

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 5

This section deals with Martin Harris' standing with the Lord after the loss of the 116 pages of the translated manuscript. Harris had repented somewhat of events, but it is plain from the Lord's comments that he had not repented sufficiently (v. 24) and was still in a precarious position spiritually (v. 32).

Permitted to speculate on the historical context, it is safe to assume Harris' judgement was clouded by concerns over his commitment to financially support the publication of the BofM, as well as the ongoing conflict with his wife over various related matters.

1 Behold, I say unto you, that as my servant Martin Harris has desired a witness at my hand, that you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., have got the plates of which you have testified and borne record that you have received of me; 2 And now, behold, this shall you say unto him--he who spake unto you, said unto you: I, the Lord, am God, and have given these things unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and have commanded you that you should stand as a witness of these things; 3 And I have caused you that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you; and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you. 4 And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished.

v1-4 Message to Martin Harris, with v. 2-4 apparently containing material Smith is to communicate to Harris.

v4 "pretend to no other gift", "pretend" here is using a meaning that is pretty much obsolete, it means, "to lay claim to", or "to aspire to as a suitor or candidate" following the Latin "praetendere" meaning "to stretch forth, put forward". Basically, the Lord is informing Smith that his calling now is to translate and no additional calling will be extended until the current one is fulfilled.

5 Verily, I say unto you, that woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words; 6 For hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. 7 Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you. 8 Oh, this unbelieving and

stiffnecked generation--mine anger is kindled against them. 9 Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; 10 But this generation shall have my word through you; 11 And in addition to your testimony, the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show these things, and they shall go forth with my words that are given through you. 12 Yea, they shall know of a surety that these things are true, for from heaven will I declare it unto them. 13 I will give them power that they may behold and view these things as they are; 14 And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness--clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. 15 And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word. 16 And behold, whosoever believeth on my words, them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit; and they shall be born of me, even of water and of the Spirit-- 17 And you must wait yet a little while, for ye are not yet ordained-- 18 And their testimony shall also go forth unto the condemnation of this generation if they harden their hearts against them; 19 For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming. 20 Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified.

v5-20 Predictions of and warnings about Smith's upcoming callings after the translation of the record is finished. The Lord describes the upcoming mission of Smith as him being generally rejected (v. 5-8), but some accepting his message (v. 16).

v7 Smith is warned that people who will not receive the Lord will not receive the testimony of the Lord's servant either, cp. Matt. 5:10-12, John 5:46-47, John 15:18-21, John 16:1-3.

The Lord also tells Smith that no matter what he shows the people they will not believe, cf. Mark 8:1-21, John 4:48, Acts 2:22. If people are not humble, then the signs will not convert them, just as the people who were following Jesus because of the signs he performed at the beginning of John 6 nearly all end up abandoning him by the end of John 6. If the people are humble, then they don't need signs to convert them.

The Lord is probably subtly referring to Smith's desire to persuade people by releasing the 116 pages of text to Harris, cf.

D&C 3:7.

v14 "clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners", a quote from Song of Solomon 6:10 following the KJV. The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation, a translation straight from Hebrew to English, renders it:

Who is she that shines through like the dawn,
Beautiful as the moon,
Radiant as the sun
Awesome as bannered hosts?

They also indicate the Hebrew of the last line is obscure. The general intent is to describe the ecclesia as rising up and becoming fair maiden Zion, the bride of the Lord, as described in Isa. 52:1-2, Isa. 62:1-5.

v18 "their testimony", i.e. the testimony of the three witnesses referenced in v. 11-12.

v19 "desolating scourge", aside from those passages indicated in the footnotes, see also D&C 45:31. This verse presents more of a covenantal malediction type curse that is poured out on the inhabitants of the earth when they deserve it (cf. Lev. 26, Deut. 28) as opposed to the final Day of the Lord.

v20 For the account referred to by the Lord concerning his telling the people of the destruction of Jerusalem see Matt. 24, Luke 21. There, the material is presented as a set of signs and events to warn the faithful.

21 And now I command you, my servant Joseph, to repent and walk more uprightly before me, and to yield to the persuasions of men no more; 22 And that you be firm in keeping the commandments wherewith I have commanded you; and if you do this, behold I grant unto you eternal life, even if you should be slain.

v21-22 Personal message to Smith.

