

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 28

This section is in response to alleged revelations of one Hiram Page, who had persuaded others the revelations were genuinely from God. Page appears to be an honest man who had been deceived by the adversary. He conforms to the Lord's bidding via Smith rather than attempt to contradict Smith and promote himself as a prophet.

This shows not all revelations or spiritual phenomena are of the Lord. Just as the Lord possesses powers we do not fully understand, so does the adversary and he may work things that appear genuine. Thus, we must exercise caution in judging what the message is and whether or not it contradicts preceding and contemporary revelation.

The section can be divided into two main parts. Verses 1-7 comment on the order of the Church, and is aimed in specific at Cowdery. The second section of v. 8-16 contradicts the "revelations" from the stone and indicates Page is to be dealt with privately by Cowdery.

While the subject is Hiram Page's seer stone revelations, the primary concern in this section is the way Cowdery dealt with the matter, and how the Lord wants him to correct it.

1 Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, that it shall be given unto thee that thou shalt be heard by the church in all things whatsoever thou shalt teach them by the Comforter, concerning the revelations and commandments which I have given. 2 But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. 3 And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the church. 4 And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it. 5 But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom; 6 And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church; 7 For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.

v1-7 The Lord explains to Cowdery that he can preach to and teach the Church about revelations and commandments (v. 1), but it is only Smith who is to receive and issue revelations and

commandments to the Church (v. 2). Cowdery is required to observe the commandments from Smith, as he stands in the same position as did Aaron to Moses (v. 3). When Cowdery is inspired by the Spirit he may preach and teach the Church (v. 4) but his writings are not commandments, they are commentaries (v. 5). Cowdery is prohibited from telling Smith what to do (v. 6) because Smith possesses the keys to preside until another is in that place (v. 7).

Cowdery clearly saw himself as an equal to Smith with respect to governing the Church. The Lord makes it clear to him this is not the case. Cowdery was certainly the more educated and eloquent of the two, but he failed to grasp the concept of Priesthood authority.

This statement by the Lord is probably reactionary to the incident regarding D&C 20 where Cowdery commanded Smith in the name of God to remove changes Smith had made in Cowdery's first draft of that text. See the historical material for D&C 20.

v1 Cowdery is informed that he is to teach and preach by the Spirit, even as was done by the apostles of old, cf. John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-14.

v3 "even as Aaron", Cowdery is reminded of his position and relationship with respect to Smith, cp. D&C 8:6.

v4 "by the way of commandment", Cowdery is commanded to teach by the Comforter, but is not to teach any commandments but those originating from Smith.

v5 Cowdery is to teach the word of wisdom, meaning he is to discern and understand the meaning of the Scriptures and then teach it, cp. Moroni 10:9-10.

v6-7 As Cowdery is in Aaron's role, so Smith is in Moses' role. Smith holds the keys and will continue to hold them until replaced by the Lord. The statement regarding another being appointed in Smith's stead is probably intended to emphasize there is only one President at a time. The Presidency is not something one earns or qualifies for, thereby opening up the possibility of multiple equal leaders of the Church.

8 And now, behold, I say unto you that you shall go unto the

Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings thou shalt cause my church to be established among them; and thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment. 9 And now, behold, I say unto you that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites. 10 Thou shalt not leave this place until after the conference; and my servant Joseph shall be appointed to preside over the conference by the voice of it, and what he saith to thee thou shalt tell.

11 And again, thou shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page, between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him; 12 For, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants. 13 For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith. 14 And thou shalt assist to settle all these things, according to the covenants of the church, before thou shalt take thy journey among the Lamanites.

15 And it shall be given thee from the time thou shalt go, until the time thou shalt return, what thou shalt do. 16 And thou must open thy mouth at all times, declaring my gospel with the sound of rejoicing. Amen.

v8-16 Having told Cowdery what he is not to do (v. 1-7), the Lord now tells him what he is to do. Verse 8 informs Cowdery his calling is to preach the to the Lamanites and will receive revelations, but not commandments to the Church. Verses 9-10 contradict the things Page received through the stone and v. 11-16 informs Cowdery what to do regarding the matter.

v8 Cowdery may receive personal revelation or revelations pertaining to his mission to the Lamanites, but he will not receive revelations which are commandments to the Church.

