

SECTION 6

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

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 6 is a pivotal revelation given in April 1829, shortly after Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, to assist Joseph Smith. The text serves a dual purpose: it validates Joseph Smith's prophetic calling to Oliver, and it commissions Oliver into the work of translation. Theologically, it establishes the early Mormon epistemological standard—truth is verified by a feeling of 'peace' to the mind (v. 23) rather than solely by objective evidence. It also articulates a soteriology that blends grace with heavy conditionalism; salvation is described as a 'harvest' that one must 'treasure up' through labor (v. 3) and is contingent upon 'doing good' and 'holding out faithful to the end' (v. 13). The text employs heavy biblical borrowing, particularly from Johannine literature, to cloak these new directives in familiar Christian language. It culminates in a command to look to Christ in every thought to overcome fear, establishing a high-demand psychological framework for the believer.

KEY FIGURES

Jesus Christ (The Speaker), Oliver Cowdery (The Recipient), Joseph Smith (The Prophet)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL SALVATION (MERIT-BASED)

Assertion: Salvation is a reward ('treasure') accumulated through labor and secured by enduring in good works to the end.

"reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation... If thou wilt do good... thou shalt be saved (D&C 6:3, 13)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, salvation is a finished work of Christ received by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), and good works are the fruit, not the root, of that salvation. D&C 6 reverses this order, presenting salvation as a future contingency dependent on the adherent's performance. The text commands the reader to 'reap' specifically so they may 'treasure up' salvation, implying that salvation is a wage for the harvesting work. Verse 13 explicitly structures salvation as an 'If/Then' proposition based on 'doing good' and 'holding out faithful,' effectively placing the burden of securing eternal life on the believer's endurance rather than Christ's sufficiency.

2. SUBJECTIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

Assertion: Truth is confirmed by an internal emotional state ('peace to your mind') rather than objective testing.

"Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God? (D&C 6:23)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelicalism relies on the objective standard of the closed canon of Scripture to test truth claims. D&C 6 elevates subjective experience—specifically a feeling of peace or enlightenment—to the status of 'witness from God.' This creates a closed loop where the text validates itself by appealing to the reader's emotions, bypassing the objective scrutiny of historical or biblical consistency. It redefines 'faith' as trust in these internal impressions.

3. RESTORATION OF HIDDEN SCRIPTURE

Assertion: Biblical records are insufficient because parts of the gospel were 'kept back' due to wickedness.

"bring to light... those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity (D&C 6:27)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text asserts that the existing scriptures (the Bible) are incomplete or corrupted ('hidden because of iniquity'). This undermines confidence in the Bible and creates a necessity for Joseph Smith's 'translation' work to restore lost truths. Evangelicalism holds that God has preserved His Word and that the Bible is sufficient for salvation and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17), rejecting the notion that essential gospel truths were lost or hidden.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While using familiar Christian terminology, D&C 6 fundamentally alters the mechanism of salvation. In Evangelicalism, the 'work' of salvation was finished by Christ (John 19:30). In D&C 6, the 'work' is something the believer must participate in to 'treasure up' salvation. The text shifts the focus from the finished atonement to the ongoing performance of the believer. Furthermore, the authority structure is shifted from the text of the Bible to the living prophet (Joseph) and the subjective experience of the believer, insulating the system from external correction.

Shared Values:

Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God; Call to repentance; Desire to do good; Rejection of materialism (seek not riches)

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] **Sola Fide** – Salvation is presented as a reward for labor ('reap... treasure up') and conditional on endurance ('if thou wilt do good... thou shalt be saved').
2. [Major] **Christology (Sufficiency of Work)** – Implies Christ's work makes salvation ***possible*** but the believer's work makes it ***actual***.
3. [Critical] **Sola Scriptura** – Elevates subjective feelings ('peace') and new revelation through Joseph Smith to the level of scripture, claiming the Bible is incomplete.
4. [Major] **Sola Scriptura (Canon)** – Asserts that parts of the gospel were 'kept back' and 'hidden,' necessitating new scripture.

