

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 68

The first part (v. 1-12) of this revelation is in response to a request by those addressed. The second part (v. 13-33) addresses a series of points under two main subjects, namely Bishops and caring for families.

- The Lord's response to their question, the first part (v. 1-12)
 - Addressing Orson Hyde (v. 1-6)
 - Parenthesis on servants speaking by inspiration (v. 3-6)
 - Addressing Hyde and the others (v. 7-12)
- Additional comments by the Lord, the second part (v. 13-33)
 - On Bishops (v. 14-24)
 - Point one - Additional Bishops to be set apart as High Priests under the MP (v. 14-15)
 - Point two - Literal descendants of Aaron have a claim to the office of Bishop by lineage and may claim it (v. 16-21)
 - Point three - Bishops tried by First Presidency (v. 22-24)
 - On families (v. 25-31)
 - Point one - Children to be taught and baptized with laying on of hands at the age of eight (v. 25-28)
 - Point two - Observe the Sabbath day (v. 29)
 - Point three - Don't raise children to be lazy and greedy (v. 30-32)
 - Point four - Remember to pray (v. 33)
- Conclusion (v. 34-35)

1 MY servant, Orson Hyde, was called by his ordination to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the Spirit of the living God, from people to people, and from land to land, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and expounding all scriptures unto them. 2 And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth--

3 And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. 4 And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. 5 Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants. 6 Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.

7 This is the word of the Lord unto you, my servant Orson Hyde, and also unto my servant Luke Johnson, and unto my servant Lyman Johnson, and unto my servant William E. McLellin, and unto all the faithful elders of my church-- 8 Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. 9 And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. 10 And he that believeth shall be blest with signs following, even as it is written. 11 And unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man; 12 And of as many as the Father shall bear

record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen.

v1-12 This revelation was in response to a petition on the part of those named in v. 7. The first 12 verses address their questions.

v1-6 Hyde is addressed individually here, but the Lord's statement to him is broadened as an example to the whole Church in v. 2. Hyde's calling to preach the gospel to the surrounding lands is restated.

v1 "synagogues", this word in English is most often associated with Jewish places of worship. However, in the scriptural context this is not the case. The English word is a transliteration of the Greek "sunagoge", which can be translated to "gathering". Thus, Hyde is not being called to specifically proselyte Jews, but to proselyte people in their gathering places.

v3-6 A parenthesis telling the Elders they are to speak by inspiration, and when doing so what they say is the same as the Lord saying it (v. 3-4, cp. D&C 46:28-30, D&C 50:30). It then goes on to give a lengthy statement of support where the Lord says He will be with them (v. 5-6). The typical support statement is "I am with you", and appears frequently in the NT and D&C. Verses 5-6 expound upon and explain this statement.

v7-12 These verses address the entire group, and similar to the statement to Hyde, repeat their commission to go out and preach the gospel.

13 And now, concerning the items in addition to the covenants and commandments, they are these--

v13-33 The Lord provides council on some additional items.

14 There remain hereafter, in the due time of the Lord, other bishops to be set apart unto the church, to minister even according to the first; 15 Wherefore they shall be high priests who are worthy, and they shall be appointed by the First Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood, except they be literal descendants of Aaron.

16 And if they be literal descendants of Aaron they have a legal right to the bishopric, if they are the firstborn among the sons of Aaron; 17 For the firstborn holds the right of the presidency over this priesthood, and the keys or authority of the same. 18 No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant and the

firstborn of Aaron. 19 But, as a high priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood has authority to officiate in all the lesser offices he may officiate in the office of bishop when no literal descendant of Aaron can be found, provided he is called and set apart and ordained unto this power, under the hands of the First Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood. 20 And a literal descendant of Aaron, also, must be designated by this Presidency, and found worthy, and anointed, and ordained under the hands of this Presidency, otherwise they are not legally authorized to officiate in their priesthood. 21 But, by virtue of the decree concerning their right of the priesthood descending from father to son, they may claim their anointing if at any time they can prove their lineage, or do ascertain it by revelation from the Lord under the hands of the above named Presidency.

22 And again, no bishop or high priest who shall be set apart for this ministry shall be tried or condemned for any crime, save it be before the First Presidency of the church; 23 And inasmuch as he is found guilty before this Presidency, by testimony that cannot be impeached, he shall be condemned; 24 And if he repent he shall be forgiven, according to the covenants and commandments of the church.

v14-24 This section of text deals with the calling of additional Bishops (v. 14-15), the lineal right to be a Bishop (v. 16-21), and how to deal with accusations of sin against Bishops (v. 22-24).

v14-15 The First Bishop of the Church is presented as an example, and additional Bishops are to be called to serve in like manner. Bishops are to be set apart as High Priests in the Melchizedek Priesthood, unless they are literal descendants of Aaron.

v16-21 If persons are literal descendants of Aaron they possess a lineal right to serve in the office of Bishop. Among Jews, it is typically held that those who have the last name "Cohen" or some Cohen in their family follow this lineage as the Hebrew word "cohen" literally translates to the English "priest".

