

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 10

Chronologically, this section should follow D&C 3. Smith placed it after D&C 3 in History of the Church.

1 Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings which you had power given unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. 2 And you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened. 3 Nevertheless, it is now restored unto you again; therefore see that you are faithful and continue on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work of translation as you have begun. 4 Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate; but be diligent unto the end. 5 Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work.

v1-5 Personal statements from the Lord to Smith. In section 3 the Lord informs Smith he has jeopardized his position as the Lord's servant, but here, a few days later, the Lord informs him he has returned to His favor.

6 Behold, they have sought to destroy you; yea, even the man in whom you have trusted has sought to destroy you. 7 And for this cause I said that he is a wicked man, for he has sought to take away the things wherewith you have been entrusted; and he has also sought to destroy your gift. 8 And because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold, wicked men have taken them from you. 9 Therefore, you have delivered them up, yea, that which was sacred, unto wickedness.

10 And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands. 11 And behold, I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written; 12 And, on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; 13 For he hath put into their hearts to do this, that by lying they may say they have caught you in the words which you have pretended to translate. 14 Verily, I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing. 15 For behold, he has put it into their hearts to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God, in asking to translate it over again. 16 And then, behold, they say and think in their hearts--We will see if God has given him power to translate; if so, he will also give him power again; 17 And if God giveth him power again, or if he translates again, or, in other words, if he bringeth forth the same words, behold, we have the same with us, and we have altered them; 18 Therefore

they will not agree, and we will say that he has lied in his words, and that he has no gift, and that he has no power; 19 Therefore we will destroy him, and also the work; and we will do this that we may not be ashamed in the end, and that we may get glory of the world.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that Satan has great hold upon their hearts; he stirreth them up to iniquity against that which is good; 21 And their hearts are corrupt, and full of wickedness and abominations; and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; therefore they will not ask of me.

22 Satan stirreth them up, that he may lead their souls to destruction. 23 And thus he has laid a cunning plan, thinking to destroy the work of God; but I will require this at their hands, and it shall turn to their shame and condemnation in the day of judgment. 24 Yea, he stirreth up their hearts to anger against this work. 25 Yea, he saith unto them: Deceive and lie in wait to catch, that ye may destroy; behold, this is no harm. And thus he flattereth them, and telleth them that it is no sin to lie that they may catch a man in a lie, that they may destroy him. 26 And thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell; and thus he causeth them to catch themselves in their own snare. 27 And thus he goeth up and down, to and fro in the earth, seeking to destroy the souls of men.

28 Verily, verily, I say unto you, wo be unto him that lieth to deceive because he supposeth that another lieth to deceive, for such are not exempt from the justice of God. 29 Now, behold, they have altered these words, because Satan saith unto them: He hath deceived you--and thus he flattereth them away to do iniquity, to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God. 30 Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands; 31 For, behold, they shall not accomplish their evil designs in lying against those words. For, behold, if you should bring forth the same words they will say that you have lied and that you have pretended to translate, but that you have contradicted yourself. 32 And, behold, they will publish this, and Satan will harden the hearts of the people to stir them up to anger against you, that they will not believe my words. 33 Thus Satan thinketh to overpower your testimony in this generation, that the work may not come forth in this generation.

34 But behold, here is wisdom, and because I show unto you wisdom, and give you commandments concerning these things, what you shall do, show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work of translation. 35 Marvel not that I said unto you: Here is wisdom, show it not unto the world--for I said, show it not unto the world, that you may be preserved. 36 Behold, I do not say that you shall not show it unto the righteous; 37 But as you cannot always judge the righteous, or as you cannot always tell the wicked from the righteous, therefore I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter.

38 And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, is engraven upon the plates of Nephi; 39 Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi. 40 And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account-- 41 Therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; 42 And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. 43 I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

v6-43 Having warned Smith of the adversary in v. 5, the Lord goes on to expose Satan's plot (v. 6-27) and how He will frustrate it (v. 28-43).

v6 This verse is obviously referring to Martin Harris.

v22 "Satan stirreth them up", he is trying to whip them up into frenzied contention, cp. Alma 11:20, Hela. 6:21, Mormon 4:5, Mormon 5:18. It is also a reference to Satan's desire to sift them as wheat by causing division, cf. v. 63, Luke 22:31, 3 Ne. 18:18, Morm. 5:18. The sifting process involves stirring up the wheat and chaff and throwing it into the wind so the lighter chaff is carried away and the heavier wheat falls to the ground.

v28 The Lord unequivocally states that the ends never justify the means.

v37 "hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter", probably referring to the subject of 2 Ne. 30:16-18.

