

Joseph Smith—History 1:66-75

D&C 6-9, 11-13

Lesson 3, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 26 Sep 2016

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General Introduction

These sections cover the period of time when Oliver Cowdery arrived to assist Joseph Smith with the work of translation. During the two months of April and May 1829, they had many great experiences, and others around them were the beneficiaries of Joseph's revelations. At the end of this time, with the Book of Mormon mostly done, they moved to Fayette, New York, and the Whitmer home, and there completed the translation and made preparations to get it printed.

Summary Chronology

- **Sun, 5 Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Oliver Cowdery arrived with Samuel Smith.
- **Mon, 6 Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Joseph Smith signed agreement to purchase a home from his father-in-law, Isaac Hale.
- **Tue, 7 Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Oliver Cowdery began to write for Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon translation.
- **Early Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 6, for Oliver Cowdery.

- **Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 8, Oliver desires to translate.
- **Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 7, question about John the Apostle.
- **Second half Apr 1829** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 9, about translation and writing.
- **Fri, 15 May 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Aaronic Priesthood restored by John the Baptist; D&C 13.
- **Mid-May 1829** (Harmony, PA) – Samuel Smith visited, was baptized.
- **Late May 1829** (Near Susquehanna River, between Colesville, NY and Harmony, PA) – Melchizedek Priesthood restored by Peter, James, and John.
- **Late May 1829** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 11, to Hyrum Smith.
- **Late May 1829** (Harmony, PA) – D&C 12, to Joseph Knight, Sr.
- **About Sat, 29 May 1829** (Fayette, NY) – Joseph, Emma, and Oliver left Harmony to move in with the Whitmers to finish the translation, arriving in Fayette about 1 Jun 1829.

Joseph Smith—History 1:66-75

Introduction

After the return of the plates and interpreters in September 1828, which had been taken in conjunction with the loss of the first manuscript that summer, Joseph made little progress on the translation, if any. D&C 10:4 counseled him not to “labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate.” Some of those “means provided” came to Joseph’s door on 5 April 1829, in the form of Oliver Cowdery.

Having learned about the work from Joseph Smith, Sr. (after the father received a commandment to open his mouth and share the message of the work in D&C 4), Oliver came to Harmony to meet Joseph and help. They immediately went to work and Oliver was the major scribe for the rest of the translation and soon the “second elder” of the

Church (D&C 20:3). Together Joseph and Oliver received the priesthood and were baptized.

Outline

1. Oliver Cowdery’s arrival (66-67)
2. Priesthood restoration (68-75)

Commentary

The Joseph Smith-History account in the Pearl of Great Price ends abruptly at that point in the story, though the revelations and his history continue to tell the rest of the story of translation and publication of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of the Church the next spring.

Oliver Cowdery's arrival (66-67)

66 On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came.

In March 1829, the Lord told Joseph Smith to stop translating the Book of Mormon “for a season” (D&C 5:30), and that if he did this, the Lord would “provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing which I have commanded” (D&C 5:34). The season was not long—less than a month—and the fulfillment of the promise came in the person of a young school teacher, Oliver Cowdery.¹

Oliver had come to the Palmyra area in 1828 to teach school in place of his brother, Lyman, who was not able to fill the contract. Because some of his pupils were Smith children, as was the custom, he boarded for a time with the Smith family. Oliver was just less than a year younger than Joseph Smith, and born in the same state of Vermont. He had previously clerked in a store before taking up teaching. When he heard the stories of the plates, and after the family felt they could trust him, Father Smith, armed with his commission from D&C 4, told Oliver how Joseph had translated them before but that the work had ceased after the loss of the first manuscript. He invited Oliver to consider being Joseph's scribe. Pondering this, Oliver went to the Lord in prayer. According to Joseph Smith's 1832 history:

[The] Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowd[e]ry and shewed unto him the plates in a vision and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me his unworthy Servant therefore he was desirous to come and write for me and to translate... I cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me to accomplish the work whereunto he had commanded me.²

Meanwhile, Joseph was in Harmony, anxious to get back to translating, and on 2 April 1829, asked the Lord to send him help. An angel “informed him that the same should be forthcoming in a few days.”³

Having received his personal witness, Oliver left Palmyra with Samuel Smith, who was going to help Joseph with Spring farming tasks, for the approximately 150-mile journey to Harmony. The weather was rainy, the roads muddy and cold, and as a result Oliver froze one of his toes. They

arrived near sunset on Sunday evening, 5 April 1829. Oliver and Joseph talked late into the night, then again the next day, and Oliver was Joseph's scribe and witness (with Samuel) on the agreement purchasing from Isaac Hale the property on which he and Emma were living.⁴

67 I commenced to translate...and he began to write. By Tuesday, 7 April 1829, just two days after his arrival, Oliver began to write the Book of Mormon as Joseph dictated, and their work on the translation continued at a brisk pace until the book was completed in June. Emma reported that they sat together at the same table in the little two-room home where the three lived, the plates sitting on the table covered by a linen cloth.⁵ Neither Joseph nor Oliver left descriptions of the experience in any detail, but according to eyewitnesses, Joseph at this time used his seer stone more than the Nephite interpreters.⁶ He would put the stone in his hat to better see the translation, while the plates themselves sat covered on the table nearby.⁷ Research on the manuscripts shows that he could ‘see’ between 20 and 30 words at a time, which he would dictate to Oliver, who would then read it back. Joseph would offer corrections, including the spelling of names, then once it was correctly recorded, the next group of words would be revealed.

During this time, many important events happened to the two of them, many of which are reflected in the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants received in April 1829 (D&C 6-9).

Priesthood restoration (68-75)

68 to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism. As the two brethren continued the Book of Mormon translation, they came to a passage in the book that talked about baptism. This was possibly 3 Nephi 11, 19, or 27, based on the timing.⁸ Other references to baptism in the Book of Mormon that they already translated might also have played into the conversation. This gave them pause, generated discussion and finally action, leading to the experiences described in the following verses.

68 having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us. The laying on of hands was thus established from the beginning as the means of ordination.

¹ Background on Oliver Cowdery from *JSP*, D1:470; Scott H. Faulring, “Oliver Cowdery, Book of Mormon Scribe,” in Black and Skinner, *Joseph*, 85-94; Black, *Who's Who*, 74-77; Brewster, *Encyclopedia*, 10-111.

² *JSP*, H1:16; this is the last entry in the 1832 history.

³ Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith*, 184.

⁴ Proctor and Proctor, *History of Joseph Smith*, 184; see *JSP*, D1:28-34 for the agreement with Isaac Hale. This agreement was thus actually the beginning of Oliver being a scribe for Joseph. The first payment was \$64 paid on 6 April (*JSP*, D1:33), probably provided by Oliver Cowdery, who had just received \$65.50

payment for teaching school (Faulring, “Oliver Cowdery,” in Black and Skinner, *Joseph*, 89).

⁵ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:539-540.

⁶ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:532.

⁷ MacKay and Frederickson, *Joseph's Seer Stones*, 50-55.

