

SECTION 62

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

OVERVIEW

This revelation, classified as Section 62 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (Section 44 in modern editions), was dictated by Joseph Smith in February 1831. Addressed to Smith and Sidney Rigdon, it serves as an administrative directive with theological underpinnings. The text commands a gathering of church elders from all directions, establishing a precedent for the general conferences of the movement. It promises an outpouring of the Spirit, but explicitly conditions this blessing on the elders' faithfulness and their act of assembling. The revelation outlines a missiological strategy: the elders are to preach repentance, resulting in conversions that will provide the demographic and social power necessary to 'organize according to the laws of man.' This refers to the legal incorporation or protection of the church to withstand 'enemies' and 'bands' seeking to destroy them. Finally, it mandates social welfare ('visit the poor and needy') as a stopgap measure until the 'law' (the Law of Consecration outlined in other sections) can be fully implemented. The text reveals a developing theocracy concerned with both spiritual power and legal survival.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Speaker), Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Elders of the Church

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL PNEUMATOLOGY

Assertion: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is contingent upon the elders assembling and exercising faithfulness.

"inasmuch as they are faithful, and exercise faith in me, I will pour out my Spirit upon them in the day that they assemble themselves together"

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit are presented transactionally: 'inasmuch as' the elders perform the work of gathering and remain faithful, the Spirit will be poured out. This contrasts sharply with the Evangelical understanding of the Indwelling Spirit, who is given as a 'seal' and 'guarantee' at the moment of justification (Ephesians 1:13-14, Romans 8:9). For the Evangelical, the Spirit is the source of faithfulness, not the reward for it. The Mormon text implies that the corporate anointing is dependent on human performance.

2. THEOCRATIC PRAGMATISM

Assertion: The church must utilize secular laws ('laws of man') to protect spiritual laws and community existence.

"organize yourselves, according to the laws of man; that your enemies may not have power over you... that you may be enabled to keep my laws"

Evangelical Comparison: The text commands the use of secular legal structures ('laws of man') specifically to ensure the survival of the religious community against 'enemies.' While Evangelicalism acknowledges the state's role (Romans 13), it generally views the Church's preservation as a supernatural guarantee by Christ ('the gates of hell shall not prevail,' Matthew 16:18) rather than a result of legal organization. This doctrine reflects the early Mormon struggle for physical and legal survival in hostile environments.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental theological gap lies in the source of authority and the nature of grace. This text establishes Joseph Smith as the mouthpiece of God, issuing commands that bind the conscience of believers equal to or above Scripture. Furthermore, the pneumatology (doctrine of the Spirit) is conditional and transactional: the Spirit is promised 'inasmuch' as they are faithful and assemble. In Evangelical theology, the Spirit is the down payment of salvation given by grace through faith (Ephesians 1:13-14), not a reward for

administrative obedience. The text also fosters a 'siege mentality' (us vs. enemies) that differs from the biblical call to bless persecutors.

Shared Values:

Importance of evangelism (preaching repentance); Care for the poor and needy; The necessity of the Holy Spirit for ministry

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text presents new, binding revelation from God outside the Bible.
2. [Major] Sola Gratia – The outpouring of the Spirit is conditioned on human faithfulness and gathering ('inasmuch as').
3. [Minor] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchical distinction where 'elders' must be called together to receive power.

Semantic Warnings:

"My Law"

In Text: Refers specifically to the revelations given to Joseph Smith, particularly the Law of Consecration (D&C 42).

Evangelical: Usually refers to the Mosaic Law or the moral law of God found in Scripture.

Example: *When the text says 'according to my law,' it means the specific economic and social order revealed to Smith, not the Ten Commandments.*

"Faithful"

In Text: Obedient to the specific commands of the prophet (gathering, organizing).

Evangelical: Trusting in Christ alone for salvation and walking in His ways.

Example: *Being 'faithful' here is the condition for receiving the Spirit, implying a works-based prerequisite for spiritual power.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to gathering, obedience to the prophet, and preservation from enemies.

How Attained: Through faithfulness, gathering, and keeping the 'laws' revealed to the prophet.

Basis of Assurance: The experiential 'pouring out' of the Spirit at the assembly.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text emphasizes 'exercising faith' as a work alongside gathering to obtain power, rather than resting in Christ's finished work for justification (Romans 3:28).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Call elders together from east, west, north, and south
2. Go forth and preach repentance
3. Organize according to the laws of man
4. Visit the poor and the needy
5. Administer to the relief of the poor

Implicit Obligations:

1. Exercise faith specifically in the context of the gathering
2. Maintain faithfulness to secure the outpouring of the Spirit
3. View outsiders/critics as 'enemies' seeking to destroy

Ritual Requirements:

1. Assembly/Conference of Elders

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In this passage, the Lord says He will pour out His Spirit 'inasmuch as' the elders are faithful. How does this compare to the biblical promise that the Spirit is a gift given to all who believe?
2. The text mentions organizing according to the 'laws of man' so enemies won't have power. How do you balance relying on legal protection versus relying on God's sovereign protection?
3. What does it mean to you that the 'law' mentioned here refers to specific instructions given to Joseph Smith rather than the Bible?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Desire for Preservation – The text reflects a deep human desire for safety and preservation from 'enemies.' The Gospel offers eternal preservation not through legal organization, but through being 'hidden with Christ in God.' [Colossians 3:3, Jude 1:1]
2. Breaking the Enemy's Bands – Christ has already broken the ultimate bands of the enemy (sin and death) through the cross, disarming the powers and authorities. [Colossians 2:15]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Dependency [Moderate] – The believer is dependent on the hierarchy (elders gathering) and the prophet's new laws for spiritual power and protection, rather than having direct access to security in Christ.
2. Performance Pressure [Moderate] – The 'inasmuch as' clause creates a burden where the manifestation of God's Spirit is blamed on the individual's or group's lack of faithfulness if it does not occur.
3. Fear/Siege Mentality [Moderate] – The text emphasizes 'enemies' seeking to destroy, fostering a worldview of persecution and fear that requires constant vigilance and legal defense.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation

Verification Method: Obedience to the command (gathering) is expected to yield the experiential verification (outpouring of the Spirit).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the objective truth of Scripture illuminated by the Spirit (Psalm 119:105), whereas this text relies on subjective experience ('pouring out of Spirit') following obedience to a new prophet.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: February 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: Published in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants as Section 62. In modern editions, it is Section 44. Minor grammatical edits occurred between the 1833 Book of Commandments and 1835 D&C.