

MORMON SCRIPTURE

Doctrine And Covenants, Part II

By Marvin W. Cowan

Our last article quoted a September 3, 1966 editorial in the LDS *Church News* which said, "With prophets and new revelation for current guidance of the people also comes new scripture, for as the divinely given revelations are recorded, they are added to the existing volume of holy writ and in this way the body of scripture grows. This then is another sign of the true church. ... Revelation, therefore, is an essential part of the true church, *constant, current revelation*." Mormons claim their Church has been led by a prophet ever since it was established by Joseph Smith, but their "body of scripture" has grown very little since his death. Out of the 138 Sections that are now in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, only three were written after Joseph Smith died in 1844. They are: Section 135 which was written by John Taylor about the "Martyrdom" of Joseph and Hyrum Smith on June 27, 1844; Section 136 written on January 14, 1847 by Brigham Young about organizing the Mormon move to the west; and Section 138 which was moved to the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1981 after it was canonized and placed in the *Pearl of Great Price* in 1976. It contains President Joseph F. Smith's account of a vision he claimed he had on October 3, 1918. That is the only Section of the *Doctrine and Covenants* that was written during the twentieth century. The two "Official Declarations" at the end of the *Doctrine and Covenants* are not revelations like those in the "Sections." The first one given in 1890, told Mormons to quit practicing polygamy; and the second one given in 1976 allowed black men to have the Mormon priesthood. Thus, addition to LDS scripture has been neither *constant* nor *current*, so the LDS Church does not meet its own qualification of having the "sign of the true church."

Joseph Smith wrote, "During the month of January (1835), I was engaged in the school of the Elders, and in preparing the lectures on theology for publication in the book of *Doctrine and Covenants*, which the committee appointed last September were now compiling." (*History of the Church* vol. II, p. 180). The same volume later reported, "A general assembly of the Church of the Latter-day Saints was held at Kirtland on the 17th of August 1835.... President Cowdery arose and introduced the Book of *Doctrine and Covenants* of the Church of the Latter-day Saints." After each group of priesthood holders had unanimously voted to accept the *Doctrine and Covenants*, including the "Lectures on Faith" as their guide, "the whole congregation accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith by unanimous vote" (Ibid. pp. 243 to 246). The last chapter in the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* entitled "General Assembly" was also a report of that meeting with its unanimous vote.

From 1835 until 1921 the *Doctrine and Covenants* had two sections. The first section, entitled "Doctrine and Covenants," contained Joseph Smith's seven "Lectures on Theology" (Later editions called them "Lectures on Faith.") The second section, called "Covenants and Commandments," consisted of Smith's revelations that are in the current *Doctrine and Covenants*. Although the LDS founding Prophet, Joseph Smith, stated that he prepared those lectures for publication in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the LDS General Conference held in 1835 unanimously voted to accept them as "the doctrine and covenants of their faith," they were deleted in 1921 by the First Presidency without any vote at a General Conference. Thus 75 pages of what had been LDS scripture from 1835 until 1921 were un-

canonized, making the current *Doctrine and Covenants* a much *smaller* volume! Some LDS General Authorities in 1921 knew that conflicting teachings about God in the *Doctrine and Covenants* was confusing members, so the First Presidency deleted the Lectures on Faith in order to eliminate the confusion. "Lecture Fifth" declared that God "The Father (is) a personage of *spirit*, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, (is) a personage of *tabernacle*, made or fashioned like unto man...." Yet, *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 130:22 declared, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's, the Son also;..." Thus the Lectures on Faith taught that God the Father was a Spirit Being but the Son had a body of flesh, while Section 130:22 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* declared that both the Father and Son have bodies of flesh and bones. Since both teachings originated with Joseph Smith, it should raise some questions about his revelations. Did he receive the information in the lectures on theology from God when he had them added to LDS scripture? Were LDS Prophet Heber J. Grant and his Counselors led by God to delete Smith's lectures from LDS scripture in 1921? Grant said, "Brethren, keep your eye on the President of this Church....the Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead this people astray" (*Ensign*, Oct. 1972, p. 7). Were both Smith and Grant led by God in this matter? Did God change or were the LDS people misled from 1835 until 1921? If someone deleted 75 pages from the Bible Christians would demand an explanation!

In the 1835 edition *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 101 declared that Mormons believed and practiced monogamy (one husband having one wife and visa versa) and that was also accepted by a unanimous vote of the August 1835 General Conference. But that Section was deleted when the first Utah edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* was published because they added Section 132 which teaches polygamy. While Mormons claim polygamy ended when the Woodruff Manifesto was issued in 1890, Section 132 is still in the current *Doctrine and Covenants*. Mormons often claim that latter day prophets and revelation are needed to clarify doctrine etc., but they don't seem to be doing that!

Our next article will discuss some other problems in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. For more information on the *Doctrine and Covenants* see *The Joseph Smith Revelations Text and Commentary* by H. Michael Marquardt, published by Signature Books in Salt Lake City in 1999.