

## Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 70

This section is the final revelation from the Conference held to discuss matters related to the publication of the revelations of the Church. It identifies who the stewards of those revelations are, the requirement that the revelations be published and sold, not given away. Any surplus from their sales was to go to the Bishop's Storehouse.

This section informs the persons cited in v. 1 of a stewardship over spiritual things, and then goes on to comment on the stewardship. The text can be arranged as follows:

- Introduction (v. 1)
- The Commandment (v. 2-6)
  - A - (v. 2) I give unto them a commandment
  - B - (v. 3) Appointed stewards over revelations
  - C - (v. 4) An account of this stewardship required at the day of judgement
  - B - (v. 5) Appointed to manage them and the concerns thereof
  - A - (v. 6) Wherefore a commandment I give unto them
- The minister in spiritual things is worthy of his hire (v. 7-16)
  - A - (v. 7-8) Excess given to storehouse for the benefit of Zion
  - B - (v. 9-11) Required of all in Zion, no exceptions
  - C - (v. 12) Spiritual administration is worthy of hire same as temporal administration
  - B - (v. 13-14) You shall be equal
  - A - (v. 15-16) For their benefit, for an inheritance
- Conclusion (v. 17-18)

1 Behold, and hearken, O ye inhabitants of Zion, and all ye people of my church who are afar off, and hear the word of the Lord which I give unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and also unto my servant Martin Harris, and also unto my servant Oliver Cowdery, and also unto my servant John Whitmer, and also unto my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also unto my servant William W. Phelps, by the way of commandment unto them.

v1 The particular individuals, and the Church as well, are informed of the calling of those individuals to stewardship over things pertaining to Zion.

2 For I give unto them a commandment; wherefore hearken and hear, for thus saith the Lord unto them-- 3 I, the Lord, have appointed them, and ordained them to be stewards over the revelations and commandments which I have given unto them, and which I shall hereafter give unto them; 4 And an account of this stewardship will I require of them in the day of judgment. 5

wherefore, I have appointed unto them, and this is their business in the church of God, to manage them and the concerns thereof, yea, the benefits thereof. 6 wherefore, a commandment I give unto them, that they shall not give these things unto the church, neither unto the world;

v2-6 Those named in v. 1 are informed that they have a stewardship over the revelations and commandments given to the Church. They are to manage them, and the concerns and benefits associated with them. They are to apply and enact the various laws of governance associated with the revelations.

v6 "they shall not give these things", a potentially confusing statement as what "these things" are is ambiguous. The footnote supplied to Moses 1:42 and Moses 4:32 seems to forward the idea that the revelations are not to be given to the Church or the world. This however was plainly not the case. The various revelations were published as quickly as possible among the Church through the Evening and Morning Star prior to their combined publication as the Book of Commandments, and the Lord makes no statement indicating He is displeased by it. Furthermore, the people addressed herein are the members of the Literary Firm and are tasked with publishing the revelations.

Rather, "these things" is probably a reference to the stewardship appointed to the persons in v. 1, which is the subject of the preceding ambiguous pronoun "this" in v. 5, as well as the section of text in general. Meaning, the tasking of publishing the revelations is to be handled specifically by those identified in v. 1, and they are not to delegate it to others or subcontract it out to others. This group alone is to publish these revelations.

7 Nevertheless, inasmuch as they receive more than is needful for their necessities and their wants, it shall be given into my storehouse; 8 And the benefits shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion, and unto their generations, inasmuch as they become heirs according to the laws of the kingdom.

9 Behold, this is what the Lord requires of every man in his stewardship, even as I, the Lord, have appointed or shall hereafter appoint unto any man. 10 And behold, none are exempt from this law who belong to the church of the living God; 11 Yea, neither the bishop, neither the agent who keepeth the Lord's storehouse, neither he who is appointed in a stewardship over temporal things.

12 He who is appointed to administer spiritual things, the same is worthy of his hire, even as those who are appointed to a stewardship to administer in temporal things;

13 Yea, even more abundantly, which abundance is multiplied unto them through the manifestations of the Spirit. 14 Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.

15 Now, this commandment I give unto my servants for their benefit while they remain, for a manifestation of my blessings upon their heads, and for a reward of their diligence and for their security; 16 For food and for raiment; for an inheritance; for houses and for lands, in whatsoever circumstances I, the Lord, shall place them, and whithersoever I, the Lord, shall send them.

v7-16 The minister in spiritual things is worthy of their hire (v. 12), but they are not exempted in any way from the laws of consecration that govern Zion (v. 7-11). All of them are to be counted equals (v. 13-14).

