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OLIVER COWDERY'S
CORRESPONDENCE WITH
JOSEPH SMITH

MOST Latter-day Saints have a reasonable familiarity with the events and activities of Oliver Cowdery's life. They know of his work as Joseph Smith's scribe and that he was one of the Three Witnesses. They know that he led a mission to the Lamanites and that he stood next to the Prophet in Church leadership. When it comes to Cowdery's personality, and particularly to his spirituality, however, less is commonly known. This study seeks to redress that imbalance and focuses on those very dimensions of Oliver Cowdery's life by examining his early correspondence with the Prophet Joseph Smith.

One of the many treasures of the Latter-day Saint Church Archives is an aged and fragile manuscript volume known as the "Joseph Smith Letterbook." It contains copies of the earliest

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surviving correspondence between the Prophet and his scribe Oliver Cowdery, some of which dates to the period before the Church was organized. In particular, two of Cowdery's late 1829 letters provide a marvelous window into his spirituality.

By way of background, we note that in late August 1829 negotiations with Palmyra printer Egbert B. Grandin to publish the Book of Mormon had been completed. No payment contract has survived, and nothing is known with certainty about the details of how and when Grandin was to be paid. What is known is that Martin Harris offered his farm as security to cover publication costs in case funds for payment could not be raised in other ways. Once the arrangements with Grandin were finalized, Joseph departed Palmyra and returned to his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Several weeks later, on October 22, 1829, Joseph wrote to Oliver. This brief communication happens to be the earliest extant letter from the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹

COWDERY'S NOVEMBER 6 LETTER

On November 6, 1829, Oliver replied to the Prophet's letter. "I received your letter yesterday bearing date Oct 22d," Cowdery began. "I had long time expected to hear from you and had often enquired at the post office for a letter and of course it was gladly received by us all."² The image of Oliver regularly inquiring at the post office for a letter reflects his oft-expressed interest in staying in close contact with his colleagues.³

To fully appreciate what follows in Cowdery's letter, we must briefly review the contents of Joseph's earlier communication. In that letter Joseph told of returning home to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to a generally friendly reception and even to some local excitement over the prospect of the publication of the Book of

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Mormon. Of course, antagonism still persisted in certain quarters, but Joseph was able to refer to it with a bit of wry humor. "Two of our most formadable persacutors," he wrote, "are now under censure and are cited to a tryal in [a local Christian] church for crimes which if true are worse than all the Gold Book business." Joseph also reported that Josiah Stowell thought he might be able to round up five or six hundred dollars to contribute to (or invest in) the printing of the Book of Mormon.⁴

In response to this news, Cowdery enthused, "We . . . rejoice to hear that you have a prospect of obtaining some mony and we further rejoice that you are at rest from your percecutors."⁵ But it was Oliver's sensing of Joseph's spiritual strength that especially roused Cowdery's admiration. "We rejoice the most," he wrote, "to learn of your faithfulness in christ my dear Brother." What triggered this comment from Cowdery and what set the tone for the rest of his letter were the final lines in the Prophet's missive. Joseph directed Oliver to tell the little band of believers in New York "that our prayers are put up dayly for them that they may be prospered in evry, good word and work and that they may be preserved from sin here and and from the consequen[c]e of sin here after." Then Joseph concluded, "And now dear brother be faithful in the discharge of evry duty looking for the reward of the righteous and now may God of his infinite mercy keep and preserve us spotless untill his coming and receive us all to rest with him in eternal repose through the attonement of Christ our Lord."⁶

These words from the Prophet Joseph elicited extended and illuminating expressions from Oliver that show him to be an intensely religious man who consciously or unconsciously appears to have been striving to fulfill an earlier directive from the Lord: "Look unto me in every thought" (D&C 6:36). "When I think of the goodness of Christ," wrote Cowdery, "I feel no desire to live

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or stay here upon the shores of this world of iniquity only to se[r]ve him my maker and be if possible an instriment in his hands of doing some good in his cause with his <grace> to assist me.” Cowdery’s keen interest in service and salvation and his contrast of heavenly rest with world-weariness reflect common Christian sensibilities. From the first centuries of Christianity, such “other-worldliness” has characterized Christian devotionalism.

