

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 71

Smith and Rigdon are called to stem hostility and falsehoods being spread about the Church in a local newspaper by apostate Ezra Booth.

A number of rhetorical cues are derived from Matt. 13 in the first part of this section (v. 1-6), and the second part of the section (v. 7-11) draws on Isaiah's Servant sermons. In drawing on Matt. 13, the Lord is characterizing the actions of the apostate in the framework of the parable of the Sower, and in using the Isaianic material the Lord is characterizing Smith and Rigdon as His servants.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, that the time has verily come that it is necessary and expedient in me that you should open your mouths in proclaiming my gospel, the things of the kingdom, expounding the mysteries thereof out of the scriptures, according to that portion of Spirit and power which shall be given unto you, even as I will. 2 Verily I say unto you, proclaim unto the world in the regions round about, and in the church also, for the space of a season, even until it shall be made known unto you. 3 Verily this is a mission for a season, which I give unto you.

v1-3 Smith and Rigdon called to preach, and expound mysteries out of the Scriptures. In the context of the parable of the Sower, the one proclaiming the gospel is the one sowing the seed.

v1 "proclaiming my gospel, the things of the kingdom, expounding the mysteries", cp. Matt. 13:11.

4 wherefore, labor ye in my vineyard. Call upon the inhabitants of the earth, and bear record, and prepare the way for the commandments and revelations which are to come. 5 Now, behold this is wisdom; whoso readeth, let him understand and receive also; 6 For unto him that receiveth it shall be given more abundantly, even power.

v4-6 They are informed they are to prepare the way for additional revelation to come forth (v. 4), as it is wisdom in the Lord that the way be prepared (v. 5). For unto those that receive shall be given more abundantly (v. 6).

v6 A paraphrase of Matt. 13:12.

7 wherefore, confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful their shame shall be made manifest. 8 wherefore, let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord. 9 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you-there is no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; 10 And if any man lift his voice against you he shall be confounded in mine own due time.

v7-10 The Lord endorses both public and private means of silencing Booth (v. 7) by showing him to be in error (v. 8-10).

v7 "confound", i.e., shame, or humiliate.

"your enemies", in general the D&C characterizes anyone who is hostile to the Saints, the Church or her leaders as being "enemies", cp. D&C 8:1-5, D&C 103:1-10. However, as the context here is the reactionary call to combat Ezra Booth's libelous publications, it is safe to assume that he and his immediate allies are the "enemies" here.

This call to shame and humiliate their enemies in public or private debate seems to be a method that would have a great potential to be nothing more than contention. One would assume the warning "inasmuch as ye are faithful" is a warning to avoid such things.

v8 A paraphrase of Isa. 41:21. Note the attacks leveled against the Church and her leaders are being taken personally by the Lord as though He were being personally attacked, this would be the case given D&C 68:4. The context of Isa. 41:21 is that of a trial arranged by the Lord where He summons idolaters to Him to confront their idol's lack of power with the Lord's power. Thus, the imagery drawn out here is that of a trial where witnesses are called and evidence is presented and examined.

v9 A paraphrase of Isa. 54:17. The context of this verse in Isaiah is that of the Lord telling the desolate wife (i.e., Zion) that while she has been afflicted for some time, the Lord has power over all, including those who afflict her, and He will now be delivering her from them.

v10 Those who rail against the Church will be shamed. Note the Lord reserves the right to shame them "in his own due time", cp. D&C 50:8.

11 wherefore, keep my commandments; they are true and faithful.
Even so. Amen.

v11 A closing admonition to keep the commandments, unlike the
one who's work they are about to go out and combat.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 71

Ezra Booth, one of the less than zealous Elders censured in D&C 61, apostatized after his return from Missouri to Ohio and was silenced from preaching there (cf. [Far West Record, entry for September 6, 1831, page 6](#)). Six days later he began writing letters to dissuade both members and non-members alike from the Church, and had those letters published in a local newspaper, the *Ohio Star*. His efforts resulted in considerable bad feelings among locals. As such, Smith and Rigdon were tasked with countering the campaign.

Booth writes a total of [9 letters](#) which get published in the newspaper, and are subsequently reprinted in Eber D. Howe's [Mormonism Unveiled](#), the first anti-Mormon book. See the historical material for D&C 61 for the first letter Booth wrote.

This section was first published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, page 225. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 9, page 513, dated May 1, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 8, page 114, dated April 15, 1852.

Excerpt from History of the Church

After Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had departed for Jackson county, Missouri, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures, and continued to labor in this branch of my calling with Elder Sidney Rigdon as my scribe, until I received the following:

[text of D&C 71 quoted]

Knowing now the mind of the Lord, that the time had come that the Gospel should be proclaimed in power and demonstration to the world, from the Scriptures, reasoning with men as in days of old, I took a journey to Kirtland, in company with Elder Sidney Rigdon on the 3rd day of December, to fulfil the above revelation....

From this time until the 8th or 10th of January, 1832, myself and Elder Rigdon continued to preach in Shalersville, Ravenna, and other places, setting forth the truth, vindicating the cause of our Redeemer; showing that the day of vengeance was coming upon this generation like a thief in the night; that prejudice, blindness and darkness filled the minds of many, and caused them to persecute the true Church, and reject the true light; by which means we did much towards allaying the excited

feelings which were growing out of the scandalous letters then being published in the Ohio Star, at Ravenna, by the before-mentioned apostate, Ezra Booth. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 238-241)

Excerpt from Times & Seasons

About this time Ezra Booth came out as an apostate. He came into the church upon seeing a person healed of an infirmity of many years standing. He had been a Methodist priest for some time previous to his embracing the fulness of the gospel, as developed in the Book of Mormon, and upon his admission into the church, he was ordained an elder; as will be seen by the foregoing revelations. He went up to Missouri as a companion of Elder Morley; but when he actually learned that faith, humility, patience, and tribulation, were before blessing; and that God brought low before he exalted; that instead of "the Savior's granting him power to smite men, and make them believe" (as he said he wanted God to do him;) he found he must become all things to all men, that he might peradventure save some, and that too, by all diligence, by perils, by sea and land; as was the case in the days of Jesus, which appears in the 6th chapter of St. John's gospel, he said; "verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." So it was with Booth, and when he was disappointed by his own evil heart, he turned away, and as said before, became an apostate, and wrote a series of letters which by their coloring, falsity, and vain calculations to overthrow the work of the Lord exposed his weakness wickedness and folly, and left him a monument of his own shame, for the world to wonder at. (Joseph Smith, Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 7, April 1, 1844)

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