

The Closer Look Series

Doctrine and Covenants Changes

Prophet, Seer & Revelator

Joseph Smith received fifteen revelations beginning in 1828 through the same “seer” stone which produced the *Book of Mormon*. These are sections 2-16 in the current RLDS *Doctrine and Covenants (D&C)*. An additional 98 revelations by “inspiration” were received before Joseph died in 1844.

■ 1833 *Book of Commandments*

The church quickly took steps to publish these words “from [God’s] own mouth” (D&C 19:2b). They were printed one or more an issue in the official church newspaper *Evening and Morning Star (E&MS)* while the book of revelations was being prepared at the church print shop in Independence, Missouri. Mob action against the church in 1833 destroyed the press and stopped completion of the book, but press sheets of the first 64 revelations were salvaged and a few hundred bound *Book of Commandments (B of C)* were distributed. Some of these had already appeared in the E&MS, and with the exception of one 11-word phrase the two versions of those 22 revelations are identical. In June 1833 Joseph Smith wrote W. W. Phelps, the printer, a letter pointing out only four one-word corrections after personally proofreading the whole book (*RLDS History of Church*, 1:300). Now one the rarest books produced by the early Mormon church, the 1833 *Book of Commandments* (along with the 1835 Kirtland Edition D&C) has been photo-reproduced by the RLDS church and is distributed by Herald House as a “Replica Edition.”

■ 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*

However, when we compare the 1835 D&C (Kirtland Edition) to the original revelations (from the bound *B of C* and later ones printed in the *E&MS*), we find *over 2,700 words added and almost 600 words deleted*. These changes are so significant *the numbering of the revelations was altered* to make them more difficult to compare.

■ The *E&MS* was actually *reprinted* by the church leadership to include the new wording: “...in the first 14 numbers, in the Revelations, are many errors, typographical and other, occasioned by transcribing manuscript; but as we shall have access to originals, we shall endeavor to make proper corrections” (*E&MS*, vol.2, no. 24, Sept. 1834, p 192). By examining the changes, it can be seen that they are far more than *typographical errors*.

■ *Covering Up the Occult Connection.*

In 1829 Joseph gave a revelation to Oliver Cowdery, his principal scribe for the *Book of Mormon*, encouraging his use of an occult divining rod—“rod of nature.” Comparing D&C 8:3 with *B of C* chapter 7, we find 17 words deleted and 64 words added to change “rod” to a “gift of Aaron” and declare it to be the “gift” or “power” of God.

■ *Introducing High Priests and the First Presidency.*

David Whitmer, states in his book (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, p. 56), “In the winter of 1834 they saw that some of the revelations *had to be changed* [sic], because the heads of the church had gone too far, and had done things in which they had already gone ahead of some of the former revelations.” Two ways they had “gone ahead” were introducing the office of *High Priest* and the creation of a *First Presidency*. Every significant function of higher leadership in the RLDS church is performed by High Priests. *But the office of High Priest is completely illegitimate in the Christian church* (see the Closer Look Tract *The Melchizedek Priesthood*). The First Presidency created a ruling triumvirate of a President (Joseph) and two “Counselors.” This same pattern of government is used in the church

down to local pastorates. In order to legitimize High Priests and a First Presidency, earlier revelations (D&C 17, 42, 48) were altered so it appeared they were there from the beginning.

■ *Softening the Financial Law.*

Joseph met Sydney Rigdon in Kirtland Ohio in December 1830. Part of Rigdon’s Campbellite congregation was practicing “common stock,” imitating the early Christian church in Acts 2. By February 1831 Joseph had a revelation on “all things common,” gaining a sizeable addition to his new church. Shortly after, dissenters including Oliver Cowdery oversaw this financial law abandoned. D&C 42 (*B of C* 44) is significantly altered to eliminate “all things common.”

■ There are *many* other revelation changes than in this brief overview.

■ Joseph died nine years after the 1835 D&C without commenting on these changes to his revelations.

■ If the revelations really were “from [God’s] own mouth,” when did God start changing His mind? (See Numbers 23:19.) Who then can we trust?

God is NOT the author of confusion.

Read Galatians 1:6-9.

This tract was condensed from
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