

# SECTION 42

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

## OVERVIEW

Received in February 1831 shortly after Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, Section 42 is historically and theologically designated as 'The Law' of the Church. It fulfills a previous promise that the Saints would receive God's law upon gathering in Ohio. The text functions as a new Leviticus or Constitution for the restoration movement. It outlines the duties of the priesthood, reiterates and expands upon the Ten Commandments (with specific penalties including excommunication), and introduces the Law of Consecration—a communal economic system where property is deeded to the Bishop for the care of the poor. Theologically, it asserts that the Bible and Book of Mormon contain the 'fulness of the gospel' while simultaneously keeping the canon open for future revelations. It establishes a strict cause-and-effect soteriology where salvation is explicitly contingent upon obedience to these new laws, and it introduces the concept that murder is a sin for which there is 'no forgiveness' in this world or the next, a significant departure from traditional Christian soteriology.

## KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), Joseph Smith (The Prophet), Sidney Rigdon (Counselor), Edward Partridge (First Bishop)

## DOCTRINES ANALYZED

### 1. CONDITIONAL SALVATION VIA LAW-KEEPING

**Assertion:** Salvation is the direct result of obeying the laws and commandments outlined in this revelation.

*"And he that doeth according to these things shall be saved, and he that doeth them not shall be damned if he so continue. (D&C 42:60)"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** In Evangelical theology, the law functions to reveal sin and lead to Christ (Galatians 3:24), but it cannot save. Romans 3:20 states, 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.' D&C 42:60 inverts this by establishing a new law code and explicitly stating that 'he that doeth... shall be saved.' This moves the locus of salvation from the finished work of Christ to the ongoing obedience of the adherent. While Evangelicals believe works are the fruit of salvation, this text presents them as the prerequisite for it.

### 2. THE UNFORGIVABLE NATURE OF MURDER

**Assertion:** Murder is a sin that cannot be forgiven in this life or the next.

*"Thou shalt not kill; and he that kills shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come. (D&C 42:18)"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** The Bible records the redemption of murderers (Moses, David) and accomplices to murder (Paul). 1 John 1:7 declares that 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL sin.' D&C 42:18 places a limit on the efficacy of the Atonement, suggesting that the sin of murder is beyond the reach of Christ's forgiving power. This creates a theological category of sins that are intrinsically unforgivable, distinct from the biblical 'unpardonable sin' (blasphemy of the Spirit), thereby diminishing the scope of the Cross.

### 3. ECCLESIASTICAL ECONOMIC CONTROL (CONSECRATION)

**Assertion:** Believers must legally deed their property to the Bishop, who then grants a stewardship back to them.

*"consecrate of thy properties... with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken... laid before the bishop of my church (D&C 42:30-31)"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** In Acts 5:4, Peter confirms to Ananias that his property remained in his own power ('Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?'). Evangelicalism upholds private property stewardship where the individual is accountable to God. D&C 42 institutes a theocratic communism where the Bishop holds legal title to the community's assets ('deed which cannot be broken'), and the member becomes a steward of what was formerly their own. This fuses spiritual authority with absolute economic control.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

**Theological Gap:** While D&C 42 reiterates moral absolutes shared by Evangelicals (Ten Commandments), the framework is fundamentally different. In Evangelicalism, the moral law guides the sanctification of a believer who is already justified by faith. In D&C 42, the moral law is the condition for salvation ('he that doeth... shall be saved'). Furthermore, the text introduces 'The Law' not just as moral precepts, but as a civil and economic structure (Consecration) managed by a hierarchy. The assertion that murder is unforgivable (v18) and the requirement of extra-biblical ordination (v11) sever the text from orthodox Protestant theology.

Shared Values:

Prohibition of murder, theft, adultery, and lying; Compassion for the poor; Healing the sick through prayer; Importance of evangelism

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds the Book of Mormon and current revelations as binding law equal to or superseding the Bible.
- 2. [Critical] Sola Fide – Explicitly links salvation to the performance of the law (v60).
- 3. [Critical] Christology (Sufficiency of Atonement) – Claims murder cannot be forgiven, implying Christ's blood is insufficient for certain sins.
- 4. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchy where the Bishop controls property and access to forgiveness.

