

Oliver Cowdery as Book of Mormon Scribe



Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet, was one of the early scribes of the Book of Mormon. (Artist, Lee Greene Richards. © 1992, 1997 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.)



Del Parson, Melchizedek Priesthood Restoration. Sometime after John the Baptist gave them the Aaronic Priesthood, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were visited by the Apostles Peter, James, and John near the Susquehanna River in the state of Pennsylvania. The Apostles conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the Melchizedek Priesthood. (© 2002 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Steven C. Harper

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OLIVER COWDERY AS SECOND
WITNESS OF PRIESTHOOD
RESTORATION

MY father conspired to introduce me to Oliver Cowdery. He was among the youth leaders who gathered the boys of the ward for a trip to a northern Utah amusement park. We loaded into the station wagon and set off with anticipation down the highway. Near the end of our long journey, something went awry. We slowed, then turned eastward onto an unfamiliar and winding road. It took us up and over the mountains and left us finally at a cemetery, the farthest place in the world from our anticipated destination. And we were there to have a history lesson. Imagine the disappointment. Against our murmuring, the leaders gathered the boys together around the grave marker of Martin Harris. There we stood for what seemed like a long time, listening to the testimony of three witnesses, learning that each of them

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maintained their faith in the Book of Mormon even when they dissented from the Church of Jesus Christ. We went on our way and spent a long day playing at the park, but I remember the cemetery best.

Since that time, I have desired to know more and more about these witnesses, these ordinary men who witnessed marvelous works and wonders. I have learned that Oliver Cowdery testified repeatedly that he received priesthood from ministering angels. I believe him. I will use his statements to describe his experiences. Richard L. Anderson wrote that “a careful search of authentic documents on his life discloses an impressive number of declarations on priesthood restoration. These were made during his career in the Church as its second priesthood officer, in the midst of his personal trials and resentments outside of its organization, at his final reconciliation with the Church, and at the closing moments of his life. One may choose to disbelieve such testimony, but no informed person can deny that it exists.”¹ I will review these documents so that all who read will be informed persons. The choice whether to believe Oliver will then be fully yours. I am conscious of his contemporaries and ours who have not believed him. My point is not to prove or disprove that Oliver Cowdery was ordained by angels. I have no more power to prove than unbelievers have to disprove. Any statement affirming or denying his testimony is not proof, but an expression of belief or unbelief. I will simply rehearse and situate his witness historically. And as we remember his bicentennial, I wish to celebrate his testimony and declare that I believe him.

Latter-day Saints believe “that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof” (Articles of Faith 1:5). “By what authority?” one

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may justifiably ask, as the chief priests and elders did of Jesus (Matthew 21:23). By priesthood authority, Latter-day Saints answer, meaning an unmediated divine commission. The priesthood is direct authorization from God to preach and administer gospel ordinances like baptism, the sacrament, confirmation, and the ultimate ordinances in our theology, those of the temple.² The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “We believe that no man can administer salvation through the gospel, to the souls of men, in the name of Jesus Christ, except he is authorized from God, by revelation, or [in other words] by being ordained by some one whom God hath sent by revelation.”³ The Church’s modern Apostles call this “divine authority by direct revelation” the faith’s “most distinguishing feature.”⁴

“And who gave you this authority?” the elders asked of Christ (New International Version, Matthew 21:23). Joseph Smith answers frankly thus: “The reception of the holy Priesthood [came] by the ministring of Aangels.”⁵ In his now-canonized history, Joseph Smith remembered the events of May 1829 as he and scribe Oliver Cowdery were translating the Book of Mormon from ancient metal plates revealed by an angel. “We . . . went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us” (Joseph Smith—History 1:68). Joseph continued his matter-of-fact narrative, noting how the angel “said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me”

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(Joseph Smith—History 1:70). Only late in the account, almost as an afterthought, Joseph reveals the identity of the ministering angel. He said, “His name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred upon us, and that I should be the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second” (Joseph Smith—History 1:72).

Joseph Smith combines nonchalance and historicity. He remembered that “it was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized” (Joseph Smith—History 1:72). Oliver Cowdery, by contrast, could hardly contain himself when he sat down to pen what became the first published account of the good news:

The angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance!—What joy! what wonder! what amazement! . . . Our eyes beheld—our ears heard. As in the “blaze of day;” yes, more—above the glitter of the May Sun beam. . . . Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, “I am thy fellow-servant,” dispelled every fear. We listened—we gazed—we admired! ’Twas the voice of the angel from glory—’twas a message from the Most High! . . . But, dear brother think, further think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts and with what surprise we must have bowed, . . . when we received under his hand the holy priesthood, as he said, “upon you my fellow servants, . . . I confer this priesthood and this authority.”⁶

I confess that I prefer Joseph’s straightforward style, but I think Oliver was trying to do something I attempt with my

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students at Brigham Young University, namely to awaken them to the import of what he witnessed. 'Twas the voice, after all, of an angel of glory—and not your ordinary angel. This one said his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. No wonder Oliver was carried away in rapturous prose. He went into the woods “to know how we might obtain the blessings of baptism and of the Holy Spirit, according to the order of God.”⁷ And who should appear but John *the Baptist*. Can you imagine a more credible informant than the man who baptized the Lord Jesus Christ? Standing there in the Pennsylvania woods, John need not say much in order to speak volumes. He laid hands upon their heads and spoke from a now-healed voice box that was damaged when he was beheaded. No wonder Oliver wrote that they listened, gazed, and admired. They knew the man who baptized Jesus Christ, that he had been resurrected, that the Bible was generally true, that there had been an apostasy resulting in the loss of authority to baptize according to the order of God, and that they were John’s fellow servants in that same ministry, having received, as Oliver put it, “under his hand the holy priesthood.” “Where was room for doubt?” Oliver asked. “No where,” he answered. “Uncertainty had fled.”⁸

