

SECTION 74 (MODERN D&C 66)

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

OVERVIEW

This text, identified as Section 74 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (Section 66 in modern editions), is a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith on October 29, 1831. It is addressed to William E. McLellin, a recent convert who had petitioned Smith to reveal God's will concerning him. The text validates McLellin's conversion, stating he is blessed for turning from iniquities and receiving the 'everlasting covenant.' However, it introduces a distinct tension between his current standing ('clean') and remaining sin ('but not all'), specifically identifying a struggle with adultery. The revelation commands McLellin to partner with Samuel H. Smith, forsake his property, and preach the gospel in the eastern lands rather than going immediately to Zion (Independence, Missouri). It promises power to heal the sick and eventual eternal life, conditioned strictly on his faithfulness and endurance to the end. The text serves as a paradigm for early Mormon missiology: a blend of high charismatic expectation (miracles, direct revelation) and high moral demand, where personal secret sins are exposed by the prophet.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), William E. McLellin, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith (The Revelator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL SECURITY / PERSEVERANCE

Assertion: Eternal life is contingent upon continuing in obedience and magnifying one's office until the end of life.

"Continue in these things, even unto the end, and you shall have a crown of eternal life"

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, the 'crown of eternal life' is a future reward contingent on the subject's ability to 'continue in these things' and 'magnify thine office.' This suggests a probationary state where salvation is not a present possession secured by Christ's atonement, but a future prize won through endurance and obedience. Evangelical theology, conversely, teaches that eternal life is a present possession for the believer (John 5:24) and that while good works are evidence of faith, they are not the procuring cause of the crown of life (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. PROPHETIC OMNISCIENCE/DISCERNMENT

Assertion: The prophet (Joseph Smith) has the ability to reveal the specific secret sins (adultery) of an individual through revelation.

"Commit not adultery, a temptation with which thou hast been troubled."

Evangelical Comparison: The text demonstrates a high view of prophetic authority where the leader acts as the voice of God to expose the private conscience of a follower. In Evangelicalism, conviction of specific sin is the domain of the Holy Spirit working through the conscience and the reading of the Bible (Hebrews 4:12), not typically the function of a church leader receiving new revelation about a congregant's private thoughts.

3. RESTORATION OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

Assertion: Receiving the 'fulness of my gospel' is equated with accepting the specific new revelation and authority of the Mormon restoration.

"blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel"

Evangelical Comparison: The text equates the 'fulness of my gospel' with the 'everlasting covenant' restored through Joseph Smith. In Evangelical theology, the 'Gospel' is defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for sins. Here, the term is expanded to include the specific ecclesiastical and covenantal structures of the LDS movement, implying that the biblical gospel was insufficient or lost.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of salvation and the locus of authority. For the Evangelical, authority is the Bible alone, and salvation is Sola Fide. In this text, authority is vested in the living prophet who can issue binding commands 'as the Lord,' and salvation is a synergistic process involving the 'receiving' of the Mormon covenant and 'continuing' in works of righteousness to earn a crown. The text's definition of being 'clean' is provisional ('clean, but not all'), contrasting with the biblical declaration of the believer's justification (Romans 5:1, 8:1).

Shared Values:

Prohibition of adultery; Call to evangelism/missionary work; Belief in healing/prayer; Necessity of repentance

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Joseph Smith speaks new words of God, adding to the canon.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide – Eternal life is conditioned on 'continuing in these things' and 'magnifying office.'
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchy where one man (Smith) mediates God's will to another (McLellin).

Semantic Warnings:

"Everlasting Covenant"

In Text: The restored gospel, priesthood, and ordinances of Mormonism.

Evangelical: The covenant of grace established by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 13:20).

Example: *In this text, receiving the covenant means joining the LDS movement; in the Bible, it means trusting Christ.*

"Fulness of the Gospel"

In Text: The complete system of LDS doctrine, including priesthood and restoration.

Evangelical: The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Cor 15).

Example: *The text implies the Bible did not contain the 'fulness' until Smith restored it.*

"Clean"

In Text: Partially sanctified or forgiven, but subject to immediate revocation or incompleteness ('but not all').

Evangelical: Washed by the blood of Christ (1 Cor 6:11), forensic justification.

Example: *McLellin is told he is clean, yet immediately told to repent, implying his cleanliness is not a settled legal standing before God.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: A 'crown of eternal life' at the right hand of the Father.

How Attained: By receiving the covenant, proclaiming the gospel, forsaking sin (adultery), and enduring to the end.

Basis of Assurance: Based on performance: 'Continue in these things... and you shall have'.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text presents a 'faith + works + endurance' model. Romans 4:5 states 'to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' This text requires working (preaching, traveling) to secure the crown.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Repent of things not pleasing to God
2. Proclaim the gospel from land to land
3. Go to the eastern lands
4. Bear testimony in synagogues
5. Take Samuel H. Smith as a companion

6. Lay hands upon the sick
7. Commit not adultery
8. Forsake all unrighteousness

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's ability to know private sins
2. Prioritize missionary work over property ownership
3. Submit to the specific travel itinerary dictated by the revelation

Ritual Requirements:

1. Laying on of hands for healing
2. Magnifying priesthood office

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. When you read that McLellin was 'clean, but not all,' how does that make you feel about your own standing before God?
2. The text promises a crown of eternal life **if** you continue to the end. How do you deal with the anxiety of not knowing if you will successfully endure?
3. What is the difference between the 'fulness of the gospel' mentioned here and the gospel Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Burden of Secret Sin – Just as McLellin carried a secret burden he thought was hidden, we all carry secret sins. The Gospel is that Christ sees them all and has already paid for them, offering cleansing that is 'once for all' (Hebrews 10:10) rather than provisional. [Hebrews 4:13-16 (All things naked before Him, therefore come boldly to the throne of grace).]
2. The Desire for Direction – McLellin wanted to know God's will. The ultimate will of God is that we believe in the Son He sent. [John 6:29, John 6:40 (This is the will of him that sent me...)]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety [Severe] – The believer is placed on a treadmill of 'magnifying office' and 'continuing' to secure a crown that is never guaranteed until the very end.
2. Exposure/Shame [Moderate] – The text canonizes a man's private sexual temptation. For the adherent, this implies a God who might publicly expose their secrets through leadership, creating a culture of fear and external conformity.
3. Dependency on Human Authority [Moderate] – The adherent must rely on the prophet to know their standing ('clean but not all') and their duty, rather than relying on Scripture and the Spirit.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (mediated through Joseph Smith).

Verification Method: The text implies self-verification through the accuracy of the secret knowledge (adultery) and the promise 'Ask and ye shall receive.'

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the objective standard of written Scripture (Acts 17:11) and the internal witness of the Spirit concerning the Word. This text relies on the subjective experience of the prophet revealing personal details to validate the message.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: October 29, 1831 (Published in 1835 D&C).

Authorship: Joseph Smith (Dictated).

Textual Issues: In the 1835 edition, this is Section 74. In modern editions, it is Section 66. The text has remained largely stable, though headings and versification have changed.