

SECTION 106

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 2013 | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 106, received in November 1834, is a personal revelation directed to Warren A. Cowdery, the brother of Oliver Cowdery. In this text, the voice of the Lord (through Joseph Smith) appoints Warren to the office of 'presiding high priest' over the church in Freedom, New York. The text outlines specific duties: he is to preach the 'everlasting gospel,' warn the people of the surrounding regions, and devote his 'whole time' to this calling. The revelation utilizes strong eschatological language, warning that the Second Coming is approaching like a 'thief in the night,' urging spiritual preparedness. Significantly, the text commends Warren for 'bowing to my scepter' and separating himself from the 'crafts of men'-a phrase denoting his conversion to Mormonism and rejection of previous religious affiliations. The text concludes with a conditional promise of grace, assurance, and a 'crown in the mansions of my Father,' contingent upon Warren humbling himself and continuing as a faithful witness.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), Warren A. Cowdery (Recipient), Joseph Smith (The Revelator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. ECCLESIASTICAL HIGH PRIESTHOOD

Assertion: Individuals can be ordained as 'presiding high priests' to govern local church units.

"It is my will that my servant Warren A. Cowdery should be appointed and ordained a presiding high priest over my church (106:1)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the office of High Priest was fulfilled and terminated by Jesus Christ, as detailed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews 7 argues that because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood that does not pass to others. Consequently, the New Testament church has elders/pastors and deacons, but no 'High Priests.' D&C 106 re-establishes a hierarchical High Priesthood on earth, implying that Christ's mediation is administered through a human priestly order, violating the principle of the Universal Priesthood of Believers.

2. CONDITIONAL ASSURANCE

Assertion: Grace, assurance, and eternal reward are contingent upon continuous personal faithfulness and humility.

"I will lift him up inasmuch as he will humble himself... and if he continue to be a faithful witness... I have prepared a crown for him (106:7-8)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text presents a transactional soteriology. The promise of being 'lifted up' is qualified by 'inasmuch as he will humble himself,' and the 'crown' is qualified by 'if he continue.' In Evangelical theology, while good works are evidence of faith, they are not the condition for maintaining justification. The assurance of salvation in the Bible (e.g., Romans 8:38-39, 1 John 5:13) rests on the immutability of God's promise and Christ's sufficiency, whereas this text places the burden of maintaining 'assurance' on the believer's behavioral consistency.

3. EXCLUSIVITY OF THE RESTORATION

Assertion: Joining the Mormon church is equated with separating from the 'crafts of men' and bowing to God's scepter.

"joy in heaven when my servant Warren bowed to my scepter, and separated himself from the crafts of men (106:6)"

Evangelical Comparison: The phrase 'crafts of men' is a derogatory reference to other religious traditions (likely Protestant denominations Warren was previously associated with). By framing conversion to Mormonism as 'bowing to my scepter,' the text conflates submission to God with submission to Joseph Smith's ecclesiastical structure. This violates the Evangelical understanding of the Church Universal, which includes all true believers in Christ regardless of denominational affiliation.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The primary theological gap lies in Ecclesiology and Soteriology. Ecclesiologically, D&C 106 establishes a priesthood hierarchy that mediates between God and man, obscuring the access believers have through Christ alone (Hebrews 4:16). Soteriologically, the text presents a 'probationary' view of salvation where a 'crown' is prepared but held in reserve pending the subject's ability to 'continue to be a faithful witness.' This introduces a works-righteousness paradigm that undermines the Evangelical doctrine of Sola Fide, where justification is a declared status, not a future reward for performance.

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Christ; Importance of humility; Call to evangelism/preaching; Concept that ministry laborers deserve support

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Universal Priesthood / Christology – Re-establishing human High Priests usurps Christ's unique role and denies the priesthood of all believers.
2. [Major] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation/Reward is conditional on ongoing personal performance ('if he continue').
3. [Major] Ecclesiology – Claims exclusive authority ('my scepter') and denigrates other Christians ('crafts of men').

Semantic Warnings:

"High Priest"

In Text: An ecclesiastical office of governance within the church hierarchy.

Evangelical: A title reserved for Jesus Christ alone in the New Covenant; or the Levitical order in the Old Covenant.

Example: *In D&C 106, Warren is a 'High Priest.' In Hebrews 4:14, 'We have a great high priest... Jesus the Son of God.'*

"Gospel"

In Text: The 'everlasting gospel' implies the restored LDS system of ordinances, priesthood, and authority.

Evangelical: The good news of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Example: *Preaching the gospel in D&C 106 involves warning people to join the restoration; in the NT, it is inviting people to trust Christ's atonement.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Being 'lifted up,' receiving 'grace and assurance,' and obtaining a 'crown in the mansions of my Father.'

How Attained: Through bowing to the scepter (joining the church), humbling oneself, and continuing as a faithful witness (works/endurance).

Basis of Assurance: Conditional upon future behavior ('if he continue').

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly opposes Sola Fide by making the 'crown' contingent on the believer's continuity in works rather than Christ's continuity in intercession.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Preach the everlasting gospel
2. Warn the people in Freedom and adjoining counties
3. Devote whole time to this high and holy calling
4. Seek diligently the kingdom of heaven
5. Gird up loins
6. Humble himself

Implicit Obligations:

1. Submit to the ecclesiastical hierarchy ('bowed to my scepter')
2. Reject previous religious affiliations ('separated from crafts of men')
3. Maintain continuous faithfulness to secure the crown

Ritual Requirements:

1. Ordination as a High Priest

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 8, the Lord promises a crown 'if' Warren continues to be faithful. How do you personally measure if you have been faithful *enough* to secure that crown?
2. The text mentions Warren 'bowed to my scepter.' Do you see that scepter as Jesus Himself, or the specific authority of the church organization?
3. Verse 1 appoints a 'presiding high priest.' How do you reconcile this with Hebrews 7, which says Jesus holds the priesthood permanently so there is no need for other high priests?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The desire for 'Assurance' – The text acknowledges the human need for assurance to stand before God. The Gospel provides this assurance not through our performance, but through the Spirit testifying of our adoption. [Romans 8:15-16 ('The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.')]
2. Joy in Heaven – This echoes Jesus' teaching that heaven rejoices over repentance. It bridges to the Gospel by shifting the focus from joining a system ('bowing to a scepter') to the repentance of a sinner trusting Christ. [Luke 15:7 ('There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents...')]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Intermediary Reliance [Moderate] – The believer is taught to rely on a human hierarchy (High Priests) for spiritual governance, creating a barrier to the direct access provided by Christ.
2. Performance Anxiety [Severe] – The 'If/Then' structure of verse 8 ('if he continue') places the burden of final salvation on the believer's endurance, potentially causing anxiety about whether one has done enough.
3. Isolation/Elitism [Moderate] – By defining other faiths as 'crafts of men,' the text isolates the believer from the broader body of Christ, fostering an 'us vs. them' mentality.

EPISTEMOLOGY

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

Verification Method: Implicitly, the verification is the fulfillment of the promises 'if' the conditions are met, and the internal spiritual confirmation of the 'joy in heaven.'

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelicals test prophecy against the closed canon of Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:21, Acts 17:11). This text demands acceptance based on the authority of the revelator (Smith) rather than biblical alignment.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: November 25, 1834

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: The text was edited for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. Original manuscript evidence shows minor variations common to the compilation process.