⁸ Oliver Cowdery commented (at the end of Joseph Smith-History) that this event was “after writing the account given of the Savior's ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob,” which could be anything after 3 Nephi 10 but perhaps 3 Nephi 27 is the best ‘trigger’ chapter, if he meant after writing the full account of Jesus' visit, which ends in 3 Nephi 28.

69 *I confer the Priesthood of Aaron.* This quotation from John the Baptist (though we don't learn his name in Joseph Smith's account until verse 72) became Section 13 in 1879, before there was a scripture called the Pearl of Great Price with Joseph Smith's history in it. See the commentary on D&C 13 below for more details.

70 *this should be conferred on us hereafter.* Referring to the Melchizedek Priesthood, John told Joseph and Oliver that they would receive it shortly. Joseph Smith did not record any details about this experience, though there are references to it in the Doctrine and Covenants (18:9; 20:2-3; 27:12; 128:20). This event happened as Joseph and Oliver were returning from a visit to Joseph Knight in Colesville (D&C 128:20). As they walked along the river, Peter, James, and John appeared, "declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fullness of times!" (D&C 128:20).

Oliver wrote some details about it: "I was also present with Joseph when the Melchizedek priesthood was conferred by the holy angles of god.—which we then confirmed on each other by the will and commandment of god. This priesthood is also to remain upon the earth untill the Last remnant of time. This holy priesthood we conferred upon many. And is just as good and valid as if god had conferred it in person."⁹

In terms of the date, it has to be after 15 May 1829, but how long? Larry C. Porter did some excellent work several decades ago that is still helpful in narrowing it down.¹⁰ According to his research, the first mention of the priesthood is in D&C 18:9, which was in early June 1829.¹¹ Joseph and Oliver moved to Fayette, NY, leaving sometime around June 1, and they had received the priesthood before they left, based on D&C 128:20. Because that scripture also declares that the event took place between Colesville and Harmony, it has to be when Joseph and Oliver were traveling twenty-eight miles between Joseph's house in Harmony and the Knight's home in Colesville, sometime between 15 May and the end of the month.

One account from Addison Everett, who said he heard it from Joseph Smith in 1844, explained how Joseph and Oliver were arrested in Colesville but managed to escape into the woods. As they traveled at night in the mud and water, Oliver prayed, "O Lord, How long Brother Joseph have we got to endure this thing." Everett stated that next Peter, James, and John appeared and gave them the priesthood. However, there are some problems with the account, including the attorney mentioned by Everett not being in-

involved with Joseph Smith until the summer of 1830. Nevertheless, a second source, Erastus Snow, said a similar thing in 1882 (without mentioning the attorney), so it could be that Everett simply conflated a couple of events but got the priesthood ordination narrative correct.¹²

71 *we went and were baptized.* Following John's instructions, the two journeyed down to the Susquehanna river at the south end of Joseph's property. Joseph first baptized Oliver, then Oliver baptized Joseph, then they each ordained each other to the priesthood they had just received (perhaps back at the house after putting on dry clothing).

72 *John the Baptist.* This is where we learn the name of the messenger, the same who was beheaded in the New Testament for his testimony of Christ. Resurrected and restored, he returned again to the earth as the last holder of the keys of Aaron and restored that priesthood.

72 *acted under the direction of Peter, James and John.* As a holder of the lesser priesthood, John was following the lead and direction of the three senior apostles of the dispensation of Jesus' time. The two men were instructed that the priesthood held by the apostles would be given to them "in due time" (see v. 70 commentary for a discussion on that event).

72 *first Elder of the Church.* There was no church, of course, at this time, but the term Elder was commonly used in Joseph Smith's day among many churches as a leadership position. When the Church was later organized in April 1830, Joseph and Oliver ordained each other elders at the organization of the Church (D&C 21 heading).

72 *fifteenth day of May, 1829.* The exact date was preserved of this first ordination and the baptisms, which is celebrated around the Church each year with commemorations of various kinds.

73 *he stood up and prophesied many things.* The two men were filled with the Holy Ghost after their baptisms and both prophesied many things. What things they said were not recorded in detail, but Joseph spoke of "the rise of this Church" and other things connected with it. Note that they had not yet been commanded to organize a church, so this was truly a preparatory revelation that perhaps was the first time that Joseph knew what the next step after completing the Book of Mormon might be.

74 *we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings.* The timing of Joseph's comment could relate not only to their baptisms, but also to their reception of the

⁹ Cook, *Revelations*, 23.

¹⁰ <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/06/dating-the-restoration-of-the-melchizedek-priesthood>.

¹¹ *JSP*, D1:69.

¹² See an excerpt from *BYU Studies* 35:4 that documents known comments about the priesthood restoration and provides some analysis, for more details: <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/priesthood-restoration-documents>.

gift of the Holy Ghost not many days afterwards. Both experiences triggered revelatory experiences, and like Paul in the New Testament who, after his vision of Christ suddenly saw Christ all throughout the scriptures, now these two had the Holy Ghost as their instructor. They read the Bible with new eyes, understanding it in a way they “never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of.”

74 forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the Priesthood. The first mention of this in print was 1834 by Oliver Cowdery, though certainly they taught it prior to that. Joseph first wrote about it in 1838, though that history wasn’t published until 1842 in Nauvoo. Bushman points out that some have said that the delay in mentioning it might make it look like a later addition to boost

Joseph’s authority, but there is no attempt at aggrandizement in his recollections, nor in Oliver’s. They simply relate their experiences.¹³

75 my wife’s father’s family. Emma’s father never did like Joseph but her brothers were much more supportive and helped protect Joseph, Emma, and Oliver as they worked in Harmony. But by late May 1829, the persecution they experienced was strong, and they returned to Fayette to stay at the Whitmer home, and there finished the translation. Joseph did not know the Whitmers, but Oliver did, so he enabled that move and support, and the Whitmers would become key players in the early history of the Church.

D&C 6

Setting

As explained above, Oliver Cowdery’s arrival in Harmony was a direct answer to Joseph Smith’s prayers. Shortly after his arrival in Harmony on 5 April 1829, Joseph inquired of the Lord in Oliver’s behalf, and received this revelation through the “Urim and Thummim,” (D&C 6 heading)¹⁴ probably meaning one of Joseph’s seer stones at this point.¹⁵ The exact date is unknown but from the context, it was quite soon after Oliver’s arrival.

Documents and Publication

D&C 6 was first published as Chapter 5 of the 1833 Book of Commandments, which is the oldest known copy (the pages where this would be are missing from Revelation Book 1).¹⁶ This was Section 8 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. The Lord’s laborers gain salvation (1-6)
2. The gift of salvation (7-13)
3. Oliver’s witness of the work (14-24)
4. Oliver invited to translate (25-28)
5. The Lord is with them (29-37)

Commentary

Oliver Cowdery was taught about revelation and his own witness, told things that only he had known, which confirmed the truth of the work to him. He was also offered the gift to translate with Joseph, and admonished to be a disciple of Christ.