This kind of statement would obviously be made in order to avoid priestcrafts and self-promotion based on perceived spirituality. Note that it follows immediately on the heels of the calling of various persons to administrative duties within the Church that are to be compensated for.

v12 "He...to administer spiritual things, the same is worthy of his hire", for statements that all are to labor cp. Mosiah 2:14, Mosiah 18:24-29. On temporal wages for spiritual hire, cp. Luke 10:7, Alma 30:33, D&C 42:70-73, D&C 51:14. On spiritual wages for spiritual hire, cp. John 4:31-38, D&C 31:5.

The larger more immediate issue is some of them would take on the job of publishing full-time, necessitating them being compensated so they could support themselves and their families.

v13 The Spirit will help people be materially abundant, cp. Jacob. 2:19, D&C 59:16-19. This is a standard covenantal benediction, cp. Lev. 26:3-13. Naturally, if you are following the Spirit, you will also be more spiritually wealthy as well.

v14 They are to be materially equal (cp. 4 Ne. 1:3), otherwise the manifestations of the Spirit referred to in v. 13 which lead to material abundance will be withheld.

17 For they have been faithful over many things, and have done well inasmuch as they have not sinned. 18 Behold, I, the Lord, am merciful and will bless them, and they shall enter into the joy of these things. Even so. Amen.

v17-18 The section closes by saying "they" (i.e., those referred to in v. 1) have done well so far as they haven't sinned, and the Lord has endorsed them and will bless them in His mercy.

## **Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 70**

This section was received during the same conference sections 67-69 was received, and addresses those who were involved with the Literary Firm.

The revelation was first published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 152-153. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 9, pages 512-513, dated May 1, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 8, pages 113-116, dated April 15, 1852.

### **Excerpt from History of the Church**

My time was occupied closely in reviewing the commandments and sitting in conference, for nearly two weeks; for from the first to the twelfth of November we held four special conferences. In the last which was held at Brother Johnson's, in Hiram, after deliberate consideration, in consequence of the book of revelations, now to be printed, being the foundation of the Church in these last days, and a benefit to the world, showing that the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom of our Savior are again entrusted to man; and the riches of eternity within the compass of those who are willing to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God-therefore the conference voted that they prize the revelations to be worth to the Church the riches of the whole earth, speaking temporally. The great benefits to the world which result from the Book of Mormon and the revelations which the Lord has seen fit in His infinite wisdom to grant unto us for our salvation, and for the salvation of all that will believe, were duly appreciated; and in answer to an inquiry, I received the following:

[text of D&C 70 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 235-236)

### **Excerpt from Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith**

Section 70 is a revelation directed specifically to members of the Literary Firm. This firm, organized in November 1831, concerned itself with the printing of official Church literature. On 12 November 1831, the last day of the Hiram, Ohio conferences, it was decided that inasmuch as Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, John Whitmer, and Martin Harris had played such a conspicuous role in recording, preserving, and

preparing the revelations for publication, they should "have claim on the Church for recompense." It was therefore voted by those present that the above-named brethren "be appointed to manage [the sacred writings] according to the Laws of the Church and the Commandments of the Lord." These men who were to "manage" the revelations constituted the membership of the Literary Firm. Members of the partnership were consecrated in their respective responsibilities, and the profits from the sale of the Church publications were to benefit both the individual members as well as the Church at large. Items of specific concern for the Literary Firm were the printing and distribution of

- the New Translation of the Bible
- the Church hymnal
- a Church almanac
- children's literature
- Church newspapers

At the organization of the Literary Firm (mid-November 1831), William W. Phelps was included as a member, and shortly thereafter Jesse Gause was added. In 1833 Frederick G. Williams, who had replaced Gause in the presidency of the High Priesthood, also became a member. Phelps's appointment was natural because he was an experienced newspaper editor and earlier had been designated as a "printer unto the Church." Harris's selection as a charter member of the firm appears to have stemmed from his earlier financial assistance in the printing of the Book of Mormon, but his role in the Literary Firm cannot be determined, though, no doubt, his contribution was monetary, not literary. The appointments of Gause and Williams were related to their position in the presidency.

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