

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 25

This section is directed towards Emma Smith. The revelation was received during the same time period as was sections 24 and 26, a time of considerable persecution.

The text follows an A-B-A pattern with the A's (v. 1-4, 10-16) focusing on Emma as an individual and the center B (v. 5-9) portion focusing on her relationship with Joseph. It is interesting to note the center portion of the B section (v. 7-8) emphasizes the spiritual nature of the relationship between Emma and Joseph over the physical things (v. 5-6, 9).

1 HEARKEN unto the voice of the Lord your God, while I speak unto you, Emma Smith, my daughter; for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom. 2 A revelation I give unto you concerning my will; and if thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue before me, I will preserve thy life, and thou shalt receive an inheritance in Zion. 3 Behold, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou art an elect lady, whom I have called. 4 Murmur not because of the things which thou hast not seen, for they are withheld from thee and from the world, which is wisdom in me in a time to come.

v1-4 These verses are a series of admonitions and exhortations similar to those delivered to other people in preceding sections, cp. D&C 18, 23.

v4 Emma was apparently irritated over not be allowed to see the plates. Here the Lord indicates it is not some act of capriciousness on her husband's part, but His will. The Lord goes on to remind her she wasn't the only one not granted a view to the plates as all others besides Joseph and the particular witnesses are excluded.

5 And the office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness. 6 And thou shalt go with him at the time of his going, and be unto him for a scribe, while there is no one to be a scribe for him, that I may send my servant, Oliver Cowdery, whithersoever I will. 7 And thou shalt be ordained under his hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit. 8 For he shall lay his hands upon thee, and thou shalt receive the Holy Ghost, and thy time shall be given to writing, and to learning much. 9 And thou needest not fear, for thy husband shall support thee in the church; for unto them is his calling, that all things might be revealed unto them, whatsoever I will, according to their faith.

v5-9 Emma is called to support her husband in his difficult circumstances (v. 5), as well as his Church duties (v. 6). She is granted a particular blessing of knowledge of the Scriptures

by the Spirit (v. 7-8). She is told not to fear concerning the callings she has just received as Joseph's is to be supportive of her labors in the Church (v. 9).

v6 As Cowdery was commanded to embark on missionary work (cf. 24:10) someone would need to act as scribe in his place. Emma had previously served as scribe, to a relatively small degree, while Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon.

v7-8 Emma is called to be a prophetess, not just a prophet's wife as in Isa. 8:3, but as a female prophet as was Miriam, Deborah and Huldah.

It is important to note that the colloquial English usage of the term "prophet" or "prophecy" does not entirely conform with the Scriptural usage of these terms. The Greek "propheteuo", translated to "prophecy" in the KJV, most literally translates to "before-aver". It means the person is a vicarious witness, or a spokesman in the place of another. Predicting events beforehand was only incidental to the testimony the witness bore. Thus, a prophet/prophetess is an inspired witness who bears testimony of the Lord, cp. Alma 32:23.

Also, in our parlance, the term "prophet" has come to represent the President of the Church in specific, and at times this term is capitalized as "Prophet". Others are recognized as "prophets" as is the case with the Quorum of Twelve and so on, but in the strictest scriptural sense of the word, anyone who is inspired to testify is a prophet, cp. D&C 68:2-4. Recall that Moses wished all of Israel were prophets, cf. Num. 11:29.

Aside from the calling and ordination, history indicates Emma was baptized June 28, 1830 by Oliver Cowdery and confirmed sometime around August 1, 1830 by Joseph. This revelation occurred sometime in July 1830, so it is probable v. 8 is referring to her being confirmed a member of the Church.

v7 "thou shalt be ordained", this phrase is placed in parallel to "he shall lay his hands upon thee" in v. 8. The "ordain[ing]" here is referring to what we today would call a setting apart, and not the bestowal of the Priesthood.

Regarding this subject John Taylor stated:

"I was in Nauvoo at the time the Relief Society was

organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and I was present on the occasion.... At that meeting the Prophet called Sister Emma to be an elect lady. That means that she was called to a certain work; and was in fulfillment of a certain revelation concerning her. [Sec. 25:13.] She was elected to preside over the Relief Society, and she was ordained to expound the scriptures. In compliance with Brother Joseph's request, I set her apart and also ordained Sister Whitney, wife of Bishop Newel K. Whitney, and Sister Cleveland, wife of Judge Cleveland, to be her counselors. Some of the sisters have thought that these sisters mentioned were in this ordination ordained to the Priesthood. And for the information of all interested in this subject I will say, it is not the calling of these sisters to hold the Priesthood, only in connection with their husbands, they being one with their husbands." (John Taylor, Journal of Discourses, Volume 21, pages 367-68)

v8 "to writing", this is probably referring to the subject of v. 6, but may pertain to the subjects of v. 7 and 11 as well.