Many of the phrases in the opening verses are similar to those in D&C 4, 11, 12, and 14, all received within a few weeks of each other. As one commentary put it, “This repetition should not be understood as a divine ‘form letter’ implying less than personal or individual concern for the recipients. Rather, it emphasizes the importance of the calling made to these servants and to all who have followed them in the Lord’s service.”¹⁷

The Lord’s laborers gain salvation (1-6)

1 great and marvelous work. The title has expanded from the revelation to Joseph’s father (D&C 4), where it was just a marvelous work (D&C 4:1).

2 my word, which is quick and powerful. The Lord’s work is “quick,” which here doesn’t refer to speed but means ‘alive.’ So many in Joseph’s and our day believe that God’s word only comes through dead prophets and ancient writings, but Joseph knew that God is living and speaks living words to living prophets.

2 sharper than a two-edged sword. Compare to Hebrews 4:12. A sword with two edges is sharp on both sides, so it can cut both ways, or, as one person expressed it, defend

¹³ Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 75-76.

¹⁴ Harper, *Making Sense*, 37.

¹⁵ MacKay and Frederick present evidence from Emma Smith that after Oliver Cowdery’s visit, the seer stones were used and not the interpreters. However, other accounts do still mention the

Nephite instruments being used in the latter part of the translation. See *Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones*, 51-55.

¹⁶ *JSP*, D1:34.

¹⁷ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:53.

and attack at the same time. The idea is that God’s word cuts deep, going straight to the heart, no matter how we receive it. But unlike a sword, it doesn’t harm us but benefits us with its penetrating power.

2 *dividing asunder of both joints and marrow.* It takes not only an extremely sharp knife to cut through bone, but great strength behind the blade. So is the power of God’s word—like a blade that is wielded with such force and expertise that it severs joints and bones in a single blow.

3 *reap while the day lasts.* This verse is similar to D&C 4:4 (and others that will come later) but this phrase is new, though it will be repeated in Sections 11, 12, and 14, and once in the Book of Mormon (Alma 26:5). The ripe field doesn’t stay ripe forever, so the work must be done in the right time—“the day.” Someone who procrastinates their service to God might miss the harvest and the blessing of “everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.”

4 *thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called.* Joseph Smith, Sr., was told that having a desire was enough to get him called (D&C 4:3), but the Lord requires of Oliver work and effort—he has to go harvesting, and then he is “called of God.”

6 *as you have asked.* The revelation came to Oliver after a request, which is the pattern for many of these early, personal revelations. They requested the word of the Lord for them individually, and Joseph looked at the stone in his hat, just like he did for the Book of Mormon, and dictated these words. That told the recipients it came straight from God.

6 *establish the cause of Zion.* This is the first recorded chronological mention of “Zion,” though Joseph Smith could certainly have encountered it earlier in the translation of the lost manuscript, as the phrase appears several times in the account on the small plates that we have in 1 and 2 Nephi. Joseph Smith’s concept of Zion expanded and clarified over time. It is hard to know just what it meant to him here, though we can say with confidence that what he understood in 1829 differed dramatically from what he understood in 1835 or 1842.

The gift of salvation (7-13)

7 *Seek not for riches but for wisdom.* Joseph and Oliver were both young and in need of the wisdom that comes with maturity and the refining power of the Spirit. Oliver’s life had been as hard as Joseph’s, with him apparently needing to work from a young age to help support his family. It would not be surprising if thoughts of personal wealth entered his mind as he heard about the plates and the interpreters. But the Lord steered him clear of that,

pointing him toward “wisdom,” which would bring him eternal life, which is likened to being rich.

7 *the mysteries of God shall be unfolded.* Oliver sought for such knowledge of the things of God that comes only through revelation—the mysteries. With this promise (and the additional reinforcement in v. 11), he became bold to ask the Lord for understanding of gospel principles and mysteries, as is shown in subsequent sections.

8 *as you desire of me so it shall be.* What an amazing promise to the 22-year-old teacher. His desires were to assist Joseph in the work, to play some role in this great translation effort, and the Lord promised him just that, which would result in “much good in this generation.”

9 *Say nothing but repentance.* Richard Bennett has written in his book, *School of the Prophet*, that this period in Joseph’s (and Oliver’s) life was a ‘school’ to learn the principles of the gospel. Oliver would have opportunities in this life to preach much more than just repentance, but at this time and in this place, he needed to learn more about it, so that’s what he was also to preach. Soon he and Joseph would learn about baptism and take the next step.¹⁸

9 *assist to bring forth my work.* The Book of Mormon for now, but this command hints at Oliver’s role in the next several years, bringing forth many aspects of the restored gospel while serving at Joseph Smith’s side.

10 *thou hast a gift.* The gift that Oliver has is not explained in great detail here, except that it will “find out mysteries” and “bring many to the knowledge of the truth” (verse 11). Some say the gift appears to be one of receiving revelation,¹⁹ while others see it as the gift to be a good scribe for Joseph.²⁰ The Lord will say more about Oliver’s gifts in D&C 8 and 9. He offered Oliver another gift in verses 25-28 below.

11 *exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries.* Verse 7 explained the mysteries of God would be unfolded if Oliver sought for wisdom and did the other things required in verses 3-6. Now the Lord added that Oliver’s gift of revelation would help with understanding the mysteries.

12 *Make not thy gift known.* This was good advice, given the persecution that Joseph himself had experienced when his gift of translation had been made known.

13 *no gift greater than the gift of salvation.* Though Oliver had these gifts, the Lord’s reminder was that doing good and holding out faithful qualifies him for “the greatest of all the gifts of God,” to be “saved in the kingdom of God.” Thus grace and the power of the Atonement continued to be taught very early and often in Church history.

¹⁸ Bennett, *School of the Prophet*, 32-59.

¹⁹ McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 79.

²⁰ Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 1:55.

Oliver's witness of the work (14-24)

14 *as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit.* Not only have Oliver's prayers for understanding and knowledge been answered every time, but the lesson was also taught that if we want to receive instruction from God, we have to inquire.

14 *thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art.* The fact that he was there with Joseph was a testimony of God's influence and a proof of divine inspiration. So it is with us—as we look back at our lives, we can see the Lord's hand in our lives and recognize that we would not be in that place without his guiding hand and direction. Revelation charts the course of our lives, sometimes in overt and sometimes in more subtle ways.

15 *thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind.* Similar to the comment in verse 14, when we inquire, we can be taught and enlightened by the Lord. In Oliver's case, he was trying to understand if the feelings and thoughts he had been experiencing were of God or something else, and the Lord assured him that they were from him because he was “enlightened by the Spirit of truth.”

16 *none else save God that knowest thy thoughts.* Though Joseph was giving this revelation to Oliver, as a testimony of the true source, the Lord reminded Oliver that only God knows our innermost thoughts and desires.

17 *a witness.* Like many of us, Oliver was looking for confirmation. Here he was, in a strange place with this man, getting ready to live in poverty and spend his days writing as Joseph dictated. He was sacrificing much. Was it really the work of God? This revelation is Oliver's witness that what he has been writing was true. He will have many other witnesses later, but it started with believing the feelings and direction that he had already received.