v38-42 indicates how the Lord will frustrate the adversary's plans. The Lord will have Smith publish the content of the small plates of Nephi instead of the portion of the large plates (i.e. the Book of Lehi) which he had translated and subsequently lost. The two records have overlapping material, but the small plates are more particularly detailed regarding spiritual things, having been started after the large plates, see 1 Ne. 9.

v41 Smith must have continued translating the plates beyond the Book of Lehi previous to losing the Urim & Thummim. The text

indicates that there is some portion of Mormon's abridgment of the large plates (The book of Lehi which Smith translated was not the original book of Lehi, but was Mormon's abridgment of it) which had been translated but not lost and that he was to translate the small plates of Nephi (which was not abridged by Mormon) to fill in the lost material. Thus, the small plates of Nephi were not placed in chronological order along with Mormon's abridged record of Lehi-4th Nephi. The Words of Mormon apparently indicate the small plates of Nephi were originally placed at the end of Mormon's writings with the Words of Mormon in between. Smith may have relocated the unabridged small plates of Nephi to the front and the Words of Mormon to segue into the abridged portion of Mormon's record which had been retained.

v43 Compare 3 Ne. 21:10.

44 Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi. 45 Behold, there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work.

46 And, behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. 47 And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers; 48 Yea, and this was their faith--that my gospel, which I gave unto them that they might preach in their days, might come unto their brethren the Lamanites, and also all that had become Lamanites because of their dissensions. 49 Now, this is not all--their faith in their prayers was that this gospel should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land; 50 And thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life; 51 Yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be. 52 And now, behold, according to their faith in their prayers will I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people.

Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up. 53 And for this cause have I said: If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them. 54 Now I do not say this to destroy my church, but I say this to build up my church; 55 Therefore, whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. 56 But it is they who do not fear me, neither keep my commandments but build up churches unto themselves to get gain, yea, and all those that do wickedly and build up the kingdom of the devil--yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that

it is they that I will disturb, and cause to tremble and shake to the center.

v44-56 These verses discuss and explain the central purpose of the plates, cp. 3:16-20. Verses 44-52a answers "What is the history of the plates, why were they made?" and v. 52b-56 answers "What are the plates supposed to do?"

57 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not. 58 I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. 59 I am he who said--Other sheep have I which are not of this fold--unto my disciples, and many there were that understood me not. 60 And I will show unto this people that I had other sheep, and that they were a branch of the house of Jacob;

61 And I will bring to light their marvelous works, which they did in my name; 62 Yea, and I will also bring to light my gospel which was ministered unto them, and, behold, they shall not deny that which you have received, but they shall build it up, and shall bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me. 63 And this I do that I may establish my gospel, that there may not be so much contention; yea, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them. 64 Therefore, I will unfold unto them this great mystery;

65 For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts; 66 Yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely. 67 Behold, this is my doctrine--whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. 68 Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church.

69 And now, behold, whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. 70 And now, remember the words of him who is the life and light of the world, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Amen.

v57-70 These verses discuss the person and mission of the Lord. The purpose of the plates (v. 44-56) dovetails with the Lord's personal mission. Note the frequent usage of the first person "I" and all of the things the Lord indicates He is personally involved with.

v57 "mine own received me not", cp. Acts 13:46, 1 Ne. 10:11, 3 Ne. 9:16, 3 Ne. 16:7.

v60-63 These verses refer to the coming forth of the Nephite record. The lineage of Lehi is identified specifically as the

"other sheep" of John 10:16 in 3 Ne. 15:21 (but see also 3 Ne. 16:1-3 where Jesus indicates there are other "other sheep" as well). Thus, the BofM shows their marvelous works (v. 61) the gospel which was had among them, builds up the Bible (i.e., "that which you have received"), and brings to light points of doctrine (v. 62) in an effort to establish the gospel and reduce contention (v. 63).

v65 This verse apparently paraphrases Luke 13:34. Note the contrast being made between the Lord who seeks to gather tenderly and Satan who seeks to harshly divide through contention (v. 63).

The image of the hen gathering her brood from Luke is one of only two scriptural references that casts the Lord in a feminine role, the other being Isa. 66:13. The intent is obviously to portray the Lord as being very much concerned about Israel, so much so that He is like a protective and consoling mother.

Throughout the Scriptures the Lord is cast in non-gender specific roles, as a groom to the bride Israel, as well as a father to the Israel abused by the other nations. In all of the various cases it is plain the context is poetical and not literal.

v67 The concept of the "church" here is the same as that of the NT Greek "ecclesia", or the body of believers. The Lord defines his "church" as "whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me". The Lord does not define His church as "My building of brick with a steeple on it" or "My highly organized institutional bureaucracy".

