

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 26

Smith, Cowdery and Whitmer are instructed to "Perfect the Saints" locally and to tend to their own family labors for a time.

1 Behold, I say unto you that you shall let your time be devoted to the studying of the scriptures, and to preaching, and to confirming the church at Colesville, and to performing your labors on the land, such as is required, until after you shall go to the west to hold the next conference; and then it shall be made known what you shall do. 2 And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen.

v1 "performing your labors on the land", cp. D&C 24:3.

"the next conference", the conference of September 26, 1830 held in Fayette, NY spoken of on page 110 of History of the Church.

v2 "common consent...by much prayer and faith", the formula for unanimous agreement is one intended to govern the Church in peace and order. Any matter that was contentious or divisive would clearly not result in unanimous consent and would naturally be of the devil, cf. 3 Ne. 11:29. Any individuals who took to promoting themselves would necessarily have to violate this principle. As the Church was beginning to be organized with separate branches and relatively slow methods of communication, some means was necessary to stanch heresy in the absence of inspired leadership. The Lord's intention is to build consensus and avoid contention, cf. D&C 28:13, D&C 38:34, D&C 102:9, D&C 104:71, D&C 124:144.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 26

The admonition to govern the Church by common consent is put into context by two events where individuals within the Church cause division and contention. In both cases the individual took it upon themselves to influence Church members and appeal to popular support in an effort to promote their private views. Incidents such as this are precisely the kinds of things the Lord seeks to eliminate through common consent.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, page 59. It was published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, page 179. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 7, page 108, dated February 15, 1843. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 4, number 10, page 150, dated February, 1844.

Excerpt from History of the Church

Shortly after we had received the above revelations [i.e., D&C 24-26], Oliver Cowdery returned to Mr. Peter Whitmer's, Sen., and I began to arrange and copy the revelations, which we had received from time to time; in which I was assisted by John Whitmer, who now resided with me.

Whilst thus employed in the work appointed me by my Heavenly Father, I received a letter from Oliver Cowdery, the contents of which gave me both sorrow and uneasiness. Not having that letter now in my possession, I cannot of course give it here in full, but merely an extract of the most prominent parts, which I can yet, and expect long to, remember. He wrote to inform me that he had discovered an error in one of the commandments-Book of Doctrine and Covenants: "And truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto a remission of their sins."

The above quotation, he said, was erroneous, and added: "I command you in the name of God to erase those words, that no priestcraft be amongst us!"

I immediately wrote to him in reply, in which I asked him by what authority he took upon him to command me to alter or erase, to add to or diminish from, a revelation or commandment from Almighty God.

A few days afterwards I visited him and Mr. Whitmer's family, when I found the family in general of his opinion concerning the words above quoted, and it was not without both

labor and perseverance that I could prevail with any of them to reason calmly on the subject. However, Christian Whitmer at length became convinced that the sentence was reasonable, and according to Scripture; and finally, with his assistance, I succeeded in bringing, not only the Whitmer family, but also Oliver Cowdery to acknowledge that they had been in error, and that the sentence in dispute was in accordance with the rest of the commandment. And thus was this error rooted out, which having its rise in presumption and rash judgment, was the more particularly calculated (when once fairly understood) to teach each and all of us the necessity of humility and meekness before the Lord, that He might teach us of His ways, that we might walk in His paths, and live by every word that proceedeth forth from His mouth.

[comments regarding D&C 27 and text thereof omitted]

About this time [early August] a spirit of persecution began again to manifest itself against us in the neighborhood where I now resided, which was commenced by a man of the Methodist persuasion, who professed to be a minister of God. This man had learned that my father-in-law and his family had promised us protection, and were friendly, and inquiring into the work; and knowing that if he could get him turned against me, my friends in that place would be but few, he visited my father-in-law, and told him falsehoods concerning me of the most shameful nature, which turned the old gentleman and his family so much against us, that they would no longer promise us protection nor believe our doctrines.

Towards the latter end of August, in company with John and David Whitmer, and my brother Hyrum Smith, I visited the Church at Colesville, New York. Well knowing the determined hostility of our enemies in that quarter, and also knowing that it was our duty to visit the Church, we had called upon our Heavenly Father, in mighty prayer, that He would grant us an opportunity of meeting with them, that he would blind the eyes of our enemies, so that they would not know us, and that we might on this occasion return unmolested. Our prayers were not in vain, for when within a little distance of Mr. Knight's place, we encountered a large company at work upon the public road, amongst whom were several of our most bitter enemies. They looked earnestly at us, but not knowing us, we passed on without interruption. That evening we assembled the Church, and confirmed them, partook of the Sacrament, and held a happy meeting, having much reason to rejoice in the God of our salvation, and sing hosannas to His holy name. Next morning we

set out on our return home, and although our enemies had offered a reward of five dollars to any one who would give them information of our arrival, yet did we get out of the neighborhood, without the least annoyance, and arrived home in safety. Some few days afterwards, however, Newel Knight came to my place, and from him we learned that, very shortly after our departure, the mob came to know of our having been there, when they immediately collected together, and threatened the brethren, and very much annoyed them during all that day.

Meantime, Brother Knight had come with his wagon, prepared to move my family to Fayette, New York. Mr. Whitmer, having heard of the persecutions against us at Harmony, Pennsylvania, had invited us to go and live with him; and during the last week in August we arrived at Fayette, amidst the congratulations of our brethren and friends.

To our great grief, however, we soon found that Satan had been lying in wait to deceive, and seeking whom he might devour: Brother Hiram Page had in his possession a certain stone, by which he had obtained certain "revelations" concerning the upbuilding of Zion, the order of the Church, etc., all of which were entirely at variance with the order of God's house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations. As a conference meeting had been appointed for the 26th day of September, I thought it wisdom not to do much more than to converse with the brethren on the subject, until the conference should meet. Finding, however, that many, especially the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone, we thought best to inquire of the Lord concerning so important a matter; and before conference convened, we received the following:

[text of D&C 28 quoted]

Revelation, given in the presence of Six Elders, in Fayette, New York, September, 1830.

[text of D&C 29 quoted]

At length our conference assembled. The subject of the stone previously mentioned was discussed, and after considerable investigation, Brother Page, as well as the whole Church who were present, renounced the said stone, and all things connected therewith, much to our mutual satisfaction and happiness. We now partook of the Sacrament, confirmed and ordained many, and attended to a great variety of Church business on the first and the two following days of the conference, during which time we had much of the power of God manifested amongst us; the Holy Ghost came upon us, and filled us with joy unspeakable; and

peace, and faith, and hope, and charity abounded in our midst.
(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Vol. 1, pages 104-115)

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