17 *the work which thou hast been writing are true.* Oliver sat with quill in hand while Joseph looked in his hat and read out words for Oliver to write down. It was tedious and slow work. Did it cross his mind that Joseph was just making all this up? If it did, the Lord here confirmed the source of Joseph's words.

18 *stand by my servant Joseph.* Oliver did this for many years but in 1838 he was excommunicated for coming out against Joseph Smith and other Church leaders. He did return to the Church in 1848, being rebaptized by Orson Hyde. He served in the Church until his death in 1850, from a chronic lung condition. Joseph Fielding Smith was of the opinion that if Oliver had remained faithful through those years, it would have been him, and not Hyrum, who fell at Joseph's side in Carthage Jail.²¹

20 *thou art Oliver.* The Lord knows our names and everything about us. See notes on D&C 3:9.

20 *I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.* Besides this verse, this phrase is also (and only) found in the writings of Lehi (so perhaps also on the lost manuscript) in 2 Nephi 1:15. It is a marvelous image of a tender Savior.

21 *I am Jesus Christ.* As the Lord identified Oliver by name as the recipient of the revelation, so he identified himself as the giver, a pattern he will follow in other revelations to individuals in the coming days. See also D&C 10:57-58.

21 *came unto mine own.* From John 1:11.

21 *I am the light which shineth in the darkness.* From John 1:5.

22 *cast your mind upon the night.* As mentioned above, Oliver had prayed before coming to see Joseph Smith and had experienced a marvelous dream/vision of the plates and a confirmation of the truth of it all. He had apparently not told anyone of that experience, so when Joseph revealed it in this revelation, Oliver knew it was from the Lord. Said David Whitmer, “Joseph had told him [Oliver] his secret thoughts, and lal he had meditated about going to see him, which no man on earth knew, as he supposed, but himself.”²²

23 *Did I not speak peace to your mind?* The peace of God is the greatest witness of his love and involvement in our lives. The great power of revelation is to bring peace.

24 *have you not received a witness?* Oliver sought a revelation through Joseph Smith as a confirmation or witness that what he was doing was of the Lord. The Lord had told him things that only the two of them knew through Joseph, which was a powerful, confirming witness that Joseph's words were from God.

Oliver invited to translate (25-28)

25 *a gift, if you desire of me, to translate.* Oliver was invited to join Joseph Smith in experiencing the gift of translation. Note that they were doing this work before they were baptized, before receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, before being members of the Church. This was a marvelous gift of the Spirit offered to both of these men.

26 *records which contain much of my gospel.* The implication here is that beyond the plates they currently possess are other records. The first instance of this promise being fulfilled was Section 7, but Oliver will be involved in the Joseph Smith Translation and the Book of Abraham as well later in his service.

²¹ Brewster, *Encyclopedia*, 111.

²² Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 56; see also HC 1:35.

27 *parts of my scriptures which have been hidden*. A clear prefiguring of D&C 7 but also the work on the Joseph Smith Translation in 1830, with which Oliver initially helped.

28 *two or three witnesses*. The Lord invited Oliver to translate at least partially to fulfill the law of witnesses. He knew Oliver would struggle and learn from the experience, and not translate much, but just having a second witness was significant.

The Lord is with them (29-37)

30 *if they do unto you even as they have done unto me*. That Oliver faced the same potential end as Joseph Smith—martyrdom—appears to be the Lord’s allusion here. But if that were the case, the blessing of glory was also promised.

32 *two or three are gathered*. Quote from Matthew 18:20, the only other place where this phrase is used. How relevant to their situation, with the three of them—Joseph, Oliver, and Emma—gathered each day in their little house, doing the work of translation. Each day they “gathered” to do that work, the Lord was in their midst.

33 *whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap*. A timely metaphor, since Joseph and Samuel were just putting in their spring planting.

34 *fear not, little flock*. Even if “earth and hell” combined against them, they were protected of the Lord.

35 *sin no more*. The Lord readily forgives sin but also readily challenges us to change our behavior so the sin is not repeated.

35 *perform with soberness the work*. There is an urgency and importance to what they are doing. The work of translation was not one to be done with jokes or a flippant attitude, but rather a sense of the eternal import of their efforts.

36 *Look unto me in every thought*. This unique phrase is only found here but speaks to their situation and need. The dedication required of them to spend hours each day translating and writing, seeking the Spirit, required them to stay focused on the Lord’s commandment each minute.

37 *Behold the wounds...the prints of the nails*. There is no indication that they saw Christ at this time, but both of these men had already seen him in one form and would yet experience his presence on other occasions, giving them the opportunity to fulfill this commandment to look and “be faithful.”

Results

Oliver Cowdery felt that this revelation “had told him secrets of his life that he knew could not be known to any

person but himself, in any other way than by revelation from the Almighty.”²³ It gave him conviction to go on and participate in the translation, even though he would make no money and put his own safety at risk. Because the revelation told him things only the Lord knew, he knew the work was also of the Lord.

Following Section 6, Joseph and Oliver continued working on the translation. They were quite destitute, and appealed to Joseph Knight, Sr., in nearby Colesville, New York, which was on the Susquehanna River but about 16 miles north of Harmony. Joseph Knight wrote:

Now Joseph and Oliver Came up to see me if I Could help him to some provisions, having no way to Buy any...I Bought a Barral of Mackrel and some Lined paper for writing and when I Came home I Bought some nine or ten Bushels of grain and five or six Bushels taters and a pound of tea, and I went Down to see him and they ware in want Joseph and oliver ware gone to see if they Could find a place to work for provisions But found none they returned home and found me there with provisions, and they ware glad for they ware out.²⁴

D&C 8

Setting

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were in Harmony, Pennsylvania, engaged in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet wrote that Oliver was desirous, even “exceedingly anxious”²⁵ to translate, too—something he had been already promised (D&C 6:25). They inquired of the Lord and received this response. The heading in the Book of Commandments summarized it, saying, “A Revelation to Oliver he being desirous to know whether the Lord would grant him the gift of Revelation & th Translation.”²⁶

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1.²⁷ This was first published as Chapter 7 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, and it was Section 34 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. The gift of revelation (1-5)
2. Oliver’s gift (6-12)

Commentary

Oliver Cowdery is invited to help translate and receives gifts from God to assist in that work.

The Gift of Revelation (1-5)

1 ***surely shall you receive a knowledge***. Oliver was promised knowledge of things that he asked about in faith and sincerity.

1 ***a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records***. The Book of Mormon was the only old record with engravings that the men had access to. But their interest must have been piqued by mention in the translation of other records, such as the record of the Jaredites found by the people of Limhi.²⁸ With the Book of Mormon’s revelation to Joseph Smith, would other records be discovered or provided as well? This must have been a topic of fascinating conversation during breaks from the work.

2 ***in your mind and in your heart***. Revelation works with both thoughts and emotions. One cannot separate the two without missing part of the message. Sometimes the Spirit might prompt us with something that doesn’t make sense, so we have to listen to the heart. Other times we may have “pure intelligence flowing into [us],” as Joseph Smith taught,²⁹ that will bring us to a perfect understanding in our minds. When both work together, we get the maximum benefit from our revelatory experiences.