10 And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better. 11 And it shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church. 12 For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads. 13 Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made. 14 Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him. 15 Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive. And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come. 16 And verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my voice unto all. Amen.

v10-16 A series of general admonitions encouraging the maintenance of covenants, continuing in meekness, warding off pride and enduring to the end (v. 13-15).

v10 Another admonition similar to those delivered to other persons in preceding sections, cp. D&C 6:3, 7, 20, 27.

v11-12 Sacred music and songs have always been a part of worship, cp. Exod. 15:1-19, Deut. 32, the Psalms in general, Rev. 14:2-3. Aside from its aesthetic value, the music can also

be taken as a type of how the ecclesia should be in that it requires effort and unity to be beautiful, yet allows for modest difference and creativity.

v14 "Let thy soul delight in thy husband", Emma's health was not good at this time, she had endured miscarriage, persecution was being heaped upon the extended family, was forced to move frequently as a result of persecution, and Joseph was away from her quite a bit as a result of his Church labors and the various lawsuits he had to defend himself from. Emma had to endure a great deal as a result of marrying Joseph.

v15 "crown of righteousness", a symbol derived mainly from the NT indicating exaltation, cp. 2 Tim. 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4. However, there are obscure Psalmic references to being crowned with glory.

v16 "this is my voice unto all", I would assume this is referring to the admonitions from v. 13-15 as the material of v. 1-11 obviously pertains to Emma in specific.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 25

See D&C 24 for general historical material for this time period. The first excerpt is Lucy Mack Smith's review of Emma's character. The second excerpt is from Joseph Knight, Sr.'s recollections of early Church history recalling that Smith had a revelation that Emma was to be his wife.

Part of this revelation includes the Lord requesting Emma to collect hymns for a Church hymnal. Action to publish the hymnal was not taken for more than five years. The Kirtland High Council met on Sept. 14, 1835 and concluded:

It was further decided that Sister Emma Smith proceed to make a selection of sacred hymns according to the revelation and that President W. W. Phelps be appointed to revise and arrange them for printing (Kirtland Council Minute Book, page 108).

The hymnal was published later in 1835 and contained 90 hymns. The second edition was published in 1841 and contained 340 hymns. Given the relatively short time between the decision in September and the publishing of the hymnal later that same year, this suggests Emma had been collecting hymns in the intervening five years.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, pages 58-59. It was published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 178-179. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 6, page 93, dated February 1, 1843. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 4, number 10, pages 149-150, dated February, 1844.

Excerpt from History of Joseph Smith by His Mother

I mentioned, in a foregoing chapter, that when Joseph and Emma left Manchester, they went to Macedon. Here, he commenced his ministerial labors, and continued, for some time, to preach successively, in this place, Colesville, Waterloo, Palmyra, and Manchester, till, finally, he sent to Pennsylvania, for his goods, and settled himself in Waterloo. Soon after which, a revelation was given, commanding Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, Peter Whitmer, and Oliver Cowdery, to take a mission to Missouri, preaching by the way [i.e., D&C 32]. As soon as this

revelation was received, Emma Smith, and several other sisters, began to make arrangements to furnish those who were set apart for this mission, with the necessary clothing, which was no easy task, as the most of it had to be manufactured out of the raw material.

Emma's health at this time was quite delicate, yet she did not favor herself on this account, but whatever her hands found to do, she did with her might, until so far beyond her strength that she brought upon herself a heavy fit of sickness, which lasted four weeks. And, although her strength was exhausted, still her spirits were the same, which, in fact, was always the ease with her, even under the most trying circumstances. I have never seen a woman in my life, who would endure every species of fatigue and hardship, from month to month, and from year to year, with that unflinching courage, zeal, and patience, which she has ever done; for I know that which she has had to endure--she has been tossed upon the ocean of uncertainty--she has breasted the storms of persecution, and buffered the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other woman. It may be, that many may yet have to encounter the same--I pray God, that this may not be the ease; but, should it be, may they have grace given them according to their day, even as has been the ease with her. (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, page 191).

Excerpt from Joseph Knight Reminiscences

From thence he went to the hill where he was informed the Record was and found no trouble for it appeared plain as tho he was acquainted with the place it was so plain in the vision that he had of the place. He went and found the place and opened it and found a plane Box. He oncovered it and found the Book and took it out and laid [it] Down By his side and thot he would Cover the place over again thinking there might be something else here. But he was told to take the Book and go right away. And after he had Covered the place he turned round to take the Book and it was not there and he was astonished that the Book was gone. He thot he would look in the place again and see if it had not got Back again. He had heard people tell of such things. And he opened the Box and Behold the Book was there. He took hold of it to take it out again and Behold he Could not stur the Book any more then he Could the mountin. He exclaimed "why Cant I stur this Book?" And he was answerd, "you have not Done rite; you should have took the Book and a one right away. You cant