“When I consider and try to realize what [Christ] has done for me,” continued Cowdery, “I am astonished and amaised why should I not be for while I was rushing on in sin and crouding my way down to that awful gulf he yet strove with me and praised be his holy <and> Eternal name, he has redeemed my soul from endless torment and wo not for any thing that I have me[r]ited or any worthyness there was in me for there was none but it was in and through his own mercy wraught out by his own infinite wisdom.” Thus extolling the grace and mercy of Christ’s Atonement in response to humanity’s fundamentally sinful and hopeless condition, as Cowdery did in this poignant passage, positions him in the mainstream of Christian discourse. The expression “rushing on in sin,” for instance, reflected the standard Christian emphasis on the inevitability of human sin and was not unique to Cowdery. The great contemporary revivalist Charles G. Finney described the plight of a reprobate thus: “He abused God’s mercy, rejected God’s gospel, grieved God’s Spirit, done despite to the Spirit of grace, and . . . now, therefore, he is . . . rushing on in sin!”⁷

The typical morphology of conversion consisted of “awakening” to a sense of one’s sinfulness, having one’s feelings deepen into a profound and terrifying “conviction” that salvifically all was lost, and ultimately emerging from the darkness of desperation and despair into the blessed light of the Son, transformed and redeemed by his grace. Central to this spiritual evolution for

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Christians generally and Cowdery specifically was an acknowledgment that redemption was unmerited. Oliver's beautiful expression "not for any thing that I have me[r]ited or any worthyness there was in me for there was none but it was in and through his own mercy" echoes Augustus Toplady's famous quatrain: "Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone."⁸

Also noteworthy in Cowdery's letter is the way in which he employed phrases from the unpublished manuscript of the Book of Mormon to give voice to these classic Christian sentiments. During the previous six months Oliver had been intimately involved with the words of the book, acting as Joseph's scribe for most of the translation and then starting back through it again to produce the copy that today is called the "printer's manuscript." Here are some examples from Cowdery's letter of intertextuality: he wrote that the Lord "from all Eternity [prepared] a means whereby man could be saved on conditions of repentance." Although the phrases "from all eternity," "means whereby," and "conditions of repentance" may have been common in the Christian discourse of the day, all are found in various places in the Book of Mormon, but not in the Bible.¹⁰ Similarly, Cowdery commented that salvation requires "faith on that infinite attonement whic11 His previous praising of the Lord because "he has redeemed my soul from endless torment and wo" and from the "awful gulf" also reflects Book of Mormon language.¹² While the use of such phrases may seem natural to a generation of Latter-day Saints raised on the Book of Mormon, and while they also may not have been uncommon in contemporary religious discourse, the way in which they came to pervade Cowdery's writing at this time seems to be due to his

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intense engagement with the Book of Mormon text as he recopied it. Coincidentally, Cowdery noted in a postscript at the end of his letter that “I have just got to alma[’s] commandment to his son in copying the manuscript.”¹³

Yet Cowdery, drawing on his years of exposure to the Bible, was just as comfortable invoking biblical images and phrases in his letter to Joseph as he was in employing Book of Mormon phraseology. At one point, for instance, he drew on Romans 6 to emphasize the believer’s new creation in Christ and the Christian’s need to continue in that regenerate condition. “If therefore we follow christ in all things whatsoever he comma[n]deth us,” wrote Cowdery, “and are buried with him by baptism into death that like as christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Eternal Father even so we also should walk in newness of life and if we walk in newness of life to the end of this probation[,] at the day of accounts we shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”¹⁴ Here Cowdery paused in his theological reflections and, like many before and since, rhapsodized, “But I need not undertake to write of the goodness of God for his goodness is unspeakable ne[i]ther tell of the [m]isteries of God for what is man that he can comprehend and search out the wisdom of deity for [quoting 1 Timothy 3:16] great is the misteries of Godliness therefore my only motive in this writing is to inform you of my prospects and hopes and my desires and my longing to be freed from sin and to rest in the kingdom of my Savior and y my redeemer.”

