

SECTION 29 (MODERN SECTION 73)

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 1835 Edition | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

This revelation, given in January 1832, addresses the immediate logistical and spiritual priorities of the early Latter-day Saint movement. The text, speaking in the voice of the Lord, commands Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to 'translate again,' referring to their work on the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of the Bible, a project viewed by the movement as a restoration of lost biblical truths. While Smith and Rigdon are told to focus on this translation work, other elders are instructed to continue preaching and exhorting in the surrounding regions. The text establishes a pattern of dependency on centralized church conferences for specific mission assignments ('it shall be made known unto them, by the voice of the conference, their several missions'). The revelation underscores the restorationist claim that the 'church of the living God' has been 'established in the last days,' implying a distinct break from historic Christendom.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Jesus Christ), Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon, Elders of the Church

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. OPEN CANON / CONTINUOUS REVELATION

Assertion: God continues to give specific, logistical instructions to church leaders in the first person.

"For verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient in me..."

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the Canon is closed (Jude 1:3, Revelation 22:18-19), and guidance is sought through the illumination of the Holy Spirit and wisdom applied to Scripture. This text asserts that God speaks new, binding, first-person revelation regarding administrative details (conferences, translation schedules), elevating Joseph Smith's administrative decisions to the level of divine fiat.

2. THE JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION (BIBLE REVISION)

Assertion: The revision of the Bible is a divinely expedient work required of the prophet.

"it is expedient to translate again... and after that it is expedient to continue the work of translation, until it be finished."

Evangelical Comparison: The command to 'translate again' refers to Smith's charismatic revision of the KJV Bible, not a linguistic translation from ancient manuscripts. Evangelicals view the Bible as the preserved Word of God (Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 24:35). Smith's project implies the Bible is corrupted or insufficient, requiring a modern prophet to insert text and alter meaning to fit Mormon theology, which attacks the doctrine of Biblical Sufficiency.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the doctrine of Scripture. By commanding Smith to 'translate again,' the text asserts that the Bible is malleable and subject to the correction of a modern prophet. This violates the Evangelical tenet of Sola Scriptura, which holds that the Bible is the final, sufficient authority. Furthermore, the text establishes a hierarchical dependency where the 'will of the Lord' regarding personal ministry is mediated through a church conference rather than individual priesthood guidance or biblical wisdom.

Shared Values:

Importance of preaching the gospel (though definitions differ); Exhortation to sobriety and readiness ('gird up loins'); Belief in a 'living God'

Friction Points:

- [Critical] Sola Scriptura – The text authorizes the alteration of the Bible and claims new revelation is necessary for church governance.

2. [Critical] Sufficiency of Scripture – Implies the Bible is incomplete or corrupted, necessitating Smith's 'translation'.

Semantic Warnings:

"Translate"

In Text: A charismatic process of revision, expansion, and clarification of the English Bible text based on 'revelation,' without reference to ancient languages.

Evangelical: The scholarly process of rendering text from original languages (Hebrew/Greek/Aramaic) into a receptor language.

Example: *When this text says 'translate again,' it means 'rewrite the Bible to fit Mormon theology,' whereas an Evangelical understands translation as faithful linguistic transfer.*

"Gospel"

In Text: The message of the restored church, including the necessity of priesthood authority and modern revelation.

Evangelical: The good news of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Example: *Preaching the 'gospel' in this text implies preaching the restoration of the church, not just the atonement.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly linked to the 'church of the living God established in the last days.'

How Attained: Through obedience to the mandates of the restored church (preaching, accepting missions).

Basis of Assurance: Compliance with the 'voice of the conference' and the prophet.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text focuses entirely on works (preaching, translating) as the 'will of the Lord,' offering no discussion of grace or faith as the basis for standing with God. It contrasts with Ephesians 2:8-9 by emphasizing duty over finished work.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Continue preaching the gospel
- 2. Exhort the churches
- 3. Translate again (resume Bible revision)
- 4. Gird up your loins
- 5. Be sober

Implicit Obligations:

- 1. Wait for the conference to receive mission assignments
- 2. Accept the 'voice of the conference' as the will of God
- 3. Prioritize the revision of the Bible (for Smith/Rigdon)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

- 1. When the text commands Joseph to 'translate again,' what specific process was he using, given that he didn't know Hebrew or Greek at this time?
- 2. How do you view the warnings in Revelation 22:18-19 about adding to the words of the book in light of the command here to revise the Bible?
- 3. If the Bible needed to be 'translated again' to be correct, why do we have thousands of ancient manuscripts that support the standard biblical text but none that support Joseph Smith's changes?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The desire for a perfect Word – We all long for the pure, uncorrupted voice of God. The Good News is that we don't need to rewrite the Bible to find it; God has faithfully preserved His Word so we can know Him today. [Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Dependency on Hierarchy [Moderate] – The believer is conditioned to wait for the 'voice of the conference' to know God's will for their life, creating a spiritual dependency on the organization rather than a direct relationship with God through the Spirit.
2. Uncertainty of Truth [Severe] – By asserting the Bible needs 'translating again,' the text erodes confidence in the Bible the believer holds in their hands, creating a subtle anxiety that they cannot trust God's Word without the Prophet's interpretation.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation

Verification Method: Obedience to the revealed voice through the prophet and the conference.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective standard of written Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) illuminated by the Spirit. This text relies on subjective, ongoing revelation through a human leader.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: January 10, 1832

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: This section was canonized in the 1835 D&C. It reflects the period when Smith and Rigdon were living in Hiram, Ohio, intensely focused on the Bible revision.