

POSTFACE (NOTES TO THE READER)

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 1835 Edition | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith (implied), Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon

OVERVIEW

The 'Notes to the Reader' serves as a postface to the seminal 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. While ostensibly a list of typographical corrections, it contains a theologically significant amendment to the 'Article on Marriage' (Section 101 in this edition, later removed). The correction specifies that while husbands and fathers have authority, they will 'answer for that sin' if they utilize that authority to prevent wives or children from 'embracing the truth' (converting to Mormonism). This establishes a hierarchy of loyalty where religious affiliation supersedes domestic authority. Additionally, the text clarifies the minutes of the General Assembly, solidifying the titles and roles of the First Presidency (Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon) and various clerks, reflecting the growing bureaucratic formalization of the early Church. This document is historically critical as it captures the tension between the text's claim to divine revelation and the mundane necessity of editorial correction.

KEY FIGURES

Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Thomas Burdick, Warren Parrish, Silvester Smith

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL DOMESTIC AUTHORITY

Assertion: The authority of husbands, parents, and masters is subordinate to the individual's obligation to join the Mormon church.

"husbands, parents and masters who exercise control over their wives, children and servants, and prevent them from embracing the truth, will have to answer for that sin."

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the believer's ultimate loyalty is to Christ, which may indeed cause family division (Matthew 10:34-37). However, the New Testament instructs believing wives to win over unbelieving husbands through conduct rather than rebellion (1 Peter 3:1-2). This Mormon text introduces a specific legalistic threat: the head of the household is explicitly told they will 'answer for that sin' of obstruction. It shifts the focus from a general spiritual warfare to a specific institutional compliance, effectively demonizing the non-Mormon head of household who resists the new faith's encroachment on the family unit.

2. ECCLESIASTICAL HIERARCHY

Assertion: The Church is governed by a specific presidency and clerk structure that requires precise recognition in the record.

"Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon, Presidents of the first presidency... appointed Thomas Burdick, Warren Parrish and Silvester Smith, Clerks"

Evangelical Comparison: The text emphasizes the specific titles and organization of the 'First Presidency' and appointed clerks. In Evangelicalism, while church order is biblical (1 Timothy 3), there is no mediating hierarchy between the believer and God (1 Timothy 2:5). The meticulous correction of these titles in the D&C suggests that the validity of the assembly and the record depends on the proper recognition of these offices, pointing toward the developing Mormon doctrine of Priesthood Authority as a prerequisite for acting in God's name.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the definition of authority and sin. For the Evangelical, sin is a violation of God's moral law as revealed in the Bible. Here, a new category of sin is created by church leaders: obstructing the growth of the Mormon church. Furthermore, the document itself—an errata sheet for a book of 'revelations'—demonstrates that in Mormonism, the living prophet/presidency holds authority over the written text. In Evangelicalism, the written Word judges the leader; in Mormonism, the leader edits and interprets the

Word. The reference to the 'Article on Marriage' is particularly divergent, as this section (monogamous in nature) was canonized while polygamy was secretly practiced, then later decanonized, revealing a shifting theological foundation.

Shared Values:

Accountability for sin.; Importance of accurate records.; The concept that God's truth is more important than human authority.

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text demonstrates the fluidity of Mormon scripture, where sections can be amended, added, or removed by leadership.
2. [Major] Theology Proper (God's Nature/Will) – Attributes the definition of sin to the obstruction of a specific organization rather than moral law.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a mediating hierarchy (Presidency) necessary for the validation of the church assembly.

Semantic Warnings:

"The Truth"

In Text: The specific doctrines and organization of the Latter-day Saint movement.

Evangelical: The person of Jesus Christ and the Gospel (John 14:6).

Example: *When the text says 'prevent them from embracing the truth,' it means preventing them from being baptized into the Mormon church.*

"Sin"

In Text: In this context, the act of a guardian preventing a dependent from joining the Church.

Evangelical: Transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4) or lack of faith (Romans 14:23).

Example: *A father forbidding his child from joining a specific denomination is not biblically defined as 'sin' in the same way this text asserts.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to 'embracing the truth' (joining the Church).

How Attained: Requires overcoming family obstruction to join the organization.

Basis of Assurance: None offered in this text; focus is on judgment for obstruction.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text focuses on the external act of joining the group ('embracing the truth') as the pivot point for sin/righteousness, rather than internal faith in Christ's finished work.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Correct the text in the next edition.
2. Recognize the specific titles of Church officers.

Implicit Obligations:

1. Husbands/Fathers must permit dependents to join the Mormon church.
2. Adherents must accept the corrected reading over the printed text.

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. When you read that the 1835 D&C contained errors that 'escaped the eye of the proof reader,' how does that shape your view of the book's divine authority?
2. This text mentions the 'Article on Marriage' (Section 101). Are you aware that this section—which defined marriage as one man and one wife—was later removed from the D&C? How do you process that change?

3. The text says a father answers for the 'sin' of preventing his family from joining the church. How does this compare to the biblical command to honor parents?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Need for Correction – Just as a text contains errors that the author must correct, our lives contain 'errors' (sins) that we cannot fix ourselves. We need a Divine Editor. [Psalm 19:12 ('Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.')]]
2. Answering for Sin – The text correctly identifies that humans must answer for sin. The Gospel provides the only way to answer: through the advocate Jesus Christ. [1 John 2:1-2]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Shifting Sand [Moderate] – The believer must rely on a text that admits errors and contains doctrines (like the 1835 Marriage article) that may be deleted later. This creates a subconscious anxiety that 'truth' is fluid and dependent on current leadership.
2. Family Division/Guilt [Severe] – For a convert, this text demonizes their non-believing spouse or parent, framing them not just as 'unsaved' but as active sinners obstructing God. This creates immense relational pressure and guilt.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Reason/Editorial Review.

Verification Method: Comparison of the printed text with the intended meaning or original minutes.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelicalism relies on the preservation of the original autograph's meaning (Textual Criticism) but does not view modern church leaders as having authority to issue 'errata' that change theological definitions of sin (as done in the marriage clause).

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1835

Authorship: Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon (Signatories)

Textual Issues: This is an explicit list of textual variants/errors acknowledged by the publishers. It admits that the 'proof reader' failed.