The extensive spiritual introspections and ruminations Cowdery offered to Joseph in this letter either intentionally or unintentionally fulfilled a revelatory injunction that Oliver had received several months earlier that “each member shall speak & tell the church of their progress in the way to Eternal life.”¹⁵ Like John Bunyan detailing the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” Oliver hinted at

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his own spiritual peregrinations, adding the charming line “when I begin to write of the mercys of God I know not when to stop.” But stop he did, at least temporarily, to insert news about Joseph’s supporters in New York. Then his intense religious piety pulled him back to his deepest yearnings: “My great desire,” he concluded, “is that we may be faithful and obedient and humble children of Christ here that we may meet together in his kingdom of Eternal glory to go no more out to spend an Ete[r]nity where the wicked cese from troubling and the humbl and penitent child in christ finds rest.”¹⁶ His final words echo phrases from John’s salutation to the seven churches in Revelation 1:9: “I remain with much Esteem and profound respect your Brother and compa[n]ion in tribulation and persecution in the kingdom of patience and hope of a glorious reserrection in christ our savior and redemer Amen Oliver Cowdry.”

COWDERY’S DECEMBER 28 LETTER

Cowdery’s intense piety was manifest again the following month when he wrote to Joseph on December 28, 1829. “Your great anxiety,” he began, “will probably be to know of the progress of the work in the which we are <so deeply> engaged and possibly our souls welfare.”¹⁷ Monitoring one another’s “soul’s welfare” was as common and crucial in evangelical Christianity as regularly checking one’s weight today if on a diet. Methodist class meetings, for instance, had mutual spiritual watchcare as their primary function, and pastoral visitation was common in contemporary Christian churches.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, such monitoring was called for in Cowdery’s 1829 “Articles” and detailed more fully in the Church’s 1830 “Articles and Covenants” (D&C 20), where it was assigned to the Aaronic Priesthood, especially the teachers.

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Cowdery next proceeded to apologize for “taking up a [composing] stick” at the printing office. “Be assured,” he wrote to Joseph, “my [changing] business has not in any degree I trust taken my mind from meditateing upon my mission which I have been called to fulfill nor of ~~changing~~ slacking my diligence in prayr and fasting.”¹⁹ Is this rhetorical hyperbole or finely grained spiritual sensitivity? Helping to advance the physical printing of the Book of Mormon would seem to be central to Cowdery’s mission. In any case, why should that work detract from his fasting and prayer? Though Oliver was not a monk, he was passionate about maintaining a spiritual virtuosity through constant devotions to Deity. It is as if he took to heart what he had recently copied from Alma’s counsel to his son Helaman: “Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever” (Alma 37:37). Young Oliver was one who truly seems to have placed the affections of his heart upon the Lord. “Some times,” he mused, “I feel almost as though I could quit time and fly away and be at rest in the Bosom of my Redeemer.”

Despite his otherworldly wishes, he pressed forward in mortality amid “many deep feelings of sorrow and the many long strugglings in prayr of sorrow for the sins of my fellow beings and also for those whos pretend to be of my faith.” Cowdery’s expression here recalls the Book of Mormon prophet Enos, who similarly prayed “with many long strugglings” (Enos 1:11) both for those of his faith and for those outside the fold of God. Such concern for others was expected of the true convert, the natural consequence of a changed heart. As Charles Finney explained, the spiritually reborn “will be filled with a tender and burning

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love for souls. They will have a longing desire for the salvation of the whole world. They will be in agony for individuals whom they want to have saved; their friends, relations, enemies.”²⁰ Such language recalls the Book of Mormon description of the sons of Mosiah, who “were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble” (Mosiah 28:3).

In Cowdery's own words, his spiritual ecstasy “almost as it were separateth my spirit from my mortal body,” a clear echo of Alma's exultation, “my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy” (Alma 29:16). But Cowdery concluded his letter with this interesting qualifier: “Do not think by this my Brother that I am would find give you to understand that I am freed from sin and temptations no not by any means.” Instead, he simply wished to communicate that “my anxiety at some times to be at rest in King in the Paradice of my God is to be freed from sin temptation &c.” Belief in human perfectibility through the sanctifying grace of Christ was sufficiently widespread in the 1820s and 1830s that demurrals about not yet being “freed from sin and temptations” could be sincere personal assessments. In his classic study of antebellum American Protestantism, Timothy L. Smith called Christian perfectionism “one of the nineteenth century's most persistent and socially significant religious themes,” adding that “the hunger for holiness lay near the heart of every movement concerned with developing a more meaningful Christianity.”²¹

A good illustration of this “hunger for holiness” which Cowdery so clearly demonstrated can be found in the life of Francis Asbury, the “Father of American Methodism.” Francis

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Asbury was an extraordinarily spiritual man among a group already noted for their religious rigorism. Consider this sampling of entries from Asbury's faithfully kept journal: "My heart is still depressed for want of more religion.' On another day, 'I must lament that I am not perfectly crucified with God.' And again, 'A cloud rested on my mind, which was occasioned by talking and jesting. I also feel at times tempted to impatience and pride of heart.' When someone tried to compliment him, Asbury suspected them of flattery inspired of Satan. No one ever caught a glimpse of his furrowed face smiling over innocent pleasantries."²² For Christians like Cowdery and Asbury, logging seat time in a chapel on Sunday was far from salvifically sufficient; spiritual virtuosity was demanded.

