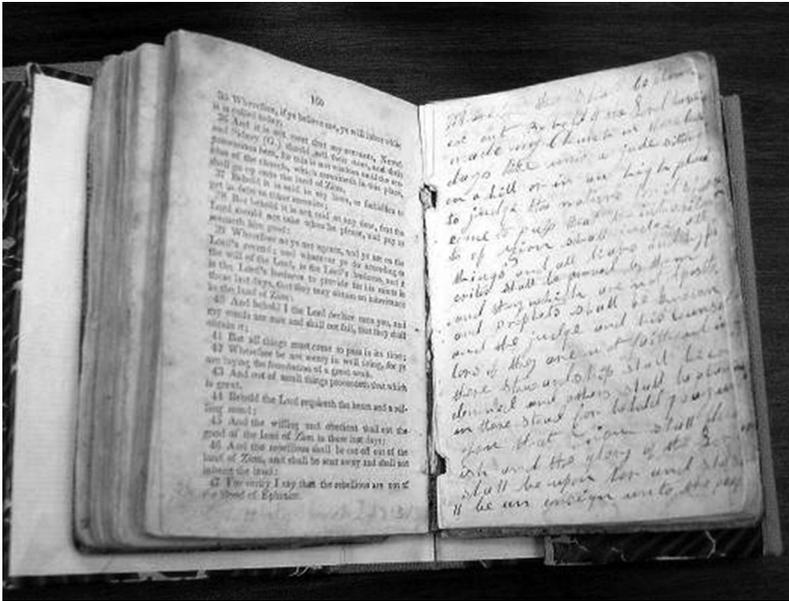
Parts of the Law whose subject matter more closely parallels that of ancient scripture retained the Elizabeth language of the King James Bible and the Book of Mormon. Such passages include: *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:18-29, which is a latter-day version of the Ten Commandments; *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:30-31 (also v. 38) which expands on a phrase from Matthew 25:40; and *Doctrine and*

20. Exodus 20:11. King James Version. See also *Book of Mormon*: Mosiah 13:19.

21. Compare *Painesville Telegraph*, 13 September 1831 with *Book of Commandments*.

22. Compare *Painesville Telegraph*, 13 September 1831 with *Book of Commandments* 44:12.

23. Compare *Painesville Telegraph*, 13 September 1831 with *Book of Commandments* 44:27.



This rare copy of the 1833 Book of Commandments belonged to Wilford Woodruff, fourth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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Covenants 42:48-58, which somewhat parallels commandments and promises given by Jesus to the apostles in the New Testament. In part of the latter passage, the word “hath” was actually in three instances modernized to “has” before the publication of the *Book of Commandments*, but then for 1844 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* the wording “hath” was restored, making the passage again uniformly Elizabethan.²⁴ A fourth passage, in *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:53-69, contains some commandments that lack parallels to actual words of the Lord in ancient scripture, such as “thou shalt stand in the place of thy stewardship,” and “let him that goeth to the east teach them that shall be converted to flee to the west.” In preparation for the printing of the *Book of Commandments*, “goes” was revised to “goeth” and “obtains” to “obtainest.”²⁵ While there are no obvious scriptural parallels to explain the intentional use of Elizabethan English in this passage, the above revisions made the wording uniformly scriptural, and may

24. Compare *Painesville Telegraph*, 13 September 1831 with *Book of Commandments* 44:38. Also see current *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:48-52.

25. Compare *Painesville Telegraph*, 13 September 1831 with *Book of Commandments* 44:42 (*Doctrine and Covenants* 42:55) and *Book of Commandments* 44:48 (*Doctrine and Covenants* 42:64).

have been meant to indicate that the entire passage should be taken as a direct address to the members of the Church, as opposed to a revelation that spoke about the Church to Smith. Close Biblical parallels and what might be called “God’s voice of direct address,” offer some possible explanations of how, within the same revelation, the grammar of some passages was Elizabethan while that of others was modern.

There are two revisions in the Article that also return the text to more archaic grammar, but are not part of a systematic effort at revision. As mentioned above, the editors changed “come to Christ” to the more archaic wording, “come unto Christ,” for the *Book of Commandments*. Less easily explained is the revision of “arrived to [the years of accountability]” to “arrived unto.” Grammatical rules would seem to mandate “arrived at.” Possibly, this revision was intended to be a grammatical correction rather than an intentional effort to use a more archaic word. Outside of the foregoing exceptions, the language of the Articles is uniformly modern. The intent of this revelation was inherently modern; it outlined the rules of Church policy. Thus, the revelation employs only modern language. Meanwhile, a revelation such as the Law may have been intentionally left partly Elizabethan because parts of the revelation hearkened back to ancient scripture, and were differentiated from passages that discussed more modern matters such as the bishop’s duty concerning the administration of properties.

Analysis of grammatical revisions illustrates how Smith struggled to determine how modern scripture ought to sound. Only a small portion of the total revisions made in the revelations were grammatical: nine percent of revisions to the Articles and Covenants, and four percent of revisions to the Law. Over half (60 percent) of grammatical revisions were not intended to correct grammatical errors; rather, they modernized archaic grammar, or conversely replaced a modern word with an archaic one. Attention to detail indicates a possibility that an effort was made to use modern English in modern contexts such as Church policy, and to use Elizabethan English in ancient contexts such as the voice of the Lord directly addressing one or more individuals, or the reaffirmation of

promises and commandments also contained in ancient scripture.