23 And now, again, I speak unto you, my servant Joseph, concerning the man that desires the witness-- 24 Behold, I say unto him, he exalts himself and does not humble himself sufficiently before me; but if he will bow down before me, and humble himself in mighty prayer and faith, in the sincerity of his heart, then will I grant unto him a view of the things which he desires to see. 25 And then he shall say unto the people of this generation: Behold, I have seen the things which the Lord hath shown unto Joseph Smith, Jun., and I know of a surety that they are true, for I have seen them, for they have been shown

unto me by the power of God and not of man. 26 And I the Lord command him, my servant Martin Harris, that he shall say no more unto them concerning these things, except he shall say: I have seen them, and they have been shown unto me by the power of God; and these are the words which he shall say. 27 But if he deny this he will break the covenant which he has before covenanted with me, and behold, he is condemned. 28 And now, except he humble himself and acknowledge unto me the things that he has done which are wrong, and covenant with me that he will keep my commandments, and exercise faith in me, behold, I say unto him, he shall have no such views, for I will grant unto him no views of the things of which I have spoken.

v23-28 Personal message to Harris.

29 And if this be the case, I command you, my servant Joseph, that you shall say unto him, that he shall do no more, nor trouble me any more concerning this matter. 30 And if this be the case, behold, I say unto thee Joseph, when thou hast translated a few more pages thou shalt stop for a season, even until I command thee again; then thou mayest translate again. 31 And except thou do this, behold, thou shalt have no more gift, and I will take away the things which I have entrusted with thee. 32 And now, because I foresee the lying in wait to destroy thee, yea, I foresee that if my servant Martin Harris humbleth not himself and receive a witness from my hand, that he will fall into transgression; 33 And there are many that lie in wait to destroy thee from off the face of the earth; and for this cause, that thy days may be prolonged, I have given unto thee these commandments. 34 Yea, for this cause I have said: Stop, and stand still until I command thee, and I will provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing which I have commanded thee. 35 And if thou art faithful in keeping my commandments, thou shalt be lifted up at the last day. Amen.

v29-35 More personal material to Smith on how to deal with Harris and some general admonitions as well.

v33 The Lord indicates that the preceding warnings and admonitions are for Smith's protection against those that would destroy him. The Lord uses many means at his disposal to protect His servants, from simple warnings to divine intervention.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 5

The first excerpt is a historical overview, and the second is a very brief comment by Smith indicating the revelation was given at Harris' request.

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Shortly after the visit of the Prophet's parents in February 1829 (see section 4), Martin Harris came to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to see Joseph Smith. Apparently humbled and repentant for having lost the 116 pages of manuscript, yet desiring to ascertain if Joseph Smith was in possession of the gold plates, Martin Harris sought out the Prophet [footnote states: Harris's concern over the plates was undoubtedly connected with his previous, yet still binding, agreement to assist in financing the printing of the Book of Mormon.]. The revelation instructed Joseph Smith to stop translating the Book of Mormon for a time. (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 11)

Excerpt from History of the Church

The following I applied for and obtained, at the request of the aforementioned Martin Harris:

[text of D&C 5 follows]

(Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, page 28)

Comparison of Original 1833 Text with Emended 1835 Version

The 1835 version clarifies some ambiguities by making the intended target explicit. As Smith had finished translating the BofM, the statements referring specifically to that work were emended. The 1833 version also removes specific accusations and replaces them with more detailed judgements instead (cf. v. 18-20 in the 1835 version). This could be the result of the generally poor reception the BofM had received among the Gentiles as well as the attack on the press that resulted in the thwarted printing of the BofC, so the warning in the 1833 version was abandoned for the judgement of 1835.

1833 Book of Commandments

1 Behold, I say unto you,
that my servant
Martin
has desired a witness
from my hand,
that my servant
Joseph
has got the things
of which he has testified,
and borne record
that he has received of me.
2 And now, behold
this shall you say unto him:--

I the Lord am God, and
I have given these things
unto my servant
Joseph, and
I have commanded him that
he should stand as a witness
of these things,
nevertheless I have caused him
that he should enter into
a covenant with me,
that he should not show them
except
I command him
and he has no power over them
except I grant it unto him;
and he has a gift
to translate the book and

1835 Doctrine & Covenants

1 Behold, I say unto you,
that as my servant
Martin Harris
has desired a witness
at my hand,
that you, my servant
Joseph Smith, Jun.,
have got the plates
of which you have testified
and borne record
that you have received of me;
2 And now, behold,
this shall you say unto him--
he who spake unto you,
said unto you:
I, the Lord, am God, and
have given these things
unto you, my servant
Joseph Smith, Jun., and
have commanded you that
you should stand as a witness
of these things;
3 And I have caused you
that you should enter into
a covenant with me,
that you should not show them
except to those persons to whom
I commanded you;
and you have no power over them
except I grant it unto you.
4 And you have a gift
to translate the plates; and
this is the first gift that

I have commanded him that
he shall pretend
to no other gift,

for I will grant him
no other gift.