The whole notion of freedom from sin evoked the much-debated doctrines of justification and sanctification. Some months after Cowdery's letters were composed, when the Church's Articles and Covenants were prepared, both doctrines were addressed (see D&C 20:30–34). So common were the terms in the contemporary Christian discourse of Mormon converts' upbringing that they required no definition. Justification was merely affirmed (see D&C 20:30). It was widely understood among Protestants to be synonymous with conversion, with being forgiven of one's sins, with being "born again," and it was considered the first work of grace. Sanctification was the process of growing from "grace to grace" to become ever more Christlike. John Wesley's view was, "By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God."²³ Through justification, believers are pardoned from sin; through sanctification they are purified from sin. From one perspective, justification is like spraying weeds with a killer; the unwanted growth is destroyed

but only temporarily. Sanctification involves removing the very roots of the weeds so that the garden can truly flourish.

Sanctification, as Cowdery knew and yearned to experience, was a gradual and lifelong process. The regenerate soul's disposition *not* to sin, however, could not prevent inadvertent sins or transgressions growing out of ignorance. These were endemic to human frailty as a result of the Fall. Cowdery knew that the scriptures taught Christian perfection, not sinless perfection. For this reason, he felt the need for constant spiritual vigilance. The Articles and Covenants stated it succinctly: "There is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God; therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation; Yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also" (D&C 20:32–34). Positively, Articles and Covenants affirmed that "sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who live and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength" (D&C 20:31).

Cowdery's passion for fasting and prayer as a means to achieving spiritual consecration recalls the Book of Mormon passage about righteous Nephites who "did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts to God" (Helaman 3:35). Joseph Smith's later comments might have provided an appropriate response to Cowdery's 1829 meditations: "The nearer man approaches perfection," he explained, "the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker, and is

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caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment.”²⁴ Such was the path Oliver sought to pursue.

COWDERY’S SUMMER 1830 LETTER

Lest we laud Cowdery to the high heavens, another piece of correspondence with the Prophet needs to be considered. Recorded in Joseph Smith’s history begun in 1838 is this account of a letter Oliver wrote to the Prophet in summer 1830: “Whilst thus (~~and otherwise at intervals~~) employed in the work appointed me, by my Heavenly Father; I received a letter from Oliver Cowdery—the contents of which, gave me both sorrow and uneasiness. . . . He wrote to inform me, that he had discovered an error in one of the commandments.” The commandment or revelation in question was no less than the Church’s Articles and Covenants, and the allegedly erroneous passage described the requirements for baptism. What Cowdery found objectionable were the words “and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit unto the remission of their sins.” As Joseph remembered the letter, Oliver wrote, “I command you in the name of God to erase those words, that no priestcraft be amongst us.”²⁵

Understanding the meaning of *priestcraft* is crucial to comprehending why this letter was so offensive to Joseph. Before exploring its implications, though, a brief digression is appropriate. There has been some confusion over the years as to exactly what it was that Oliver found objectionable in this list of baptismal requirements. Some have opined that Cowdery viewed it as perpetuating the old Puritan practice of having to give a satisfactory recital of one’s conversion prior to being admitted to the ordinances. While such an interpretation might be plausible

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if Oliver had singled out the requirement to “witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins,” those are not the words he found objectionable. The words Oliver chose—“and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit unto the remission of their sins”—are the only ones not included in the list of baptism requirements found in Moroni 6:1–3. This created a problem for Oliver because he apparently felt that the additional words violated instructions he and Joseph had received the previous June to “rely upon that which is written,” meaning the Book of Mormon, when endeavoring to “build up [the] church” (D&C 18:3–5). By including in the Articles and Covenants an additional requirement not specified in the Book of Mormon—especially when Cowdery’s own 1829 “Articles of the Church of Christ” hewed so closely to Book of Mormon wording—Joseph had, as Oliver saw it, overstepped his bounds. To Cowdery, such arrogation on Joseph’s part was nothing less than priestcraft.

