

## Section 28

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As the Church's second conference approached in September 1830, Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates, began receiving revelations through a stone “concerning the upbuilding of Zion the order of the Church and so forth, but which were entirely at variance with the order of Gods House, as it is laid down in the scriptures. and our own late revelations.”<sup>1</sup> Newel Knight wrote that Hiram “had quite a roll of papers full of these revelations, and many in the Church were led astray by them,” including Oliver Cowdery and many of the Whitmer family. Joseph was perplexed, but not for the reason that is sometimes assumed.<sup>2</sup>

Hiram Page’s seer stone was not the problem. Joseph’s revelations and personal teachings encouraged others to use their spiritual gifts, including when those gifts involved seeric objects like Oliver Cowdery’s rod (see section 8). If Hiram had received real revelation through his stone about how to be a better husband, there would have been no problem. The problem was that Hiram’s revelations were “entirely at variance with the order of God’s house.” He was a teacher in the Aaronic priesthood. He had not been appointed by God’s authorized servants, nor sustained by the common consent of the Saints, to receive revelations and commandments about issues that involved all the Saints.

Joseph spent most of a sleepless night prayerfully seeking and receiving Section 28. His history says, “We thought it best to enquire of the Lord concerning so important a matter.” Maybe the “we” included Oliver, because the Lord’s answer

is addressed directly to Oliver, which is an important key to seeing what the revelation does, rather than just what it says.

The Lord speaks through the first elder of his Church to the second elder—a point of order—clarifying Oliver’s role to teach the revelations given to Joseph. Likening Joseph to Moses and Oliver to Aaron, the Lord reminded Oliver of his role to “speak or teach” (D&C 28:4) but not to write revelations for the Church or to command Joseph. The Lord directed Oliver to go on a mission to the Lamanites, or Native Americans, in the West, hinting that Page’s predictions for the location of Zion were wrong: “it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites” (v. 9). But before his mission, Oliver was assigned to visit Hiram privately to “tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him” (v. 11). The Lord did not renounce personal revelation or seer stones. He reminded Oliver of the revealed order and showed him that Hiram was out of order. “For all things must be done in order, and by the common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith” (v. 13).

By speaking through Joseph to Oliver, the Lord illustrated the order in which revelation flows for the Church. By countering the information in Page’s revelation with accurate details about Zion, the Lord led Oliver to the conclusion that either Joseph or Hiram Page was the true revelator. By commanding Oliver to teach Hiram Page these principles, the Lord reinforced them in Oliver’s mind and illustrated the order of the Church at work at a critical moment. Oliver obeyed the revelation and “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.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#),” 53–54, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 24, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*, 1846, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

<sup>3</sup> Newel Knight, *Autobiography and Journal*, 1846, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.