

SECTION 26 (MODERN D&C 70)

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 1835 Edition | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

Given in November 1831, this text (canonized as Section 26 in the 1835 edition and Section 70 in modern editions) establishes the legal and financial framework for the 'Literary Firm.' Joseph Smith and five associates are designated as 'stewards' over the revelations and commandments. The text asserts that these men are to manage the 'concerns' and 'benefits' (financial proceeds) of these scriptures. It mandates that while these leaders are worthy of their hire and should be supported by the proceeds for their 'food and raiment,' any surplus beyond their needs must be consecrated to the Lord's storehouse for the inhabitants of Zion. The revelation explicitly links spiritual manifestations to temporal obedience, warning that the 'abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit' will be withheld if the saints are not equal in temporal things. It serves as a foundational document for the intersection of ecclesiastical authority and economic management within early Mormonism.

KEY FIGURES

Joseph Smith, Jr., Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, William W. Phelps

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. PROPRIETARY STEWARDSHIP OF REVELATION

Assertion: Specific men are appointed to manage the revelations and the financial benefits derived from them.

"I the Lord have appointed them... to be stewards over the revelations... to manage them and the concerns thereof, yea, the benefits thereof"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the Scriptures are the self-revelation of God, intended for free dissemination (Matthew 10:8). While publishers may cover costs, the concept of a specific ecclesiastical oligarchy appointed by God to 'manage the benefits' (profits) of the revelations as a divine stewardship is foreign to the New Testament. The Apostles often worked to support themselves (1 Thessalonians 2:9) or received voluntary support, but they did not claim a divine copyright stewardship over the text of the Gospel itself as a means of livelihood.

2. CONDITIONAL SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION

Assertion: The outpouring of the Spirit is contingent upon temporal/economic equality among the saints.

"nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit, shall be withheld."

Evangelical Comparison: This text introduces a transactional pneumatology: the Holy Spirit's abundance is directly tied to the community's adherence to economic equality ('temporal things you shall be equal'). In contrast, the New Testament teaches that the Spirit is the 'guarantee' of inheritance given upon believing (Ephesians 1:13-14) and that spiritual gifts are distributed by the Spirit's sovereign will (1 Corinthians 12:11), not as a reward for successful communal economics.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While Evangelicalism and Mormonism both value stewardship, this text bridges the gap between spiritual authority and financial gain in a way that Evangelicalism rejects. By appointing men to 'manage the benefits' of God's word and threatening the withdrawal of the Spirit for lack of temporal equality, the text creates a works-based system where spiritual standing is inextricably linked to financial compliance with the church hierarchy. This violates Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) by making the Spirit's manifestation a reward for social/economic performance.

Shared Values:

Care for the poor (Storehouse concept); Accountability to God (Stewardship); Ministers worthy of financial support

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Elevates Joseph Smith's new revelations to the status of binding law, requiring management and publication alongside or above the Bible.
2. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchy where only specific men are 'stewards over the revelations,' creating a mediation layer between God's word and the people.
3. [Critical] Sola Gratia – Conditions the 'abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit' on the works of temporal equality and financial consecration.

Semantic Warnings:

"Stewardship"

In Text: A specific ecclesiastical assignment to manage church assets and revelations for the benefit of the leaders and the church.

Evangelical: The general principle that all believers manage God's gifts (time, talent, treasure) for His glory (1 Peter 4:10).

Example: *In this text, 'stewardship' is a formal office with financial rights; in the Bible, it is a posture of the heart applicable to all believers.*

"Storehouse"

In Text: A literal repository for surplus goods and money managed by the Bishop for redistribution.

Evangelical: Often metaphorical in the NT, or referring to the OT temple treasury; NT giving was generally voluntary collections for specific needs (1 Cor 16:1-2).

Example: *The text mandates surplus be given to the 'storehouse' as a law of the kingdom.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implied as 'entering into the joy' of the Lord and receiving an inheritance.

How Attained: Through faithfulness in stewardship, not sinning, and adherence to the laws of the kingdom (including economic laws).

Basis of Assurance: Performance in one's appointed stewardship.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly links the 'reward' and 'joy' to diligence and faithfulness in management, contrasting with Romans 4:4-5 where the reward is reckoned not according to debt (work) but grace.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Hearken to the word of the Lord given to Joseph Smith
2. Manage the revelations and their benefits (profits)
3. Give surplus earnings to the Lord's storehouse
4. Be equal in temporal things

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept the financial authority of the church leadership
2. Submit to the economic redistribution required by the Law of Consecration

Ritual Requirements:

1. Consecration of property/funds to the Bishop/storehouse

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. How do you interpret the connection in verse 3 between being 'equal' in temporal things and receiving the 'manifestations of the Spirit'?
2. In this passage, specific men are appointed to manage the 'benefits' (profits) of the revelations. How does this compare to the Apostle Paul's refusal to peddle the word of God for profit (2 Corinthians 2:17)?
3. If the Spirit is withheld because someone is 'grudging' in their temporal equality, how does a believer find assurance of God's presence during times of financial struggle?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Storehouse – The desire to provide for the poor is noble. Jesus is the true Bread of Life (John 6:35) who fills the ultimate storehouse. In Him, we find the resources to be generous, not out of legal obligation, but out of the overflow of His grace. [2 Corinthians 8:9]
2. Accountability/Stewardship – We are indeed accountable to God. However, our primary stewardship is the Gospel of Grace. We are called to be 'stewards of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor 4:1) by faithfully proclaiming Christ, not by managing financial assets. [1 Corinthians 4:1-2]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Legalism/Performance [Moderate] – The believer is burdened with the requirement of 'temporal equality' to access spiritual blessings. This creates a constant pressure to measure one's financial generosity against a divine standard to ensure the Spirit is not withheld.
2. Hierarchy/Dependency [Moderate] – The text reinforces a dependency on a select group of men who control the 'revelations.' The believer must submit to their management to be considered faithful.
3. Fear of Rejection [Severe] – The threat that the Spirit will be withheld if one is 'grudging' creates an internal policing of emotions, where a believer fears that a moment of hesitation in giving might cost them God's presence.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Joseph Smith speaking as the mouthpiece of God).

Verification Method: Implicit trust in the prophet's stewardship; the text assumes its own authority rather than offering external verification.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the objective standard of written Scripture (Acts 17:11) and the internal witness of the Spirit regarding the Gospel, not on the administrative dictates of a modern prophet.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: November 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This section was originally intended for the 'Book of Commandments' (1833) but that printing was interrupted by mob violence. It appeared in the 1835 D&C. The text reflects the specific needs of the 'Literary Firm' which was dissolved in 1834, making the revelation historically specific yet canonized as eternal law.