

SECTION 93 (MODERN D&C 92)

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

OVERVIEW

This text, identified as Section 93 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (but renumbered as Section 92 in modern editions), is a specific administrative directive given by Joseph Smith regarding the 'United Order' or 'United Firm.' This organization was a consecrated business partnership among Church leaders intended to manage Church resources and provide for the poor. The revelation uses code names—'Enoch' for Joseph Smith and 'Shederlaomach' for Frederick G. Williams—a practice common in early Mormon publications to protect the identity of the firm's members from creditors and persecution. The text commands the order to receive Williams as a 'lively member.' Theologically, it is significant for its conditional covenant structure: Williams is promised that he will be 'blessed forever' only 'inasmuch' as he is faithful in keeping all former commandments. This reinforces the Mormon concept that eternal standing is contingent upon ongoing obedience and active participation in Church structures.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Jesus Christ), Enoch (Code name for Joseph Smith), Shederlaomach (Code name for Frederick G. Williams), The United Order (The United Firm)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL ETERNAL BLESSING

Assertion: Eternal blessings ('blessed forever') are contingent upon the individual's faithfulness in keeping all commandments.

"inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments, you shall be blessed forever. (Verse 2)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the believer is 'blessed with every spiritual blessing' (Ephesians 1:3) upon the moment of justification by faith. The security of the believer rests on the immutability of God's promise and the sufficiency of Christ's atonement (Romans 8:38-39). This text, however, introduces a conditional clause ('inasmuch as') regarding being 'blessed forever.' This suggests that the permanence of the blessing is directly correlated to the adherent's ability to keep 'all former commandments,' effectively making sanctification and obedience the root of final salvation rather than the fruit of it.

2. THE UNITED ORDER (CONSECRATION)

Assertion: God organizes economic and social orders among the Saints for the benefit of the poor, requiring membership and active participation.

"I give unto the united order... a revelation... that ye shall receive him into the order. (Verse 1)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical Christianity promotes generosity and care for the poor as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 2:10), often facilitated through the diaconate or parachurch organizations. However, it does not view specific economic communalism or business partnerships (like the United Firm) as a saving ordinance or a mandated ecclesiastical structure. In this text, the 'United Order' is a revelation-based institution, and membership within it is a matter of obedience to a direct commandment from God.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The primary theological gap lies in the conditional nature of the covenant presented. The phrase 'inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments, you shall be blessed forever' establishes a legalistic framework where eternal blessing is the reward for comprehensive obedience. This stands in direct contrast to the Evangelical understanding of the Covenant of Grace, where the believer's standing is secured by Christ's obedience (Romans 5:19). Furthermore, the text operates on the premise that God continues to issue binding, canonized revelations for the administrative details of the church, contradicting the sufficiency of Scripture.

Shared Values:

Care for the poor; Church discipline and organization; Call to active service ('lively member')

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation/Blessing is conditioned on keeping 'all former commandments.'
2. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Adds new revelation to the canon regarding administrative church business.
3. [Moderate] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchical 'order' that mediates God's will and blessings.

Semantic Warnings:

"United Order"

In Text: A specific consecrated business partnership among early Mormon leaders.

Evangelical: N/A (Though similar to the community of goods in Acts 4, it is not a formal biblical term).

Example: When a Mormon reads 'United Order,' they think of a specific priesthood-directed economic system. An Evangelical might mistake it for general church unity.

"Blessed forever"

In Text: Implies exaltation or eternal life, contingent on works.

Evangelical: Eternal life is a gift of God, not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Example: In this text, being 'blessed forever' is the result of keeping commandments.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implied as being 'blessed forever.'

How Attained: Through faithfulness in keeping commandments and active participation in the order.

Basis of Assurance: Personal performance ('inasmuch as you are faithful').

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text explicitly links the eternal blessing to the condition of keeping commandments, violating Sola Fide (Galatians 3:10-11).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Receive Shederlaomach (Frederick G. Williams) into the United Order
2. Be a 'lively member' in the order
3. Keep all former commandments

Implicit Obligations:

1. Submit to the administrative decisions of the Church leadership
2. Participate actively in the economic affairs of the Church

Ritual Requirements:

1. Participation in the United Order (often involved covenant making)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 2, the promise of being 'blessed forever' is linked to keeping 'all former commandments.' How do you handle the pressure of needing to keep *all* commandments to ensure your blessing?
2. What does it mean to you to be a 'lively member'? Do you feel that your activity level in the church affects your standing with God?
3. Why do you think the 1835 edition used code names like Enoch and Shederlaomach? How does that impact your view of the text as pure revelation versus historical record?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Lively Member – The desire to be active and alive in God's work is good. In Christ, we are made alive (regenerated) by the Spirit, not by our own effort to be 'lively.' [Ephesians 2:4-5 ('God... made us alive together with Christ')]
2. United Order (Care for Poor) – The early church also shared all things in common, driven by the love of Christ. This reflects a heart that wants to care for the body. [Acts 4:32 ('Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul...')]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety [Severe] – The believer is burdened with the knowledge that their eternal blessing is contingent on their ability to keep 'all' commandments, creating a cycle of striving and fear of failure.
2. Uncertainty [Moderate] – Because the canon is open and administrative decisions are framed as divine revelation, the believer must constantly adjust to new mandates, lacking the stability of a finished revelation.
3. Institutional Pressure [Moderate] – The command to be a 'lively member' places spiritual value on organizational activity, potentially equating busyness with godliness.

PISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation

Verification Method: Obedience to the prophet's instruction is the primary mode of verification; the text assumes the authority of the speaker.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelicals test all claims against the closed canon of the Bible (Acts 17:11). This text relies on the ongoing, open canon mediated through Joseph Smith.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: March 15, 1833

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This text (Section 93 in 1835) is Section 92 in modern editions. The 1835 edition used code names (Enoch, Shederlaomach) which were replaced by real names (Joseph Smith, Frederick G. Williams) in the 1981 edition.