3 ***this is the spirit of revelation***. Oliver has asked to translate. The Lord went bigger, talking about a gift that was so powerful that it was the same one Moses used to open up the Red Sea and let the children of Israel pass through. Moses had it revealed to him what to do by the Holy Ghost as he stood at the shore of the sea with Egypt’s armies bearing down upon his people. By heeding that spirit of revelation

²³ JSP, D1:34, quote from Oliver’s friend, David Whitmer, who received a letter from Oliver shortly after his arrival in Harmony.

²⁴ Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:19-20; Cook, *Revelations*, 13.

²⁵ Harper, *Making Sense*, 42.

²⁶ JSP, D1:45.

²⁷ JSP, D1:44; see JSP, MRB:14-17.

²⁸ JSP, D1:45.

²⁹ HC 3:381.

and having faith, he was able to perform great miracles in the Lord’s name.

4 *this is thy gift.* Oliver was blessed with the same spirit of revelation as Moses and Joseph. This gift was so powerful it would not only let him translate texts (verse 11) but will deliver him from his enemies, just as the Lord did through Moses.

Oliver’s Gift (6-12)

6 *you have another gift.* See the text note below. Oliver’s other gift was related to the gift that Aaron enjoyed. That means that Oliver was blessed with both a gift related to Moses but also to his brother, Aaron.

6-9 text note:

RB1 ³⁰	1833 ³¹	1835 ³²
now this is not all for thou hast another gift which is the gift of working with the sprout Behold it hath told you things Behold there is no other power save God that can cause this thing of Nature to work in your hands for it is the work of God & therefore whatsoever ye shall ask to tell you by that means that will he grant unto you that ye shall know	Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands, for it is the work of God; and therefore whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, that you shall know.	Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron: behold it has told you many things: behold there is no other power save the power of God that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you; therefore, doubt not, for it is the gift of God, and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works; and no power shall be able to take it away out of your hands; for it is the work of God. And therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you and you shall have knowledge concerning it:

Several items of interest arise from these changes. First, the phrase “the gift of Aaron” that we read today was first inserted in 1835, replacing “rod of nature” in 1833. In Revelation Book 1, it was first written by John Whitmer as “the sprout” but then changed to “rod” by Sidney Rigdon, whose hand also made the modernizing changes in this and many other revelations (“ye” to “you,” etc.). Apparently, Oliver Cowdery had something that was

first referred to as a “sprout” then as a “rod.” Later, Joseph Smith equated this with the “gift of Aaron” and so changed it in the 1835 text. What this item was is not certain, because neither Joseph nor Oliver nor anyone else of the period wrote about it. Some believe that Oliver had a divining or diviner’s rod that he used.³³ That would match what was widely believed in those days about such things—that they could not only find things, such as water or metal (Joseph enemies once brought a dowser to his home to try and find the plates), but also reveal information to the possessor, just as Joseph’s seer stone and the Nephite interpreters did for him. Thus the “sprout” reference perhaps has to do with the type or nature of wood that Oliver used. Some argue strongly that it can only be the Urim and Thummim.³⁴

Whatever the item referred to was, it was something that Oliver could hold in his hand, and it was something the Lord determined he could use with Oliver for his own purposes (verse 8). It is not unreasonable to suppose that Oliver used this instrument in his attempt to translate the Book of Mormon, giving the Lord’s clear sanction here.

10 *without faith you can do nothing.* The Lord was working with the brethren according to their own language, knowledge, and experience. If Oliver had a divining rod or some other instrument, the message was that it all works by faith in God. These things should not be trifled with or taken lightly.

11 *that you may translate and receive knowledge.* Oliver was invited to translate here. We don’t know how much Oliver did. Much of the original Book of Mormon manuscript is lost—especially the part that may well have had Oliver’s translation and Joseph’s handwriting. He may have done some to stand as the second witness of it, but neither he nor Joseph ever explained just how much that was.

However, it may not have been the Book of Mormon at all that Oliver translated. See the introduction below to D&C 7, which may in fact have been Oliver’s translation effort.

12 *the same that spake unto you from the beginning.* A reminder of the great spiritual experiences Oliver had before he met Joseph Smith, and that it was the same person speaking to him now.

Results

The Lord didn’t criticize Oliver for his ‘magic’ outlook and instruments, but rather worked with him to teach him something about them that he could do in faith. Today we might see seer stones or divining rods as odd things, but if so, then we forget how the Lord has worked with many people, including Moses, Aaron, the brother of Jared, the Jewish high priest, and many others. All of these had relics

³⁰ JSP, D1:46.

³¹ JSP, R2:31.

³² JSP, R2:471-472.

³³ JSP, D1:46 n116-118.

³⁴ McConkie and Garrett, *Revelations*, 87-88.

or objects that helped them understand and interpret God’s will. The Lord worked with Oliver in D&C 8 to show him how his gifts might fit in with the overall gospel plan for the Restoration and the last days. Later editors, including

Joseph Smith, turned Oliver’s “sprout” and “thing of Nature” into “the gift of Aaron.” The words may be more acceptable but the true imagery is exactly the same.

D&C 7

Setting

Not long after his arrival in Harmony and while working on the translation with Joseph Smith, Oliver and Joseph had a conversation about the fate of John the Beloved, based on a reading of John 21 (and perhaps added to by the fate of Alma in Alma 45:19, the translation of which may have coincided with this). One of them thought he had lived on, one thought he had died; the record does not say who supported which position. Based on their experience and on the promise of D&C 6 and 8, they took the question to the Lord, and received a remarkable answer through the “Urim and Thummin” (probably the seer stone), whereby they were shown an actual parchment manuscript written by John himself, hidden up by him, but now lost to the knowledge of the world (and perhaps not even in existence any more).³⁵ By the power of God, the brethren were able to translate this manuscript, seen only to them in vision. This amazing experience was perhaps only one of many such answers the two young men received during the translation process.

In Revelation Book 1, John Whitmer placed what is today D&C 7 after D&C 8. Later in the 1833 Book of Commandments, the order was reversed and has remained so since. However, Whitmer’s order was probably the correct chronology; D&C 7 was, in fact, a joint revelation received by both Joseph and Oliver,³⁶ perhaps fulfilling Oliver’s desire to translate “ancient records which have been hid up, that are sacred” (D&C 8:11; also D&C 6:26-27), a perfect description of the content of D&C 7. That he and Joseph had to accomplish it together may allude to the challenges Oliver faced, as discussed in D&C 9.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1.³⁷ It was first published as Chapter 6 of the 1833 Book of Commandments, then was edited (expanded) substantially when it was published as Section 33 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants, showing the ongoing and fluid nature of revelation to Joseph Smith.

³⁵ JSP, D1:47.

³⁶ JSP, D1:48.

Commentary

John the Beloved is invited to have his desire, which he determines is to stay alive and bring souls to Christ. This he is granted, while Peter is granted to come quickly to Jesus’ kingdom. See John 21:20-24.