have it now." Joseph says, "when can I have it?" The answer was the 22nd Day of September next if you Bring the right person with you. Joseph says, "who is the right Person?" The answer was "your oldest Brother." But before September Came his oldest Brother Died. Then he was Disapinted and did not [k]now what to do. But when the 22nd Day of September Came he went to the place and the personage appeard and told him he Could not have it now. But the 22nd Day of September nex he mite have the Book if he Brot with him the right person. Joseph says, "who is the right Person?" The answer was you will know. Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale, Daughter of old Mr Hail of Pensylvany, a girl that he had seen Before, for he had Bin Down there Before with me. Joseph then went to Mr Stowels [Stowell] whare he had lived sometime Before. But Mr Stowel Could not pay him money for his work very well and he came to me perhaps in November and worked for me until about the time that he was Married, which I think was in February. And I paid him the money and I furnished him with a horse and Cutter to go and see his girl Down to Mr. Hails. And soon after this he was Married and Mr Stowel moved him and his wife to his fathers in Palmyra Ontario County.

(Scans of the original monograph are available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/37b7b91c-4148-45d6-8f32-df4acf06fe99?view=browse> and a transcription is available at <http://byustudies.byu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/17.1JesseeJoseph.pdf> which is from BYU Studies 17, no. 1, Autumn 1976)

Comparison of Original 1833 Text with Emended 1835 Version

Most of the changes between the 1833 and 1835 version are simply clarifications for plainer reading. The only substantial change is that of the first verse of the 1833 version. The appellation of "my daughter" in the 1833 version is explained in the 1835 version in a manner consistent with other Scriptures, cp. John 1:12, Mosiah 27:25. And, the statement "in Zion" in the 1833 version is made conditional and eschatological in the 1835 version, which only harmonizes it with v. 17-18 in the 1833 version (v. 15 in the 1835 version).

The verse numbering in the 1835 D&C below is that of the contemporary 1981 LDS edition for ease of use. The textual emendations occurred in the 1835 Kirtland edition of the 1st Edition Doctrine & Covenants.

1833 Book of Commandments

1 Emma, my daughter
in Zion,

a revelation I give unto you,
concerning my will:

2 Behold thy sins
are forgiven thee, and
thou art an elect lady,
whom I have called.

3 Murmur not
because of the things

1835 Doctrine & Covenants

1 HEARKEN unto the voice
of the Lord your God,
while I speak unto you,
Emma Smith, my daughter;

for verily I say unto you,
all those who receive
my gospel
are sons and daughters
in my kingdom.

2 A revelation I give unto you
concerning my will;
and if thou art faithful and
walk in the paths of virtue
before me,

I will preserve thy life,
and thou shalt receive
an inheritance in Zion.

3 Behold, thy sins
are forgiven thee, and
thou art an elect lady,
whom I have called.

4 Murmur not
because of the things

which thou hast not seen,
for they are withheld
from thee, and
from the world,
which is wisdom in me in a
time to come.
4 And the office of thy
calling shall be for a comfort
unto my servant
Joseph,
thy husband,
in his afflictions
with consoling words,
in the spirit of meekness.
5 And thou shalt go with him
at the time of his going, and
be unto him for a scribe,

that I may send
Oliver
whithersoever I will.
6 And thou shalt be ordained
under his hand
to expound scriptures, and
to exhort the church,
according as it shall be
given thee by my Spirit:
7 For he shall lay
his hand upon thee, and
thou shalt receive
the Holy Ghost, and
thy time shall be given
to writing, and
to learning much.
8 And thou needest not fear,
for thy husband shall
support thee from the church:
9 For unto them is his
calling, that all things
might be revealed unto them,
whatsoever I will
according to their faith.
10 And verily I say unto thee,

which thou hast not seen,
for they are withheld
from thee and
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5 And the office of thy
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6 And thou shalt go with him
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10 And verily I say unto thee

that thou shalt lay aside
the things of this world, and
seek for the things
of a better.
11 And it shall be given thee,
also, to make a selection
of sacred Hymns,
as it shall be given thee,
which is pleasing unto me,
to be had in my church:
12 For my soul delighteth
in the song of the heart:
Yea, the song of the righteous
is a prayer unto me.
13 And it shall be
answered with a blessing
upon their heads.
14 Wherefore lift up thy heart
and rejoice, and
cleave unto the covenants
which thou hast made.
15 Continue in
the spirit of meekness, and
beware of pride.
16 Let thy soul delight
in thy husband, and
the glory which shall come
unto him.
17 Keep my commandments
continually, and
a crown of righteousness
thou shalt receive.
18 And except thou do this,
where I am you cannot come.
19 And verily, verily
I say unto you, that
this is my voice unto all.
Amen.

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And except thou do this,
where I am you cannot come.
16 And verily, verily,
I say unto you, that
this is my voice unto all.
Amen.

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