Semantic Warnings:

<p><b>"Salvation"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> A state achieved through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Church (v60).</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> Deliverance from sin and death through faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>In D&amp;C 42:60, salvation is the reward for doing; in the Bible, salvation is the gift that enables doing.</i></p>
<p><b>"The Scriptures"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> The Bible, the Book of Mormon, and these new revelations (v12, v59).</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments (2 Timothy 3:16).</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>Verse 12 commands teaching principles from 'the Bible and the Book of Mormon' as co-equal sources.</i></p>

SOTERIOLOGY

**Salvation Defined:** Being 'saved' is the result of doing the works of the law (v60) and enduring to the end.

**How Attained:** Through belief, baptism, ordination, and strict obedience to the 'law of the Church' (v11-13, v60).

**Basis of Assurance:** Assurance is based on the 'Spirit' confirming one's standing and the approval of the Bishop.

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** D&C 42:60 ('he that doeth... shall be saved') is the antithesis of Romans 4:5 ('to him that worketh not, but believeth... his faith is counted for righteousness').

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Go forth preaching the gospel two by two (v6)
- 2. Baptize with water (v7)
- 3. Ordain preachers by authority (v11)
- 4. Do not kill, steal, lie, or commit adultery (v18-24)
- 5. Love thy wife with all thy heart (v22)
- 6. Consecrate properties to the bishop with a deed (v30)
- 7. Remember the poor (v30)

8. Do not be idle (v42)
9. Heal the sick by laying on of hands (v44)

#### **Implicit Obligations:**

1. Submit to the Bishop's judgment regarding personal financial needs (v33)
2. Report offenders to the church elders (v89)
3. Accept the Book of Mormon as equal to the Bible (v12)

#### **Ritual Requirements:**

1. Baptism (v7)
2. Ordination (v11)
3. Laying on of hands for the sick (v44)
4. Consecration of property (v30)

### **EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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#### **Discovery Questions:**

1. In verse 18, it says murderers have no forgiveness in this world or the next. How does that fit with the story of King David or the Apostle Paul?
2. Verse 60 says 'he that doeth according to these things shall be saved.' How do you balance that with Ephesians 2:8 which says we are saved by grace through faith, not of works?
3. When verse 30 talks about consecrating properties with a 'deed which cannot be broken,' does that mean the church owns the property or the individual?
4. If the Bible and Book of Mormon contain the 'fulness of the gospel' (v12), why was this additional 'Law' necessary for the church?

#### **Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The Desire for Zion (New Jerusalem) – The text reflects a deep human longing for a holy city and a perfect society. This longing is fulfilled not by building a city in Missouri, but in the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven (Revelation 21), prepared by Christ, not by human hands. [Hebrews 11:10, 16]
2. Consecration/Care for the Poor – The desire to care for the needy is godly. However, true charity flows from the transformed heart of a believer (fruit of the Spirit) rather than a legalistic transfer of deeds. Christ became poor so we might become rich (2 Cor 8:9). [2 Corinthians 8:9, 1 John 3:17]

#### **Spiritual Weight:**

1. Performance Anxiety / Legalism [Severe] – The adherent is placed under a 'law' where salvation is contingent on 'doing' (v60). This creates a treadmill of works where one can never be certain they have done enough to merit salvation.
2. Uncertainty of Truth [Moderate] – With an open canon ('revelation upon revelation', v61), the believer has no fixed standard. The rules can change at any moment through the head of the church, leading to instability.
3. Fear of Unforgivable Failure [Severe] – The declaration that certain sins (like murder) have 'no forgiveness' (v18) introduces a terrifying limit to God's grace, potentially leading to despair for those with checkered pasts.
4. Financial Control [Severe] – The requirement to deed property to the Bishop (v30) creates a high-control environment where financial independence is surrendered to ecclesiastical authority.

### **EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Ongoing Revelation and the 'Spirit of Truth'.

**Verification Method:** Asking God in the name of Christ (v3, v61) and observing the 'Spirit' given by the prayer of faith (v14).

**Evangelical Contrast:** Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective standard of the written Word (2 Timothy 3:16) as the final test for truth. D&C 42 relies on subjective spiritual experience and the authoritative pronouncements of the Prophet/Bishop.

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM

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**Dating:** February 9 and 23, 1831.

**Authorship:** Joseph Smith (dictated).

**Textual Issues:** This section is a composite of two separate revelations combined into one. Early manuscripts show variations in the laws of consecration as the system evolved.