

SECTION 14

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

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 14 is a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith in June 1829, addressed to David Whitmer, who would become one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. The text adopts the voice of Jesus Christ, announcing a 'great and marvelous work' (the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the church). It utilizes heavy biblical imagery, particularly the metaphor of the field being 'white already to harvest.' Theologically, the text is significant for its early definition of soteriology within the developing Mormon movement. It posits a direct correlation between missionary labor ('thrust in his sickle') and the acquisition of salvation ('treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation'). Furthermore, it establishes a conditional covenant for Eternal Life, stating that it is the 'greatest of all the gifts of God' yet contingent upon the recipient keeping the commandments 'in all things' and enduring to the end. This section serves as a foundational call to action for early converts, merging the identity of the believer with the success of the institutional movement.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), David Whitmer (The Recipient), Joseph Smith (The Revelator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL ETERNAL LIFE

Assertion: Eternal life is a gift from God, but it is conditionally granted based on strict obedience to commandments and enduring to the end.

"And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God. (D&C 14:7)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, 'Eternal Life' is synonymous with salvation and is a present possession of the believer upon the exercise of faith in Christ (John 5:24, 1 John 5:11-13). It is not a reward for endurance, but the power that enables endurance. D&C 14:7, however, structures Eternal Life as the reward at the end of a probation period ('endure to the end'). The conditional 'if' clause ('if you keep my commandments') introduces a works-righteousness paradigm where the 'greatest gift' is effectively a wage earned through behavioral compliance, contradicting the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. SOTERIOLOGICAL LABOR

Assertion: One's own salvation is treasured up or secured through the act of laboring in the harvest (missionary work).

"thrust in his sickle with his might... that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God. (D&C 14:3)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text commands the adherent to 'thrust in his sickle' specifically 'that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation.' This grammatical construction implies purpose and causality: the work is done ~~in order to~~ secure salvation. In contrast, the Evangelical baseline asserts that works done to secure salvation are 'filthy rags' (Isaiah 64:6) and that salvation is 'not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:9). Here, the missionary effort is not merely an expression of gratitude, but a mechanism for accumulating spiritual standing.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While D&C 14 uses familiar KJV terminology ('harvest,' 'sickle,' 'eternal life'), the theological definitions are fundamentally different. The primary gap lies in the mechanism of salvation. The text presents a synergistic model where human effort ('thrust in his sickle,' 'keep my commandments') is the prerequisite for 'treasuring up' salvation. This violates the Evangelical tenet of Sola Fide. Additionally, the

text asserts that the 'fulness of my gospel' (v10) is something being brought forth ~~now*~~ (via the Book of Mormon), implying the Bible is insufficient or incomplete, which violates Sola Scriptura.

Shared Values:

Jesus is the Son of the Living God (v9); Jesus is the Creator (v9); Importance of prayer (v5); Urgency of spiritual harvest (v3)

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation/Eternal Life is explicitly conditioned on 'keeping commandments in all things' and laboring in the harvest.
2. [Critical] Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone) – The text claims to be new, binding revelation from God, adding to the canon and redefining the 'fulness of the gospel.'

Semantic Warnings:

"Eternal Life"

In Text: The highest state of exaltation, conditional on keeping commandments in all things and enduring to the end.

Evangelical: The present possession of every believer in Jesus Christ, granted freely by grace (John 3:36, Romans 6:23).

Example: In D&C 14:7, *Eternal Life* is an 'if/then' reward. In Romans 6:23, it is a 'gift of God' through Christ, distinct from wages.

"Fulness of my gospel"

In Text: The contents of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration (v10).

Evangelical: The complete revelation of God's grace in Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament (Colossians 1:19-23).

Example: The text claims the 'fulness' is coming from Gentiles to Israel (v10), referring to the Book of Mormon, whereas Evangelicals believe the Gospel was fully delivered in the New Testament.

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Eternal Life (v7), framed as the greatest gift of God, but distinct from general resurrection.

How Attained: By thrusting in the sickle (missionary work), keeping commandments in all things, and enduring to the end.

Basis of Assurance: There is no present assurance; assurance is prospective, based on the condition 'if you keep...'

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly contradicts Sola Fide. D&C 14:7 says 'If you keep my commandments... you shall have eternal life.' Romans 3:28 says 'man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Give heed to my word (v2)
2. Thrust in his sickle with his might (v3)
3. Ask and knock (v5)
4. Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion (v6)
5. Keep my commandments in all things (v6)
6. Assist in the work (v11)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith as the channel for God's voice
2. Accept the 'marvelous work' (Book of Mormon) as the fulness of the gospel
3. Commit to lifelong endurance in the specific cause of Mormonism

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 7, it says you receive eternal life 'if' you keep the commandments. How do you define 'keeping the commandments'-is it perfection, or something else?
2. Verse 3 says we 'treasure up' salvation by laboring. How does that fit with the idea that Jesus paid it all on the cross?
3. When the text says 'keep my commandments in all things' (v6), how does that make you feel about your current standing with God?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Harvest – Just as the text notes the urgency of the harvest, the Bible speaks of the urgency of reconciliation. However, the 'Lord of the Harvest' (Matt 9:38) sends laborers who are already sons, not slaves working to earn their sonship. [Matthew 9:37-38]
2. The Two-Edged Sword – The Word of God exposes our hearts. In Mormonism, this exposure leads to a demand for works. In the Gospel, this exposure leads us to the Cross because we see our inability to keep commandments 'in all things.' [Hebrews 4:12-13]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Perfectionism/Legalism [Severe] – The command to 'keep my commandments in all things' (v6) combined with the conditional 'if' for eternal life (v7) creates a crushing burden. The believer can never be certain they have done enough or kept commandments perfectly enough to qualify.
2. Uncertainty of Salvation [Moderate] – Because salvation is linked to 'enduring to the end' (v7), the adherent cannot possess the peace of assurance today. They are always on probation.
3. Performance Pressure [Moderate] – The instruction to 'thrust in his sickle with his might' to 'treasure up' salvation links spiritual security to burnout-inducing levels of activity.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Subjective spiritual experience (revelation) mediated through a prophet.

Verification Method: Asking the Father in the name of Christ to receive the Holy Ghost as a witness of 'these things' (the Restoration/Book of Mormon) (v8).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology tests spirits against the objective standard of Scripture (1 John 4:1, Acts 17:11). D&C 14 relies on an internal spiritual witness to validate new propositional revelation that stands outside the Bible.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: June 1829

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: Part of the 'Whitmer revelations' (D&C 14-16). D&C 15 and 16 are identical except for the names addressed, suggesting a template revelation. D&C 14 is unique but shares phrasing with D&C 4 and 6.