This very simple verse offers an excellent distillation of 3 Ne. 11:30-41 (also cp. 3 Ne. 12:19), and therefore serves as an essential definition of who is a Christian.

v68 "more or less than this", this phrase is used to indicate that whatever the preceding or following text is, it must not be altered by people because it is a statement of the Lord. People are not to embellish upon it or delete it if found inconvenient. For similar and related statements, cp. Deut. 4:2, Matt. 5:37, Rev. 22:18, 3 Ne. 11:40, 3 Ne. 18:13, D&C 20:35, D&C 68:34, D&C 93:25, D&C 98:7, D&C 124:120, Moses 1:41.

The statement does not mean the particular doctrine the phrase is applied to is the quintessential statement of doctrine and anything else is tangential or heretical, it simply means people may not alter the doctrine which was given to suit their needs. The fact that this warning is inserted shows the Lord is aware there are people around who would very much like to alter the particular doctrine to suit their needs. We should then be

aware this is an important doctrine, and probably one that is difficult to observe. Otherwise, there would be no temptation to alter it.

"therefore he is not of my church", as the Lord indicates in v. 67, those who repent are His church. If a person is altering the Lord's doctrine and declaring the altered version as the correct version they are not humble and repentant. Rather, they are prideful, self-promoting, and unrepentant, and therefore, by definition, not part of His church. They may belong to the institutional bureaucracy and visit the brick building with the steeple on it, but they are not of His ecclesia.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 10

It is plain from comments made by Lucy Mack Smith in her biography of her son Joseph that the primary instigator of the plans to discredit Joseph was Martin Harris' wife (see the historical material on D&C 3).

There is little historical material directly pertaining to this revelation. The first is a comment by Smith giving the timing of the revelation relative to D&C 3. The second is a historical commentary regarding the timing of the revelation.

Excerpt from History of the Church

[text of D&C 3 precedes]

After I had obtained the above revelation, both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but in a few days they were returned to me, when I inquired of the Lord, and the Lord said thus unto me:

[text of D&C 10 follows]

I did not, however, go immediately to translating, but went to laboring with my hands upon a small farm which I had purchased of my wife's father, in order to provide for my family. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, pages 23-28).

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

In all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants before 1921, the date of section 10 was given as May 1829. However, Elder Brigham H. Roberts, who edited the History of the Church for publication in 1902, gave as his opinion that the date May 1829 was "clearly in error," that the revelation was received in the summer of 1828 [Footnote: History of the Church, 1:23. 122-123]. Roberts's interpretation undoubtedly influenced the committee that prepared the 1921 edition. But even though the date in the headnote was changed to "the summer of 1828," the revelation has not been moved from where it was placed in the earlier editions.

The "Manuscript History of the Church" for the years 1828-29 was written by James Mulholland, the Prophet's scribe, in the summer of 1839. An insert in that section of the history places section 10 immediately after section 3. Although the May 1829 date of reception for section 10 (contained in both the 1833 and 1835 editions of the Doctrine and Covenants) was not altered by Mulholland, his work clearly attests to the 1828 reception of section 10. The "wicked man" reference to Martin Harris certainly suggests an 1828 setting, as do the instructions on the manner of proceeding with the translation of the Book of Mormon after the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript and the temporary withdrawal

of the Urim and Thummim and the gold plates in 1828. [Footnote: My own dating of this revelation would be fall 1828. See Max H. Parkin's thorough study of this dating problem in "A Preliminary Analysis of the Dating of Section 10," Seventh Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1979), pp. 68-84. It is interesting to note that the words "by the means of the Urim and Thummim" in verse 1 were not part of this verse in the Book of Commandments; nor was section 17, which also makes use of the term Urim and Thummim, printed in the Book of Commandments. Both section 17 and verse 1 of section 10, as we now have them, first appeared in the 1835 edition. While the retroactive placement of the term in section 10 has led to some speculation relative to the Prophet's having the instrument in his possession, a preponderance of evidence confirms the Prophet's own testimony: "With the records was found a curious instrument, which the ancients called 'Urim and Thummim,' which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate" (History of the Church, 4:537). The problem here seems to be one of terminology, not whether or not the Prophet had possession of an ancient artifact. Until some time after the translation of the Book of Mormon, the sacred instruments may have been referred to as "Interpreters," or "spectacles." It is possible that Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible played some part in designating the translating instrument "Urim and Thummim." The earliest use of the term Urim and Thummim in Mormon literature is in the Evening and Morning Star (January 1833). An article on the Book of Mormon, undoubtedly authored by W. W. Phelps, stated, "It was translated by the gift and power of God, by an unlearned man, through the aid of a pair of Interpreters, or spectacles—(known, perhaps in ancient days as Teraphim, or Urim and Thummim)." See also Richard P. Howard, Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1969).] (Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 17)

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