

SECTION 43

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

OVERVIEW

Given in February 1831 in Kirtland, Ohio, Doctrine and Covenants Section 43 addresses a crisis of authority where other members were claiming to receive revelations for the Church. The text decisively consolidates spiritual authority, declaring that only the one appointed (Joseph Smith) can receive commandments and revelations for the entire body. It establishes a succession protocol where Smith alone can appoint his successor if his power is taken. The latter half of the text shifts to eschatology, commanding elders to preach repentance to the nations because the 'great day of the Lord' is imminent. It utilizes apocalyptic imagery (thunders, lightnings, trumpets) to describe God's voice calling humanity to repentance before the Millennium. The text explicitly links the receipt of 'mysteries of the kingdom' to the material support of Joseph Smith.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, The Elders of the Church, Satan

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. EXCLUSIVE PROPHETIC CHANNEL

Assertion: Only one man at a time is appointed to receive commandments and revelations for the Church.

"there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken... none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him (D&C 43:3-4)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical theology holds to the 'priesthood of all believers' (1 Peter 2:9), meaning all Christians have direct access to God through Christ without a human mediator for spiritual truth. Furthermore, Evangelicals believe the canon of Scripture is closed (Jude 1:3). D&C 43 establishes a strict hierarchy where the 'mind of God' for the community is accessible only through a single human individual. This creates a dependency on the leader for truth that Evangelicals reserve for Scripture alone.

2. MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR REVELATION

Assertion: Providing food and clothing for the prophet is a condition for receiving the mysteries of the kingdom.

"if ye desire the mysteries of the kingdom, provide for him food and raiment... And if ye do it not he shall remain unto them that have received him (D&C 43:13-14)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text explicitly links the provision of 'food and raiment' for Joseph Smith with the community's access to 'mysteries of the kingdom.' In Evangelical thought, spiritual truth and growth are free gifts of grace, accessible to the poor and rich alike through the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 55:1). This transactional structure—support the leader to get the mysteries—raises concerns regarding spiritual manipulation and contrasts with Paul's refusal to be a burden on the churches (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

3. SANCTIFICATION THROUGH LAW

Assertion: Believers are sanctified by receiving and acting upon the laws given through the prophet.

"ye shall become instructed in the law of my church, and be sanctified by that which ye have received (D&C 43:9)"

Evangelical Comparison: D&C 43:9 posits that instruction in the 'law of my church' leads to sanctification. This reflects a legalistic framework where holiness is achieved through adherence to the specific polity and commandments revealed through Smith. Evangelicalism teaches that the law cannot sanctify; rather, the Spirit sanctifies the believer who is justified by faith (Galatians 3:2-3, 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the structure of authority and revelation. Evangelicalism posits that the Canon is closed and the Holy Spirit illuminates Scripture for all believers. D&C 43 posits an open

canon that is functionally controlled by one man. If that man is not supported materially and obeyed, the 'mysteries' are withheld. This creates a 'Prophetic Papacy' that exceeds even Roman Catholic claims of infallibility by allowing the leader to generate new 'commandments for a law' (v. 2) that bind the conscience of the church, effectively superseding previous scripture.

Shared Values:

Belief in the Second Coming of Christ; Necessity of Repentance; Jesus Christ as Savior; Reality of Judgment and Millennium

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Asserts that new commandments and laws are being generated that are binding on the church, outside of the Bible.
2. [Major] Sola Gratia – Conditions the receipt of 'mysteries' and 'glory' on works (providing for the prophet) and obedience to law.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Restricts the reception of valid revelation for the community to a single individual.

Semantic Warnings:

"Sanctified"

In Text: The result of being instructed in and acting upon the laws/polity of the church (v. 9).

Evangelical: The process of being made holy by the Holy Spirit through faith in the truth (John 17:17).

Example: *In D&C 43, you are sanctified by receiving the law of the church; in the Bible, you are sanctified by the Spirit.*

"Mysteries"

In Text: Hidden knowledge or deeper doctrines available conditionally based on supporting the prophet (v. 13).

Evangelical: Truths once hidden but now fully revealed to all saints through the Gospel (Colossians 1:26).

Example: *Paul says the mystery is Christ in you (Col 1:27); D&C 43 implies mysteries are withheld pending support of Joseph Smith.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Redemption, reigning with Christ on earth (v. 29), and escaping the 'unquenchable fire' (v. 33).

How Attained: Through repentance, binding oneself to act in holiness, and upholding the appointed prophet.

Basis of Assurance: Obedience to the commandments given through the prophet.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text emphasizes 'laboring' and 'acting in all holiness' to secure the kingdom. It does not mention justification by faith alone. Salvation is framed as an outcome of endurance and obedience to the new laws.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Harken to the words of the appointed one (v. 1)
2. Do not receive teachings as revelation from anyone else (v. 5-6)
3. Instruct and edify each other in the law (v. 8)
4. Purge out iniquity (v. 11)
5. Appoint, uphold, and provide food/raiment for Joseph Smith (v. 12-13)
6. Lift up voices and call nations to repent (v. 20)
7. Labor in the vineyard for the last time (v. 28)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's potential successor only if appointed by Joseph Smith
2. View natural disasters as the voice of God calling for repentance

Ritual Requirements:

1. Ordination must be done 'at the gate' as previously instructed (v. 7)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. This section says only one person can receive commandments for the Church. How do you handle it if that person says something that contradicts the Bible?
2. Verse 13 says providing food and clothing for Joseph Smith was necessary to receive the 'mysteries of the kingdom.' How does that compare to the Gospel being 'without money and without price' (Isaiah 55:1)?
3. If God speaks through nature (thunder, lightning) to call us to repentance, what is the specific role of the prophet that we cannot get from Scripture and the Holy Spirit?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Hen and Chickens – This image captures the heart of God—protective, self-sacrificing, and gathering. It is a direct link to Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. [Matthew 23:37]
2. The Voice of Warning – God uses various means to wake us from spiritual slumber. This aligns with the biblical idea that creation testifies of God, leaving men without excuse. [Romans 1:20]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Dependency/Vulnerability [Severe] – The believer is forced to rely entirely on one human individual for the 'laws' of the church. If that leader errs, the follower has no mechanism to correct them, creating a high-stakes spiritual vulnerability.
2. Performance/Transactionalism [Moderate] – The text implies that access to deep spiritual truth ('mysteries') is contingent on financial/material support of the leader. This creates a burden where spiritual growth is purchased through works.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Authoritative Revelation via a Single Mediator.

Verification Method: Internal assurance ('ye shall know assuredly' v. 3) derived from obeying the command to listen only to the appointed one.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology encourages testing all spirits against Scripture (1 John 4:1, Acts 17:11). D&C 43 restricts testing by declaring that valid revelation **only** comes through one source, creating a circular verification loop.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: February 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: The text is a direct response to the activities of a 'Mrs. Hubble' who claimed to be a prophetess. The revelation serves a specific administrative function to delegitimize her.