1 **John, my beloved.** These three words confirm the authorship of the gospel of John. Many scholars debate the issue, but if someone did discover this manuscript actually written by John, referring to himself as the “beloved” and expanding John 21:20-24, it would end all debate.

1 **text note:**

RB1 what desiresdst thou

1833 what desirest thou?

1835 what desirest thou? For if ye shall ask, what you will, it shall be granted unto you

The 1835 addition clarifies that the Lord already knew John was going to ask for something righteous, and thus granted it to him before he even spoke the words.

2 **text note:**

RB1 give unto me power that I may

bring souls unto thee

1833 give unto me power that I may

bring souls unto thee

1835 give unto me power over death, that I may live and

bring souls unto thee

The addition of “over death” and “live and” clarifies the nature of the power John sought for. It also makes clear that he asked to live on, and it wasn’t something the Lord just granted to fulfill his request to be a missionary. John was told to ask for his desire, which he did and which was granted.

3 **thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory.** When John was first told this, it is likely that he had no idea it would be thousands of years. It is clear from the New Testament record that the early Saints initially believed that Jesus would return again soon, perhaps in their lifetimes. But as the years passed and they grew to understand this doctrine better, they realized that it was a distant event. Certainly by the time John was the last remaining apostle, he clearly understood the divine timeline—and the length of his own request.

3 **text note:**

RB1 come in my glory

³⁷ JSP, D1:47; JSP, MRB:16-19.

1833 come in my glory
 1835 come in my glory, and shall prophesy before nations,
 kindreds, tongues and people
 John doesn't just live on until the Second Coming, but he has the bold mission to testify of Christ throughout the earth.

4 *If I will that he tarry.* This conversation with Peter starts like John 21:22, but is expanded dramatically in this revelation, clearing up the confusion that some evidently felt with the version of John that we have, reflected in the editorial comments in John 21:23.

4 *text note:*

RB1 thou desiredst that thou mightest come unto me in my kingdom
 1833 thou desiredst that thou might speedily come unto me in my kingdom
 1835 thou desiredst that thou might speedily come unto me in my kingdom

The Revelation Book manuscript excludes the word “speedily,” but it was included in 1833 and all subsequent publications. This matches what the Nephite disciples requested of the Lord in 3 Nephi 28:2, “that we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom.”

5 *this was a good desire.* Peter's desire to come into the kingdom at the end of his labors is good. It is different from John's but not unworthy or in any way less than John's.

5 *or a greater work.* While “greater” can mean ‘better,’ that is clearly not the Lord's intent here. Another meaning of greater is ‘longer’ or ‘larger,’ which probably is the meaning. John's mission was going to be longer and larger than Peter's, covering thousands of years and many nations of the earth.

5-7 *text note:* Verses 5-7 are almost all brand new in 1835, as shown below.

RB1	1833	1835
but my beloved has undertaken a greater work	but my beloved has undertaken a greater work	but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work, yet among men than what he has before done;

		yea, he has undertaken a greater work; therefore, I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel: he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth; and I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James: and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come.
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The simple comment from the Revelation Book and the 1833 Book of Commandments is greatly enlarged in 1835, also expanding our understanding of the mission of Peter, James, and John. Why did these three restore the Melchizedek Priesthood? Why not Melchizedek or other of the ancient prophets? Because the Lord told them, as reflected here, that it was their calling to possess these keys until the Second Coming, and therefore their calling to pass them on. Peter leads the three of them, and John has an individual mission, but they jointly administer the keys.

8 *ye both joy in that which ye have desired.* Neither Peter's request nor John's were superior in some way. Both brought joy and both were gladly fulfilled by the Lord.

Results

This revelation prefigures the later work Joseph Smith did on the translation of the Bible, examining Biblical passages by revelation and providing greater insight into their meaning and application. In other words, this experience gave the Prophet a taste of his next translation project.

It is intriguing to note that the next spring (1830), Joseph Smith gave Oliver his brown seer stone.³⁸ Was that in part because it was the one that Oliver had used to translate John's ancient document here, and thus had success with, if only short-lived?

D&C 9

Setting

As directed in Section 8, Oliver Cowdery made his attempt at translating, and apparently had some success, either through D&C 7 or possibly also some portion of the Book of Mormon translation, but it was mixed and soon he was no longer able to do so. The heading in Revelation Book 1 says, “A Revelation to Oliver he was disrour to know the

reason why he could not Translate & thus said the Lord unto him.”³⁹ This was the fourth revelation that was received in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in early to mid-April 1828, associated with Oliver's arrival.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy is in Revelation Book 1, but the book is missing a few pages, which include everything after what

³⁸ MacKay and Frederickson, *Joseph Smith's Seer Stones*, 69-71.

³⁹ *JSP*, MRB:19.

is today v. 9. It was first published as Chapter 8 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, then as Section 35 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. Oliver's mission (1-6)
2. The process of translation (7-14)

Commentary

Oliver learned firsthand how challenging translation was. As a manifestation of the principle of revelation, translation is a particular gift that requires work, preparation, and real effort. It does not come just by the asking. Oliver's attempt to translate may not have been entirely successful, but it was neither a failure for him or for Joseph. Both learned from the experience and, by extension, so do we today, even if the principles of revelatory translation apply more precisely to Oliver's experience than to most of what we do today.

Oliver's mission (1-6)

1 *because you did not translate according to that which you desired.* Oliver appears to have stopped trying to translate on his own before this revelation was received and went back to just being Joseph's scribe.

1 *continue until you have finished this record.* Oliver not only finished writing the translation of the Book of Mormon with Joseph, but then he mostly made a second copy of the entire book, the printer's manuscript. In other words, in less than a year, he wrote out nearly the entire Book of Mormon by hand, twice.

2 *other records.* See D&C 6:26 above.

4 *write for my servant Joseph.* Oliver came to Harmony to write. He had a desire to do more and the Lord allowed it, but now it was time to return to his first calling.

5 *you did not continue as you commenced.* How many times do we start a project, calling, or assignment with enthusiasm and commitment, only to fade away over time? Oliver perhaps did something similar, beginning with excitement but as he discovered just how hard it was, he lost some of that excitement or willingness to work at it.

The process of translation (7-14)

7 *you took no thought save it was to ask me.* Oliver wanted the thrill of translating but had not put in the preparation and effort that Joseph had. The Prophet had studied the plates and tried to understand how the Nephite interpreters would work for him over many months. He tried to translate characters, attempted to understand the Nephite alphabet, and prayed and repented much. It took all that effort before he was able to translate the first page. Oliver's

effort was in a more compressed time. Perhaps it seemed easy watching Joseph, but it was not.

8 *study it out in your mind.* Revelation begins as a mental exercise, working through the issues and options and seeking to understand what is the right thing to do. After our best efforts, then the Lord teaches us to pray and see his confirmation: "ask me if it be right."

your bosom shall burn within you. Many Latter-day Saints have been confused, looking for an answer that feels like an actual burning. Speaking of this verse, Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated:

This may be one of the most important and misunderstood teachings in all the Doctrine and Covenants. The teachings of the Spirit often come as feelings. That fact is of the utmost importance, yet some misunderstand what it means. I have met persons who told me they have never had a witness from the Holy Ghost because they have never felt their bosom "burn within" them.