3 And verily I say unto you,
that woe shall come unto
the inhabitants of the earth,
if they will not
hearken unto my words,

for behold,
if they will not believe
my words,
they would not believe
my servant Joseph,
if it were possible
that he show them
all things.

O ye unbelieving,
ye stiffnecked generation,
mine anger is kindled
against you!

4 Behold, verily I say,

I have reserved the things
of which I have spoken,
which I have intrusted
to my servant,
for a wise purpose in me,
and it shall be made known
in future generations:
But this generation
shall have my words,

yea and the testimony
of three of my servants

I bestowed upon you; and
I have commanded that you
should pretend
to no other gift until my
purpose is fulfilled in this;
for I will grant unto you
no other gift
until it is finished.

5 Verily, I say unto you,
that woe shall come unto
the inhabitants of the earth
if they will not
hearken unto my words;

6 For hereafter
you shall be ordained and
go forth and deliver
my words unto
the children of men.

7 Behold,
if they will not believe
my words,
they would not believe you,
my servant Joseph,
if it were possible
that you should show them
all these things which
I have committed unto you.

8 Oh, this unbelieving and
stiffnecked generation--
mine anger is kindled
against them.

9 Behold, verily I say
unto you,

I have reserved those things

which I have entrusted
unto you, my servant Joseph,
for a wise purpose in me,
and it shall be made known
unto future generations;

10 But this generation
shall have my word
through you;

11 And in addition
to your testimony,
the testimony
of three of my servants,
whom I shall call and ordain,

shall go forth
with my words
unto this generation;

yea, three shall know
of a surety that
these things are true,

for I will give them power,
that they may behold
and view these things
as they are,
and to none else
will I grant this power,
to receive this same testimony
among this generation.

And the testimony of
three witnesses
will I send forth
and my word,
and behold,
whosoever believeth
in my word,
them will I visit with
the manifestation of my Spirit,
and they shall be born of me,

and their testimony
shall also go forth.

5 And thus,
if the people of
this generation
harden not their hearts,

unto whom I
will show these things, and
they shall go forth
with my words

that are given through you.

12 Yea, they shall know
of a surety that
these things are true,
for from heaven will I
declare it unto them.

13 I will give them power
that they may behold
and view these things
as they are;

14 And to none else
will I grant this power,
to receive this same testimony
among this generation,
in this the beginning of
the rising up and
the coming forth of my church
out of the wilderness--
clear as the moon, and
fair as the sun, and
terrible as an army
with banners.

15 And the testimony of
three witnesses
will I send forth
of my word.

16 And behold,
whosoever believeth
on my words,
them will I visit with
the manifestation of my Spirit;
and they shall be born of me,
even of water and
of the Spirit--

17 And you must wait yet
a little while,
for ye are not yet ordained--

18 And their testimony shall
also go forth

I will work a reformation
among them, and
I will put down all
lyings, and
deceivings, and
priestcrafts, and
envyings, and
strifes, and
idolatries, and
sorceries, and
all manner of iniquities, and
I will establish my church,
like unto the church
which was taught
by my disciples
in the days of old.

6 And now if this generation
do harden their hearts
against my word,
behold I will deliver them
up unto Satan,
for he reigneth and
hath power at this time,
for he hath got
great hold upon the hearts
of the people
of this generation: and
not far from the
iniquities of
Sodom and Gomorrah,
do they come at this time: and
behold the sword of justice
hangeth over their heads, and

if they persist in
the hardness of their hearts,
the time cometh that
it must fall upon them.

unto the condemnation of
this generation if they
harden their hearts
against them;

19 For a desolating scourge
shall go forth
among the inhabitants
of the earth, and
shall continue to be poured out
from time to time,
if they repent not,

until the earth is empty, and
the inhabitants thereof are
consumed away and
utterly destroyed

Behold
I tell you these things
even as I also told
the people of
the destruction of Jerusalem,
and my word shall be verified
at this time as it
hath hitherto been verified.
7 And now I command
my servant, Joseph
to repent, and
walk more uprightly before me,
and yield to the persuasions
of men no more; and
that he be firm
in keeping the commandments
wherewith I have commanded him;
and if he doeth this,
behold I grant unto him
eternal life,
even if he should be slain.
8 And now
I speak again

concerning the man that
desireth a witness:
behold I say unto him,
he exalteth himself and
doth not humble himself
sufficiently before me,
but if he will go out and
bow down before me, and
humble himself
in mighty prayer and faith,
in the sincerity of his heart,
then I will grant unto him
a view of the things
which he desireth to know:
and then he shall say
unto the people
of this generation,
behold I have seen
the things

