

SECTION 67

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

OVERVIEW

Given in November 1831, this revelation addresses a specific historical crisis where elders, including William E. McLellin, criticized the language and grammar of Joseph Smith's revelations during the compilation of the Book of Commandments. The text presents a divine challenge: the critics are invited to select the 'least' of the revelations and appoint their wisest man to write one 'like unto it.' If they succeed, they are justified in rejecting Smith's revelations; if they fail, they are under condemnation unless they bear testimony of the truthfulness of Smith's work. Beyond this apologetic challenge, the text articulates a theology of theophany. It asserts that it is the privilege of the elders to see the face of God and know Him, not just intellectually but visually. However, this privilege is predicated on the elders stripping themselves of jealousies and fears and continuing in patience until they are 'perfected' and 'worthy.' The text serves as both a defense of Joseph Smith's prophetic mantle despite his admitted 'imperfections' in language and a roadmap for the Mormon concept of exaltation, which involves literal interaction with the divine presence based on personal progression.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Jesus Christ), Joseph Smith, Jun., The Elders of the Church (specifically William E. McLellin, though unnamed), Father of lights

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE DIVINE CHALLENGE (PROPHETIC VALIDATION)

Assertion: The authenticity of scripture is proven by the inability of man to replicate its style and content.

"If there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true; But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true. (D&C 67:7-8)"

Evangelical Comparison: This doctrine establishes a subjective, experiential test for canonical authority. In Evangelical theology, the authority of Scripture (Sola Scriptura) is intrinsic, self-authenticating through the Holy Spirit, and historically grounded in the apostolic witness of the resurrection. D&C 67 shifts the burden of proof to a literary contest: if a human cannot mimic the 'voice' of the revelation, the revelation is deemed divine. This creates a logical dichotomy (replicate or submit) that bypasses objective testing of the content against prior biblical revelation (Acts 17:11).

2. CONDITIONAL THEOPHANY

Assertion: Believers can and should see the face of God in this life if they become sufficiently humble and worthy.

"It is your privilege... that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears... the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am. (D&C 67:10)"

Evangelical Comparison: D&C 67 promotes a 'knowledge by sight' epistemology where spiritual maturity is marked by rending the veil to see God. Evangelical theology maintains that while God is intimately known through the Spirit and the Word, the Beatific Vision (seeing God's essence) is reserved for the glorified state (1 John 3:2). The demand to see God 'in the flesh' (v. 11) contradicts the New Testament emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ's past incarnation and the current indwelling of the Spirit as the guarantee of future glory.

3. PERFECTION AS PREREQUISITE

Assertion: Access to God's presence is delayed until the believer is 'perfected' and 'worthy.'

"Continue in patience until ye are perfected... when ye are worthy, in mine own due time, ye shall see. (D&C 67:13-14)"

Evangelical Comparison: This text introduces a progressive merit system for access to God. The phrase 'until ye are perfected' implies that the believer's standing before God is incomplete and dependent on their own moral improvement. In contrast, Sola Fide (Faith Alone) asserts that the believer is clothed in the righteousness of

Christ (2 Cor 5:21) and has immediate boldness to enter the Holiest (Heb 10:19) not because they are worthy, but because Christ is worthy.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of access to the Divine. D&C 67 posits a 'merit-based mysticism' where the believer must strip away sin and achieve perfection to rend the veil and see God. This is a direct contradiction of the Evangelical doctrine of Sola Fide, where the veil was rent by Christ at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:51), granting access to the unworthy through faith. Furthermore, the text elevates Joseph Smith's writings to the level of binding scripture based on a subjective test of literary quality, violating the principle of Sola Scriptura and the sufficiency of the biblical canon.

Shared Values:

God hears prayers (v. 1); God is the 'Father of lights' (v. 9); Humility is necessary for spiritual growth (v. 10); God is omniscient ('heavens and earth are in mine hands') (v. 2)

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds new revelations to the canon and challenges the sufficiency of the Bible.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide – Conditions access to God's presence on personal worthiness and perfection rather than faith in Christ.
3. [Minor] Universal Priesthood – Establishes a hierarchy where specific 'ordained' elders have special access to mysteries.
4. [Major] Theology Proper – Implies God can be seen by men in the flesh, contradicting the biblical definition of God as invisible Spirit (John 4:24).