What does a "burning in the bosom" mean? Does it need to be a feeling of caloric heat, like the burning produced by combustion? If that is the meaning, I have never had a burning in the bosom. Surely, the word "burning" in this scripture signifies a feeling of comfort and serenity. That is the witness many receive. That is the way revelation works.

Truly, the still, small voice is just that, "still" and "small."

"The language of peace, as spoken by the Lord, embraces a sense of quiet confidence, comfort, and warmth. It is gentle and calm, amiable and sweet; it is temperate and kind; it is orderly and identified by happiness, joy, and feelings of love" (Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *The Holy Ghost* [1989], 14; *Ensign*, Mar 1997, 7).

9 *stupor of thought.* The opposite course can also be a source of confusion. A "stupor" is a dullness or a diminution. Our minds are not crisp and clear, as they would be if the thing we are asking about were true. In Oliver's case, the application was very direct—he would "forget the thing which is wrong," referring to the translated words he was trying to judge. This dullness and loss of the words he was attempting to verify with the Lord was part of the translation process. If it happened, they could not "write that which is sacred."

10 *if you had known this you could have translated.* Perhaps Joseph had tried to explain all this to Oliver but it was difficult to put it into words, since the process was more intuitive and earned over time with him. It took a revelation to explain how to receive revelation.

11 *it was expedient...but you feared*. Translating was the right thing when he began, but that time had past and it was no longer “expedient.” He may have been able to translate more, but he “feared” and quit. Letting our fears paralyze us or stall us can make us less useful in the kingdom. Dealing with our fears and overcoming them enable us to be a more flexible tool in the Lord’s hands.

12 *neither of you have I condemned*. Like many parents who let their children try things even though they know how it will turn out, the Lord allowed Oliver to experience this even though he knew Oliver would struggle. But the struggle is often the point of the activity. Oliver learned a great lesson from this experience and so did all of us by reading about it. It especially strengthened his testimony of Joseph’s calling and of the truthfulness of the Book of

Mormon, to which he will bear witness all his life. His ‘failure’ is thus not condemned by God or by us, but used for the greater good of the Church as a whole.

14 *Stand fast*. This phrase means to take an unyielding position. Oliver is thus counseled to be unyielding in the work the Lord has called him to, and promised to be “lifted up at the last day.”

Results

Oliver returned to being Joseph’s scribe for the remainder of the Book of Mormon and there is no indication that he attempted further translation efforts. However, Oliver gained significant respect for Joseph’s gift, which he retained all of his life.⁴⁰

D&C 13

Setting

As Joseph and Oliver were translating, they came upon the words of the Savior in 3 Nephi 11:22-30 that explained the importance of baptism and how the ordinance should be performed. They realized this applied to them as well but also that they had no authority. They went into the woods to pray about this. John the Baptist appeared as an answer to that prayer. The date was 15 May 1829, the place Harmony, Pennsylvania. Recent research has revealed that the location was not down toward the river on Joseph Smith’s 13-acre lot, which was mostly cleared for farming and bordered on the very busy Susquehanna River. Rather, the event likely took place in a grove of maple trees at the north end of Joseph’s property, which was secluded.⁴¹

Documents and Publication

This section was first published in the *Times and Seasons* on 1 Aug 1842. It was included in the *Doctrine & Covenants* for the first time in the 1876 edition.

Commentary

Joseph and Oliver were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, of repentance, and of baptism, which shall remain on the earth. This prepared them to receive the Melchizedek

priesthood not long afterward, and allowed them to perform saving ordinances and eventually organized the Church.

1 *in the name of Messiah*. This was a completely appropriate thing for John the Baptist to say. In his native tongue, “Messiah” was the title he applied to Jesus, not “Christ,” which is the Greek form of the same word. This small element adds a real touch of veracity to the story.

1 *the keys of the ministering of angels*. The Aaronic Priesthood does hold keys, including these. Joseph learned what these keys were shortly after this experience. He was walking down near the river when a heavenly messenger—perhaps Michael—met him and taught him how to use these keys to distinguish between true angels and messengers of the devil, even if the devil himself “appeared as an angel of light” (D&C 128:20). He taught some of the brethren about these in February 1843, including Parley P. Pratt, who wrote it down and whose writings thus became the source for D&C 129.

But seeing an angel is not always required to experience their ministrations. “Angelic messages can be delivered by a voice or merely thoughts or feelings communicated to the mind. President John Taylor described ‘the action of the angels or messengers of God, upon our minds, so that the heart can conceive...revelations from the eternal world.’” (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, Nov 1998).

⁴⁰ See Oliver Cowdery’s description of the translation experience at the end of Joseph Smith-History: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven.”

⁴¹ See <https://history.lds.org/article/where-was-the-priesthood-restored>. See also <https://history.lds.org/maps/priesthood-restoration-site> for an interactive map showing the various locations in Harmony at the time, and today, and this illustrated guide to the priesthood restoration at <https://history.lds.org/story/how-the-aaronic-priesthood-was-restored>.

repentance, and of baptism. The other keys of the Aaronic Priesthood mentioned by John are those of repentance and of baptism.

until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering. Oliver Cowdery's recollection of what was spoken is a little different than Joseph's, where John says, "Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (footnote, JS-H 1:71). The point is that this priesthood will remain unto the end, which Oliver Cowdery also stated was the case with the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Results

Joseph and Oliver were ordained by John the Baptist, then went to the Susquehanna River and baptized each other, probably looking for a quiet moment between the hundreds of river boats passing that way each day. Then they ordained each other to the priesthood, either near the river's edge or when they returned to the house.

Later priesthood restorations occurred with the visits of Peter, James, and John later in May 1829, and with subsequent keys restored, especially in the Kirtland temple on 3 April 1836 (D&C 110).

D&C 11

Setting

In early 1829, Joseph had been visited by his parents, his brother Samuel, and Martin Harris. Father Smith and Martin had both received a personal revelation. As they returned home, Joseph's next oldest brother, Hyrum, grew excited hearing their experiences. In April 1829, Samuel Smith, Joseph's younger brother, had taken Oliver Cowdery down to Harmony. He apparently stayed until nearly the end of May, during which time he had prayed to know if the work was true. He received a divine witness for himself, and asked to be baptized. Oliver baptized him on 25 May 1829, just 10 days after the restoration of the priesthood, and Samuel returned home to Manchester, "filled with the Holy Spirit" and telling how the work was progressing. Hearing all this, Hyrum determined to make his own trip to Harmony in late May 1829, see his brother, and discover what message the Lord might have for him. Thus chronologically, Section 11 came after Section 13, which is the order they are in here in these notes.