and I know of a surety that
they are true,

by the brightness of my coming.
20 Behold,
I tell you these things,
even as I also told
the people of
the destruction of Jerusalem;
and my word shall be verified
at this time as it
hath hitherto been verified.
21 And now I command you,
my servant Joseph,
to repent and
walk more uprightly before me,
and to yield to the persuasions
of men no more;
22 And that you be firm
in keeping the commandments
wherewith I have commanded you;
and if you do this,
behold I grant unto you
eternal life,
even if you should be slain.
23 And now, again,
I speak unto you,
my servant Joseph,
concerning the man that
desires the witness--
24 Behold, I say unto him,
he exalts himself and
does not humble himself
sufficiently before me;
but if he will
bow down before me, and
humble himself
in mighty prayer and faith,
in the sincerity of his heart,
then will I grant unto him a
view of the things
which he desires to see.
25 And then he shall say
unto the people
of this generation:
Behold, I have seen
the things
which the Lord hath shown
unto Joseph Smith, Jun.,
and I know of a surety that
they are true,

for I have seen, and
they have been shown unto me
by the power of God and
not of man.

And I command him

that he shall say no more
unto them,
concerning these things,
except he shall say,
I have seen them, and
they have been shown unto me
by the power of God.

9 And these are the words
which he shall say.--
But if he deny this,
he will break the covenant
which he has before covenanted
with me, and
behold he is condemned.

And now except he
humble himself and
acknowledge unto me
the things that he has done,
which are wrong, and
covenant with me that
he will keep my commandments,
and exercise faith in me,
behold I say unto him,
he shall have no such views,
for I will grant unto him
no views of the things
which I have spoken.
And if this be the case,
I command him that

he shall do no more,
nor trouble me any more
concerning this matter.
10 And if this be the case,
behold I say unto you, Joseph,
when thou hast translated
a few more pages,
thou shalt stop for a season,
even until I
command thee again:

for I have seen them, for
they have been shown unto me
by the power of God and
not of man.

26 And I the Lord command him,
my servant Martin Harris,
that he shall say no more
unto them

concerning these things,
except he shall say:
I have seen them, and
they have been shown unto me
by the power of God;

and these are the words which
he shall say.
27 But if he deny this
he will break the covenant
which he has before covenanted
with me, and
behold, he is condemned.

28 And now, except he
humble himself and
acknowledge unto me
the things that he has done
which are wrong, and
covenant with me that
he will keep my commandments,
and exercise faith in me,
behold, I say unto him,
he shall have no such views,
for I will grant unto him
no views of the things
of which I have spoken.

29 And if this be the case,
I command you,
my servant Joseph,
that you shall say unto him,
that he shall do no more,
nor trouble me any more
concerning this matter.
30 And if this be the case,
behold, I say unto thee Joseph,
when thou hast translated
a few more pages
thou shalt stop for a season,
even until I
command thee again;

then thou mayest
translate again.
And except thou do this,
behold thou shalt have
no more gift, and
I will take away
the things which I
have intrusted with thee.
11 And now, because I foresee
the lying in wait
to destroy thee:
Yea, I foresee that if my
servant
humbleth not himself, and
receive a witness from my hand,
that he will fall into
transgression;
and there are many that
lie in wait to destroy thee
from off the face of the earth:
And for this cause,
that thy days may be prolonged,
I have given unto thee these
commandments;
yea, for this cause
I have said,
stop and stand still
until I command thee, and
I will provide means whereby
thou mayest accomplish the
thing which I
have commanded thee;
and if thou art faithful
in keeping my commandments,
thou shalt be lifted up
at the last day:-- Amen.

then thou mayest
translate again.
31 And except thou do this,
behold, thou shalt have
no more gift, and
I will take away
the things which I
have entrusted with thee.
32 And now, because I foresee
the lying in wait
to destroy thee,
yea, I foresee that if my
servant Martin Harris
humbleth not himself and
receive a witness from my hand,
that he will fall into
transgression;
33 And there are many that
lie in wait to destroy thee
from off the face of the earth;
and for this cause,
that thy days may be prolonged,
I have given unto thee these
commandments.
34 Yea, for this cause
I have said:
Stop, and stand still
until I command thee, and
I will provide means whereby
thou mayest accomplish the
thing which I
have commanded thee.
35 And if thou art faithful
in keeping my commandments,
thou shalt be lifted up
at the last day. Amen.

Copyright © 2013 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>.
All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in
any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express
written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be
freely made and distributed for personal and public non-
commercial use.