v11 Cowdery is to privately discuss the matter of the revelations from the stone with Page. This not only indicates the Lord's sensitivity to Page, but also indicates Page was not deliberately spreading abroad the issue of the stone in a self-promoting manner that would require a public censure, cp. Matt. 18:15-17, D&C 42:88.

v12-13 The message of D&C 26:2 is reiterated.

v13 The Lord indicates the appropriate manner in which to

govern the ecclesia. When the people are united in the Spirit and led by God there is no division or contradiction, cp. 4 Ne. 1:2-3. Revelation is dispensed along the lines of keys, the people recognize its inspiration by faith and prayer and they consent to it accordingly.

v16 The message of 24:1-19 is reiterated.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 28

Below are comments from Smith regarding the matter of Hiram Page's seer stone and then an excerpt from Newel Knight's journal on the same issue. The third excerpt includes some details about Page's stone and David Whitmer's recollections on the matter documented quite some time later.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, pages 67-68. It was published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 181-182. It was published in the Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 8, dated March 1, 1843, and in the Millennial Star, volume four, number 10, pages 152-152, dated February, 1844.

Excerpt from History of the Church

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]

[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 109-115)

Excerpt from Newell Knight Autobiography

After arranging my affairs at home, I again set out for Fayette, to attend our second conference, which had been appointed to be held at Father Whitmer's, where Joseph then resided. On my arrival I found Brother Joseph in great distress of mind on account of Hyrum Page, who had managed to get up some dissension of feeling among the brethren by giving revelations concerning the government of the Church and other matters, which he claimed to have received through the medium of a stone he possessed. He had quite a roll of papers full of these revelations, and many in the Church were led astray by them. Even Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family had given heed to them, although they were in contradiction to the New Testament and the revelations of these last days. Here was a chance for Satan to work among the little flock, and he sought by this means to accomplish what persecution failed to do. Joseph was perplexed and scarcely knew how to meet this new exigency. That night I occupied the same room that he did and the greater part of the night was spent in prayer and supplication. After much labor with these brethren they were convinced of their error, and confessed the same, renouncing the revelations as not being of God, but acknowledged that Satan had conspired to overthrow their belief in the true plan of salvation. In consequence of these things Joseph enquired of the Lord before conference commenced and received the revelation published on page 140 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein God explicitly states His mind and will concerning the receiving of revelation. Conference having assembled, the first thing done was to consider the subject of the stone in connection with Hyrum Page, and after considerable investigation and discussion, Brother Page and all the members of the Church present renounced the stone, and the revelations connected with it, much to our joy and satisfaction. The sacrament was then administered, a number were confirmed, many were ordained, and a great variety of Church business was transacted.

During this time we had much of the power of God manifested among us and it was wonderful to witness the wisdom that Joseph displayed on this occasion, for truly God gave unto him great wisdom and power, and it seems to me, even now, that none who saw him administer righteousness under such trying

circumstances, could doubt that the Lord was with him, as he acted--not with the wisdom of man, but with the wisdom of God, the Holy Ghost came upon us and filled our hearts with unspeakable joy. Before this memorable conference closed three other revelations [i.e., D&C 29, 30, 31] besides the one already mentioned [i.e., D&C 28] were received from God by our prophet, and we were made to rejoice exceedingly in His goodness. (Newell Knight, "Newel Knight's Journal," [Classic Experiences and Adventures](#), Bookcraft, 1969, chapter 5, paragraphs 10-11)

Excerpt from The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants

Even though Hiram Page's stone was renounced by its owner and the membership of the Church, it was kept as a souvenir. It was eventually placed in the hands of the leaders of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and is now housed in their Department of History. Elder Cecil McGavin has had the privilege of examining this stone, and wrote the following description of it:

It is a flat stone about seven inches long, four wide, and one-quarter inch in thickness. It is dark gray in color with waves of brown and purple gracefully interwoven across the surface. A small hole has been drilled through one end of it as if a string had been threaded through it.

An interesting sidelight concerning this stone and the revelations received through it is found in a statement made by David Whitmer fifty-seven years later. He wrote:

As to the revelations which came through Hiram Page's stone, I will state that Oliver and I never thought much about them. We talked of them, and thought they might be from God, or might be from Satan. (The Saints' Herald, Lamoni, Iowa, February 5, 1887, page 90)

(Robert J. Woodford, The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants, PhD Dissertation at BYU, volume 1, pages 406-407, April, 1974)

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