Documents and Publication

The oldest copy of this revelation is a document recently added to the Joseph Smith Papers website in Hyrum Smith's own handwriting, which may well be his personal copy of this revelation from when it was given.⁴² It was copied into Revelation Book 1 but the pages containing it have been removed. It was first published as Chapter 10 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and then as Section 37 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

⁴² "Revelation, May 1829–A [D&C 11], in handwriting of Hyrum Smith," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 25, 2016, [http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-may-1829-a-dc-11-in-handwriting-of-hyrum-](http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-may-1829-a-dc-11-in-handwriting-of-hyrum-smith/1)

Outline

1. The Lord calls his servants (1-9)
2. A time of preparation (10-30)

Commentary

Hyrum Smith is counseled to be ready for a coming mission. Many elements of his revelation are similar to others just received and coming shortly. But other parts are highly personal and direct Hyrum to specific actions. He has a gift and will have the chance to use it, but for now he should strive for righteous living, wait, study the scriptures, and prepare.

The Lord calls his servants (1-9)

Note: Verses 1-9 are nearly identical to D&C 6:1-9. It is intriguing that Oliver's and Hyrum's revelations start the same, but then this become quite different. Hyrum, of course, remained true to the gospel all his life, while Oliver left the Church for almost eleven years. Hyrum, in essence, replaced Oliver during that time, playing a critical role in Church leadership and ultimately in giving his life for what the Lord had restored through his brother.

A time of preparation (10-30)

12 *trust in that Spirit.* Like all of us, Hyrum needed to learn to follow the Spirit. Verses 12 and 13 taught him that he would know it because it would: 1) lead him to do good and justly; 2) help him walk humbly; 3) allow him to judge righteously; 4) enlighten his mind. The result of the Spirit is to fill our souls with joy. If we are experiencing these

smith/1. The document is from a private, unnamed collection but was in the Hyrum Smith family until 1960.

things, we can be assured it is the Spirit; any other result, and it is something else.

14 **by this shall you know.** Truth comes through the Spirit, so when we experience it with faith, we know the “things of righteousness.”

15 **until you are called.** Hyrum’s passion to preach is bridled a bit; he needs to wait until a formal call is extended to him.

16 **you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel.** Things had to be done in order, and it was too soon. Hyrum needed to “wait a little longer,” for the Book of Mormon, the Church, and more.

17 **according to your faith shall it be done.** With the request of patience comes the promise of fulfillment; according to Hyrum’s faith he was receive later.

18 **hold your peace.** Another reference to being patient and waiting a little longer.

19 **assist in bringing to light those things.** Hyrum will play a key role in the printing of the Book of Mormon. With Joseph in Harmony, Hyrum and Oliver are the ones that oversee the day to day decisions about the printing, working with Grandin to check the proofs and more. He wrote parts of the printer’s manuscript and even set some of the type.

20 **this is your work, to keep my commandments.** Before we can be valuable servants to the Lord, we have to be obedient servants.

21 **first seek to obtain my word.** This is great advice for any potential missionary—study the scriptures, seek to understand the Spirit, and gain a testimony. Then can the Lord loosen the tongue and inspire us by the power of God to convince many.

22 **study my word which hath gone forth.** He is to study the Bible.

22 **study my word which shall come forth.** Then he is to study the Book of Mormon when it is ready.

23 **thou art Hyrum, my son.** The Lord uses our names so we feel a sense of intimacy with him.

24 **my rock, which is my gospel.** The truth about Jesus’ atonement and offer of salvation to all mankind is the bed-rock truth of the message of the Restoration.

26 **treasure up in your heart.** Yet another reference to Hyrum’s personal preparation and study of the scriptures.

27 **I speak unto all who have good desires.** Hyrum’s revelation was personal but it was also a model for others who wanted to know how and when to serve. This is the value of publishing these early revelations.

28 **I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** As with other revelations, Jesus clearly identifies the voice that is speaking. Though Hyrum heard his brother Joseph dictating this to Oliver, the message was directly from the Lord.

30 **I give power to become the sons of God.** If we receive and embrace the saving message of the gospel, we can become “sons of God,” meaning his heirs.

Results

The counsel to Hyrum was to learn more and be patient and his time to proclaim the gospel would come. Over the next year, he helped with the publication of the Book of Mormon and spent considerable time in the Bible. In April 1830, after the Church was organized, Hyrum was told by the Lord he was ready and was called to spread the message of the Restoration (D&C 23:3). When Hyrum went out, he was ready to teach with knowledge and the Spirit, which is an example to many preparing for service today.⁴³

D&C 12

Setting

Joseph Knight, Sr. had been an early believer and supporter of Joseph Smith. The two met him in 1826 when Joseph Smith was working for Josiah Stowell, and he also worked for Joseph Knight for many months in the following year. Joseph Knight loaned his horse and wagon to Joseph and Emma so they could go get married, and they used it again the night Joseph received the plates. Toward the end of May 1829, about the same time Hyrum came for a visit, Joseph Knight again made the thirty-mile trip from Colesville

to Harmony, bringing much needed supplies to the Prophet, including writing paper used in the translation. Like Hyrum, he also wanted to know his duty in the work, and Joseph inquired, receiving this revelation in response. Joseph Knight and all nine of his children later joined the Church and became the Colesville branch, forsaking all to follow the Lord and Joseph Smith to Ohio and Missouri.

⁴³ Harper, *Making Sense*, 52-53.

Documents and Publication

This revelation was first published as Chapter 11 in the 1833 Book of Commandments, then as Section 38 in the 1835 and 1844 Doctrine and Covenants.

Outline

1. Qualifications to server (1-6)
2. A message to all (7-9)

Commentary

Father Knight was counseled that the marvelous work was coming, and he should give heed to God's word. He was told that the harvest is prepared and he could bring salvation to his soul as he helped in the work. He could ask of God and receive answers and blessings, but he needed to first seek to keep the commandments and develop godly characteristics as he sought to establish Zion.

Qualifications to serve (1-6)

Compare these verses to D&C 4:1-4; 6:1-5; and 11:1-9.

A message to all (7-9)

7 I speak unto you, and also to all those who have desires.

The revelation to Father Knight was personal but also universal. We are all profited by the counsel he received.

8 humble and full of love. Joseph Knight was fairly well off, but his position did not qualify him to serve. Humility,

love, and other virtues are the traits that enable a person to be of service to God and others. He was actually an excellent example of these traits.

8 being temperate in all things. To be "temperate" means to exercise self-control and to resist the carnal man. It means to avoid extremes and indulgences.

9 I am the light and the life of the world. While Knight's revelation did not use the name "Jesus Christ," this declaration served the same purpose. Referring to both John 8:12, John 6:33, and perhaps John 3:16, but more importantly quoting Mosiah 16:9, Alma 38:9, and 3 Nephi 11:11, which Joseph had recently translated, there is no mistaking the voice of the Savior of the world.

Results

Joseph Knight is a quiet hero in the early history of the Church. He had faith in the Lord and in Joseph Smith's calling as a young prophet. He supplied the Prophet, his family, and his scribes during the critical translation period as best he could, making it possible for the translation to move forward. Joseph Knight and all nine of his children joined the Church and became the Colesville branch, forsaking all to follow the Lord and Joseph Smith to Ohio and Missouri.

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For text notes:

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Dx – Various early manuscripts of revelations in the *JSP* documents series books.

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