Though Cowdery believed such religious imposition had long been practiced elsewhere in Christendom, to feel it was contaminating the fledgling faith was more than he could bear. Indeed, in the young American republic, many ordinary people committed to the new democratic enterprise no longer felt they had to subject themselves to what they took to be corrupt priests pursuing their own desires under the guise of religion. Several lines from Baptist Timothy Waterous’s “Priestcraft Float Away” typify this populist animosity toward the established clergy:

Why are we in such slavery, to men of that degree;
Bound to support their knavery when we might all be free;
They’r nothing but a canker, we can with boldness say;
So let us hoist the anchor, let Priest-craft float away.²⁶

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Given the derogatory nature of the term, not to mention Cowdery's misunderstanding of the Prophet's intent, an irritated and offended Joseph wrote back to Oliver asking "by what authority he took upon him to command me to alter, or erase, to add or diminish to or from a revelation or commandment from Almighty God."²⁷

CONCLUSION

Thus, for all Oliver's authentic religious piety, which is inspirational indeed to review, he had a serious flaw, a fatal Achilles' heel. It was his fiery independence of mind, and this was not the last time he would exercise it to challenge the Prophet Joseph Smith. Yielding to God was one thing; passivity and humility in the face of divinity was de rigueur for genuine Christians. But in true religion there was no place for fawning sycophancy. No self-respecting citizen of the Republic, as Cowdery clearly saw himself to be, would allow it. Even a prophet could be suspect. Wrote Elias Smith, no relation to Joseph, "Many are *republicans* as to *government*, and yet are but half republicans. . . . Venture to be as independent in things of religion," he urged, "as those which respect the government in which you live."²⁸ Or as Lorenzo Dow, a popular Methodist preacher, put it, "There can be no just reason, [why man] . . . should not think, and judge, and act for himself in matters of religion."²⁹

Statements such as these epitomize the democratizing attitude toward religion that developed in the early years of the Republic and that provided the matrix for Cowdery's clash with the Prophet. The depth of Cowdery's convictions on these matters is captured in a letter he wrote to his brother Lyman in 1834: "The body may be confined in chains, racked upon the wheel,

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or consumed with the fagot, but still *Mens Invicta Manet* (The Mind remains unconquered).”³⁰ And thus we see the profound paradox that was Oliver Cowdery—willing, even anxious, to expunge his own will to please God, but fearlessly demanding his independence in human affairs; pious and pliant before the Lord, but sometimes defiant before the Lord’s prophet, whom Cowdery sometimes viewed as a peer based on their many shared divine experiences. For a season, Oliver’s independence and his republican indignation won out, and Oliver found himself eating husks outside the Church. In the end, however, his devotion to God and his reliance on a deep inner spirituality carried the day and carried him back into the kingdom.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, October 22, 1829, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, 9, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
2. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, November 6, 1829, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, 6–8, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library. Original spelling is retained in all quotations used in this study.
3. As just one example, while in Missouri at the head of a mission to the Lamanites, Oliver wrote to Joseph and leading elders in Kirtland: “My dearly beloved bretheren after a considerable lengthy journey I arrived avail myself of the first oportunity of communicating to you a knowledge of our situation that you may be priviledged of writing to us for we have not heard any thing from you since we left you last fall.” Later in the letter, he added, “I have but a short time to write to you my bloved Bretheren as the mail leves thi[s] place in ~~morni~~ the morning I wish some of you to write <to> me immediatly a full letter of all your affairs and then I will write to you the situation of all the western tribes.” Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, January 29, 1831, as copied

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into Joseph Smith to Hyrum Smith, March 3, 1831, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library.

Scribal corrections in the various manuscript sources cited throughout this study are indicated by the use of angle brackets to show interlinear insertions and strikethroughs to identify words or letters that were either erased or crossed out.

4. Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, October 22, 1829.
5. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, November 6, 1829. Unless otherwise noted, the quotations from Cowdery in the following paragraphs are from this letter.
6. Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, October 22, 1829.
7. See Finney's 1851 sermon "The Whole Counsel of God," as reproduced in http://www.gospeltruth.net/1849-51Penny_Pulpit/510402.pp_counsel_of_god.htm. The phrase had been in use for years. In one of countless spiritual narratives produced in colonial America, an eighteenth-century sinner awakened to religious sensibility by an earthquake characterized his preconversion condition thus: "[I had previously] neglected the loud calls of [God's] word and was rushing on in sin. [but] he was pleased [to rescue me]." Cited in Kenneth P. Minkema, "The Lynn End 'Earthquake' Relations of 1727," *New England Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (September 1996): 489.
8. Augustus Toplady composed "Rock of Ages" in 1776, and it has been reproduced in countless Christian hymnals since that time. Cited here from *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 111.
9. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 3–4. See also Royal Skousen, "Oliver Cowdery as Book of Mormon Scribe," in this volume.
10. "From all eternity" is found in Mosiah 3:5 and Moroni 8:18; "means whereby" in 1 Nephi 17:3; Mosiah 3:17; 4:8; Alma 38:9; Helaman 5:9; and "conditions of repentance" in Alma 17:15; 42:13; Helaman 5:11; 14:11, 18.

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11. "Great and last sacrifice" and "infinite atonement" are found in Alma 34:10–16.
12. The awful "gulf" of misery is mentioned in 1 Nephi 15:28; 2 Nephi 1:13; Alma 26:20; and Helaman 5:12. Both 2 Nephi 1:15 and 33:6 refer to one's soul being redeemed "from hell," and Mosiah 27:29 mentions deliverance "from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity." "Endless torment" is found in such passages as 2 Nephi 9:19, 26 and Mosiah 3:25; "endless wo" in Alma 28:11 and Helaman 5:12 and 7:16.
13. Alma addresses his three sons, Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton, in Alma 36–37, 38, and 39–42, respectively. In addition to the already cited phrases from Alma that Cowdery used, he also employed "the eternal Father of Heaven and Earth" (Alma 11:39) and "by his resurrection all the Family of man might be brought back into the presence of God," which closely follows Alma 42:23.
14. Being "caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air" echoes 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17.
15. "A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his Church & the manner thereof. . . . Written in the year of our Lord & Saviour 1829" in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and designated "Articles of the Church of Christ" at the end of the document, Church History Library.
16. Alma 34:36 says that "the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out."
17. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, December 28, 1829, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, 4–5, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library. Unless otherwise noted, quotations in subsequent paragraphs are from this letter.
18. For an engaging first-person portrait of contemporary Methodist watchcare, see Candy Gunther, "The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Rachel Stearns, 1834–1837: Reinterpreting Women's Religious and Social Experiences in the Methodist Revivals of Nineteenth-Century America," *Church History* 65, no. 4 (December 1996): 577–95.

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19. John Gilbert, typesetter for most of the Book of Mormon, later recalled that though Oliver Cowdery “was not a printer,” “he was a frequent visitor to the office, and did several times take up a [composing] ‘stick’ and set a part of a page—he may have set 10 or 12 pages, all told.” John Gilbert to James T. Cobb, February 10, 1879, Schroeder Collection, New York Public Library, New York City, New York.
20. Charles G. Finney, “What a Revival Is,” as cited in Edwin S. Gaustad and Mark A. Noll, eds., *A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 324.
21. Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 103; see also chapters 7–9.
22. Francis Asbury entries included in Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1984), 172.
23. John Wesley, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” as cited in Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury, 1987), 46. Roman Catholics historically did not separate sanctification notionally or sequentially from justification (see Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd. ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005]).
24. Joseph Smith, “The Elders of the Church in Kirtland to Their Brethren Abroad,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, February 1834, 135.
25. Cited in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–1992), 1:319–20.
26. Timothy Waterous, *The Battle-Axe and Weapons of War: . . . Aimed at the Final Destruction of Priestcraft* (Groton, CT: 1811), quoted in Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 45.
27. Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:320.

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28. Elias Smith, *The Loving Kindness of God Displayed in the Triumph of Republicanism in America* (n.p., 1809), 32, quoted in Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 69–70.
29. Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite; Or, the Four Volumes of Lorenzo Dow's Journal* (Wheeling, VA: John C. Totten, 1814), quoted in Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 37.
30. Oliver Cowdery to Lyman Cowdery, January 13, 1834, Oliver Cowdery Letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.