Previous to this in-depth examination of grammatical revisions, I provided an introductory explanation to each of the other five types of revisions. Similar to my exploration of the implications of grammatical revisions, I expect that future studies that thoroughly explore each of the other five types of revision will also prove fruitful.

As he began the editing process, Smith appears to have felt free to “discover by the holy Spirit” how to better express the divine will that he had recorded in his earlier revelations. To cite a well-known example, one of the first subjects taught in the School of the Prophets was English grammar; this reflected upon Smith’s initially low level of education, and that of his associates. Due to this and other efforts during the intervening years, his command of the English language had improved and his religious insight had expanded considerably by 1835. His revisions, relatively sparse during the editing of the *Book of Commandments* but much more extensive four years later at the publication of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, reflected the in-progress nature of his academic and spiritual educations. In 1830 he had begun making revisions to the Bible; by the time he went to edit the revelations, he was already quite used to editing scripture. Even though there could be no claiming that the scripture that he himself had revealed was translated incorrectly, he revised his own revelations as freely as he revised the Bible. Although he never admitted directly to his own limitations, much less that he had ever revealed incorrectly, the idea that he could only express divine revelation according to his own limitations is expressly referred to in a revelation: “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.”²⁶ Joseph Smith required no doctrinal leap or special permission to revise his own revelations.

26. *Doctrine and Covenants* 67:5.

Below is an elaboration, because Smith added heretofore unrevealed, albeit related information; in addition to repentance, he had to “humble himself,” and this was done “sincerely” and “through faith.” These descriptive words evidently replaced the sole earlier adjective, “truly.”

Book of Commandments 24:7

...but after **truly** repenting, God ministered unto him by an holy angel...

Doctrine and Covenants (1835) 2:2

...but after repenting, **and humbling himself, sincerely, through faith** God ministered unto him by an holy angel...

To the following verse, Smith made several kinds of revisions. He reassigned the duty of “assisting the bishop” to the post-Law office of counselor, and also included a new allowance for a “renumeration” to be paid in place of a stewardship of consecrated property. Both of these changes reflect *updates* of policy. Meanwhile, the insertion about helping the poor is part of the systematic effort to *present* the revelation in a less-legally problematic light.

Book of Commandments 44:54

The priests and teachers, shall have their stewardship **given them** even as the members; and the elders are to assist the bishop in all things, and **he is to see that** their families are supported out of the property which is consecrated to the Lord either a stewardship, or otherwise, as may be thought best **by the elders**

Doctrine and Covenants (1835) 13:19

The priests and teachers shall have their stewardships, even as the members **and the elders, or high priests who are appointed** to assist the bishop as counsellors, in all things are to have their families supported out of the property which is consecrated to the **bishop for the good of the poor, and for other purposes, as before mentioned; or they are to receive a just remuneration for all their services;** either a stewardship, or otherwise, as may be thought best, **or decided by the counselors**

In the following revision we find a good example of *clarification*. The change clarifies what this revelation means by *kingdom* as it echoes a New Testament passage whose meaning has been much-disputed.

Book of Commandments 44:53

Doctrine and Covenants (1835) 13:18

Lift up your hearts and rejoice, for unto you the kingdom **has** been given; even so: Amen

Lift up your hearts and rejoice, for unto you the kingdom, **or in other words, the keys of the church, have** been given; even so: Amen

The following passage shows examples of two types of revision: aesthetic and grammatical. Apparently Smith or an associate decided that “framer” was more aesthetically fitting than “maker,” even though the two words clearly have the same meaning. During the same editing process, the reviser corrected the grammatically incorrect “all things that in them is,” likely without realizing that the phrase had its origins in the Old Testament (albeit in a different and grammatically correct phrase).

Bible (KJV)
Exodus 20:11

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and **all that in them is**, and rested on the seventh day

Book of
Commandments 24:13

By these things we know, that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, the **maker** of heaven and earth and all things **that in them is**

Doctrine and
Covenants (1835) 2:4

By these things we know, that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal from everlasting to everlasting, the **framer** of heaven and earth and all things **which are in them.**

The following passage illustrates that while either uniformly archaic or uniformly modern grammar was desirable, the revisers attempted to modernize some passages. In this case, modernization may have been haphazard, or the revisers may have thought that the particular phrases which were changed were too awkward when rendered with the archaic, "hath."

Painesville Telegraph,
13 September 1831
(the revelation was
published as a curi-
ousity in this local
Ohio newspaper)

Book of
Commandments
44:38–39

Doctrine and
Covenants (2nd ed.)
42: 48–51

again it shall come
to pass that he that
hath faith in me to be
healed, and is not ap-
pointed unto death,
shall be healed; he that
hath faith to see, shall
see; he that **hath** faith
to hear shall hear; the
lame **that** have faith to
leap, shall leap;

again it shall come
to pass that he that
has faith in me to be
healed, and is not ap-
pointed unto death,
shall be healed; he
that **has** faith to see,
shall see; he that **has**
faith to hear shall
hear; the lame **who**
have faith to leap,
shall leap;

again it shall come
to pass that he that
hath faith in me to be
healed, and is not ap-
pointed unto death,
shall be healed; he
that **hath** faith to see,
shall see; he that **hath**
faith to hear shall
hear; the lame **who**
have faith to leap,
shall leap;