Semantic Warnings:

"Perfected"

In Text: A state of personal moral development and worthiness required to see God.

Evangelical: Often refers to maturity (*teleios*) or the imputed righteousness of Christ, not a self-achieved state triggering a vision.

Example: In D&C 67:13, '*continue in patience until ye are perfected*' suggests a process leading to a reward. In Hebrews 10:14, '*by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*'

"See God"

In Text: A literal, visual encounter with the personage of God in the flesh.

Evangelical: Often refers to spiritual perception or eschatological hope; God is spirit and invisible (1 Tim 1:17).

Example: D&C 67 promises the veil will be rent to see God's face; John 1:18 says '*No one has ever seen God.*'

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly defined here as 'seeing God' and knowing Him through the rent veil (Exaltation).

How Attained: Through stripping oneself of jealousies/fears, humbling oneself, and continuing in patience until perfected.

Basis of Assurance: Personal testimony derived from spiritual experience (visions/feelings) and adherence to the revelations.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly contrasts with Sola Fide. D&C 67:13 demands 'patience until ye are perfected' to abide God's presence, whereas Romans 5:1 says 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Behold and hearken (v. 1)
2. Seek out the least revelation from the Book of Commandments (v. 6)

3. Appoint the wisest man to attempt to write a revelation like it (v. 6)
4. Bear record that the revelations are true if unable to replicate them (v. 8)
5. Strip yourselves from jealousies and fears (v. 10)
6. Humble yourselves before God (v. 10)
7. Continue in patience until ye are perfected (v. 13)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's authority despite his grammatical or linguistic imperfections.
2. Equate the inability to mimic Joseph's writing style with proof of his divine calling.
3. Strive for a literal vision of God as a mark of spiritual maturity.

Ritual Requirements:

1. None explicitly detailed in this text, though 'ordained unto this ministry' (v. 10) implies priesthood ordination.

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 13, it says to 'continue in patience until ye are perfected.' How do you define 'perfected' in this context?
2. If seeing God's face depends on your worthiness (v. 10, 14), how can you ever be sure you are worthy enough?
3. The text says fears prevented the blessing (v. 3). Do you ever feel that your doubts or fears are the only reason God isn't answering you?
4. How does the promise of seeing God 'when ye are worthy' compare to the biblical promise that we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19)?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Desire to See God – Every human heart longs to see the Creator. D&C 67 says this happens through your perfection. The Gospel says this happens because Jesus was the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) and we will see Him face to face in glory because of His grace. [1 John 3:2]
2. The Imperfect Messenger – The text admits Joseph was imperfect. The Bible agrees all men are flawed. This points to the need for a perfect Mediator who is not just a prophet, but the Son of God. [Hebrews 7:26-27]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Perfectionism / Worthiness Anxiety [Severe] – The text places the burden of theophany on the believer's ability to 'strip' themselves of sin and become 'perfected.' This creates a crushing weight where the lack of spiritual visions is interpreted as a personal moral failure or lack of humility.
2. Intellectual Suppression [Moderate] – The text frames criticism of Joseph's language as a spiritual failing ('jealousies and fears'). This discourages critical thinking or honest questioning of the text's origins, labeling doubt as 'condemnation.'

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Experiential (attempting to write and failing) and Mystical (seeing God through the rent veil).

Verification Method: Adherents verify truth by attempting to replicate it (failure proves divinity) and by seeking a personal theophany.

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology is rooted in the written Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and the internal witness of the Spirit regarding the Word, not in a challenge to replicate scripture or a demand for visual manifestation.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Early November 1831

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: The text addresses the 'imperfections' of Joseph Smith's language, acknowledging that the original manuscripts of the revelations contained grammatical errors which were later edited.