This suggests literal descendants of Aaron can act in the office of Bishop without being ordained a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood. They would presumably be ordained to the office of a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, and then consecrated to act as an ancient "high priest" (cf. Lev. 21:10-15, 2 Ne. 5:26), with equivalent duties of the contemporary Bishop (cf. Jacob 1:18-19).

It is curious the lineal right remains after the fulfillment of the Law of Moses. In D&C 84:27 we are informed John Baptist's ordination was to overthrow the house of Aaron. In the absence of the present verses, one would have interpreted

the D&C 84 statement to mean the lineal right of the sons of Aaron was ended along with a lot of the other details associated with the Law of Moses. It is unclear which aspects of seemingly dispensation-specific covenants operate outside of their dispensations. But, since the Aaronic Priesthood is operating in the present dispensation, some of the regulations regarding its administration must go with it.

It is possible v. 17 can be taken to mean that firstborn sons of Aaron have both the right and the keys of this office, but in order to use them within the Church confines they must be authorized per v. 20. However, if they are operating outside of the confines of the Church, say they were devout Jews, it is unclear what this right and these keys grant them, and what keys exactly is invested in them.

The negative implications of this case are also instructive. The only persons who have a patrilineal claim to the office of Bishop are those who are firstborn sons of Aaron. No other Gentile can claim such a right. This effectively ends any attempt to pass Priesthood office from father to son upon the father's decease or retirement. In the Old Testament and Book of Mormon, it is clear the office of High Priest was passed from father to son. In the contemporary era, that practice has been eliminated.

v21 Proof must be had of their lineage in order to claim the office, either by genealogical paperwork or by revelation. One would assume the revelation would be a Patriarchal Blessing or something akin to it.

v22-24 A Bishop must be tried by the First Presidency under the same rigorous means applied to all persons. One would assume because of their prominent position and involvement with certain potentially sensitive matters regarding people's behavior they would become conspicuous targets for disgruntled members.

25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. 26 For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized. 27 And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands. 28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the

Lord.

29 And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

30 And the inhabitants of Zion also shall remember their labors, inasmuch as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness; for the idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord.

31 Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness. 32 These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them; wherefore, let my servant Oliver Cowdery carry these sayings unto the land of Zion.

33 And a commandment I give unto them--that he that observeth not his prayers before the Lord in the season thereof, let him be had in remembrance before the judge of my people.

v25-31 The Lord presents a second topic for discussion, namely families and their responsibilities towards children.

v25-28 Parents are to teach their children the principles of the gospel and have them baptized and confirmed by the laying on of hands at the age of eight years old. Failure to do so results in the sins of the children being placed upon the heads of the parents, cp. 2 Ne. 4:5.

v29 The subject of observing the Sabbath receives relatively little emphasis here as it was covered in detail in D&C 59, which was received only 3 months earlier than this one.

v30-32 These verses address the adult's bad example of being lazy, and therefore raising their children in sloth and greediness. The inhabitants in Zion should do away with these things and work vigorously.

v33 People in Zion should pray regularly. This verse may not be "point 4" under the families header, but may just be a general closing exhortation for the people of Zion to remember their prayers. Line d of v. 32 seems to form closure on the v. 25-32 section, but the prayer admonition certainly has application to families and individuals regardless.

34 These sayings are true and faithful; wherefore, transgress them not, neither take therefrom. 35 Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, and I come quickly. Amen.

v34-35 Conclusion of the section with an authority statement.

v34 "neither take therefrom", cp. Deut. 4:2, Rev. 22:19.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 68

Minutes from the Far West Record suggest this section is a composite of two different revelations, verses 1-12 received some time in November 1-3, 1831 and verses 13-35 were received November 11, 1831 (see Lyndon W. Cook's The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith for discussion).

The Elders were gathered together for a series of meetings over the publication of the revelations into the Book of Commandments. Apparently after the first two days of the conferences, Smith was approached by four Elders who wanted to know the will of the Lord.

Regarding the text of this section, Woodford states:

There are several rather important alterations in the text of this revelation. Most of them are connected with the explaining the duties and qualifications of a Bishop, and the responsibility of the person who calls another to what office in the priesthood. IN 1831, when this revelation was given, there was no First Presidency of the Church, and it was not until March 1835 that much of the information about bishops was revealed (see Section 107). Therefore, in light of these later revelations, Section 68 contained several changes when it was published in the Kirtland reprint of the Evening and Morning Star, June 1835, and these changes have been retained in all printings since then. (Robert J. Woodford, *Historical Developments of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 1973, volume 2, page 854)

This section was first published in the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 5, page 35, October, 1832 (also in the Kirtland reprint of the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 15, pages 73-73, dated June, 1835). It was published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 147-149. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 8, pages 496-497. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 5, number 12, pages 186-187, dated May, 1845.

Excerpt from History of the Church

As the following Elders Orson Hyde, Luke Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, and William E. M'Lellin-were desirous to know the mind

of the Lord concerning themselves, I inquired, and received the following:

[text of D&C 68 quoted]

(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 277)

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