Semantic Warnings:

"Salvation"

In Text: A future reward ('treasure') earned by reaping, doing good, and holding out faithful.

Evangelical: Deliverance from sin and death, granted immediately upon faith in Christ as a free gift (Ephesians 2:8).

Example: D&C 6:3 says '*reap... that he may treasure up... salvation,*' whereas Romans 6:23 says '*the gift of God is eternal life.*'

"Witness"

In Text: An internal feeling of peace or mental enlightenment.

Evangelical: Legal or historical testimony; the Holy Spirit bearing witness to the identity of believers as children of God (Romans 8:16), not necessarily confirming new informational truth claims.

Example: D&C 6:23 asks '*Did I not speak peace... What greater witness can you have?*'

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: A reward ('treasure') in the kingdom of God, the 'greatest of all the gifts,' but contingent on behavior.

How Attained: By thrusting in the sickle (labor), keeping commandments, doing good, and holding out faithful to the end.

Basis of Assurance: Personal performance and internal feelings of peace.

Comparison to Sola Fide: D&C 6:13 ('If thou wilt do good... thou shalt be saved') stands in direct contrast to Titus 3:5 ('Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us').

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Thrust in your sickle and reap (v3)
2. Keep my commandments (v6, v9, v37)
3. Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion (v6)
4. Seek not for riches but for wisdom (v7)

5. Say nothing but repentance unto this generation (v9)
6. Trifle not with sacred things (v12)
7. Stand by my servant Joseph (v18)
8. Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not (v36)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's authority as God's servant
2. Rely on internal feelings as the primary method of truth verification
3. Validate Oliver Cowdery's subservient role to Joseph

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 13, it says 'If thou wilt do good... thou shalt be saved.' How do you know when you have done enough good to secure that promise?
2. Verse 23 speaks of peace as a witness. Is it possible for someone to feel peace about something that isn't true? How does the Bible say we should test our feelings?
3. Verse 3 talks about 'treasuring up' salvation through labor. How does that compare to the Bible's description of salvation as a free gift that cannot be earned?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The desire for peace of mind. – The text highlights a universal human longing for peace and assurance. The Gospel answers this not with a feeling about a truth claim, but with objective peace ***with*** God through Christ. [Romans 5:1 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.']}
2. The command to look to Christ in every thought. – This is a beautiful impossibility for a human to perform perfectly. It points to our need for a Savior who ***did*** perfectly obey the Father. We look to Him not just for example, but for substitution. [Hebrews 12:2 'Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...']

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety / Uncertainty [Severe] – The text links salvation directly to 'doing good' and 'holding out faithful.' This creates a perpetual burden of performance where the believer can never be truly assured of their standing until the very end of life. The 'treasure' is always future, never a present possession.
2. Cognitive Dissonance / Psychological Monitoring [Moderate] – The command to 'Look unto me in every thought' (v36) combined with the instruction to verify truth through feelings creates a high-pressure psychological environment. The believer must constantly monitor their thoughts and feelings, interpreting any lack of peace or negative thought as a spiritual failure or lack of faith.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Subjective internal experience (feelings/thoughts) interpreted as divine revelation.

Verification Method: Recalling past feelings of peace: "Cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me... Did I not speak peace to your mind?" (v22-23).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology involves testing truth against the objective standard of written Scripture (Acts 17:11) and the apostolic tradition (Galatians 1:8). D&C 6 replaces this with an internal, subjective test that is unfalsifiable and prone to emotional manipulation.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: April 1829

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: The 'gift' mentioned in verses 10-12 is vague in the 2013 edition. In the original Book of Commandments (Chapter 5), and related historical context, this referred to Oliver Cowdery's use of a divining

rod ('rod of nature'). The text was later redacted to remove the explicit reference to the rod, changing it to 'gift of Aaron' or simply 'gift' to align with more orthodox religious sensibilities.