Oliver’s other statements reported these events with striking straightforwardness, similar to Joseph’s. This example makes the point well that Joseph

was ordained by the angel John, unto the lesser or Aaronic priesthood, in company with myself, in the town of Harmony, Susquehannah County, Pennsylvania, on Fryday, the 15th day of May, 1829, after which we repaired to the water, even to the Susquehannah River, and were baptized, he first ministering unto me and after—I to him. but before baptism our souls were

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drawn out in mighty prayer—to know how we might obtain the blessings of baptism and of the Holy Spirit, according to the order of God, and we diligently sought for the right of the fathers and the authority of the holy priesthood, and the power to admin[ister] the same. . . . Therefore, we retired to the woods . . . and called upon the name of the Lord, and he answered us out of the heavens, and while we were in the heavenly vision the angel came down and bestowed upon us this priesthood; and then, as I have said, we repaired to the water and were baptized. After this we received the high and holy priesthood, but an account of this will be given elsewhere, or in another place.⁹

The understated nature of these claims to historical ordinations by corporeal angels becomes more notable, for neither Joseph Smith nor Oliver Cowdery wrote a narrative of their ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood by no less worthy individuals than Apostles Peter, James, and John. All we have are passing reminiscences—a revelation to Joseph first published in 1835 in which the Lord describes “Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles” (D&C 27:12); a Joseph Smith sermon from about 1839 in which he declared that “the Savior, Moses, & Elias—gave the Keys to Peter, James & John . . . [and] they gave it up” to him;¹⁰ and an 1842 musing about the time when Joseph and Oliver met “Peter, James, and John in the wilderness” near the Susquehanna River and they declared “themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom” (D&C 128:20). They, along with a veritable who’s who of angels, transmitted to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “the power of their priesthood” (D&C 128:21).¹¹ Joseph and Oliver in turn ordained new Apostles in 1835. Oliver told them, “You have

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been ordained to the Holy Priesthood. You have received it from those who had their power and authority from an angel.”¹²

The climactic event in this history came as Joseph and Oliver prayed together in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio. No account was published until 1852, but Joseph’s journal entry for April 3, 1836, says that they “saw the Lord standing upon the . . . pulpit before them.”¹³ He was followed in succession by Moses, Elias, and Elijah, each authorizing some aspect of the gospel, the gathering of Israel, or the preparation of the world for the impending millennium. “The keys of this dispensation are [now] committed into your hands,” the messenger told Joseph and Oliver (D&C 110:16). A year later, Oliver wrote from personal experience that God would “reveal his glorious arm” in the latter days “and talk with his people *face to face*.”¹⁴ He had told the Apostles when he commissioned them in 1835 to “never cease striving until you have seen God face to face.”¹⁵ Now that he had, perhaps Oliver thought he could cease striving.

Feeling self-important and weary of weeping for Zion, Oliver became disaffected from the Church in 1838. Hyrum Smith was “crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood” that once were Oliver Cowdery’s (D&C 124:95). But Oliver would ever be a witness. During the decade he spent outside the Church from 1838 to 1848, Oliver confessed to Phineas Young that he had been hypersensitive, but defended his character on the grounds that he had “stood in the presence of John . . . to receive the Lesser Priesthood—and in the presence of Peter, to receive the Greater, and look[ed] down through time, and witness[ed] the effects these two must produce.”¹⁶ Two and a half years later, a humbler Oliver presented himself to be immersed again, noting that he was the first to be so baptized in this dispensation. On November 5,

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1848, a joint meeting of the high council and high priests quorum in Kanesville, Iowa, met to consider Oliver Cowdery's request. "I know the door into the church," a wonderfully meek Oliver Cowdery said that day, "and I wish to become a member thro the door. I wish to be a humble private member. I did not come her[e] to seek honor." Bishop George Harris moved that Oliver be rebaptized. Evan M. Greene seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.¹⁷

Elder George A. Smith listened during those fall days in 1848 as a penitent Oliver Cowdery "bore testimony in the most positive terms of the truth of the Book of Mormon—the restoration of the priesthood to the earth, and the mission of Joseph Smith as the prophet of the last days; and told the people if they wanted to follow the right path, to keep in the main channel of the stream—where the body of the Church goes, there is the authority; and all these lo here's and lo there's, have no authority; but this people have the true and holy priesthood; 'for the angel said unto Joseph Smith Jr., in my hearing, that this priesthood shall remain on earth unto the end.'" George A. noted that Oliver's "testimony produced quite a sensation among the gentlemen present who did not belong to the Church, and it was gratefully received by all the saints."¹⁸

Since he first testified, Oliver's witness has been gratefully received by believers and has created quite a sensation among others. Joseph Smith was threatened with violence for claiming that "angels appear to men in this enlightened age."¹⁹ His history says that he and Oliver "were forced to keep secret the circumstances of our having . . . received this priesthood; owing to a spirit of persecution."²⁰ But the secret was soon out. Cowdery "pretends to have a divine mission," one newspaper reported in 1830, "and to have seen and conversed with Angels." The newspaper reported shortly after the Church was organized that Oliver Cowdery "holds

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forth that the ordinances of the gospel, have not been regularly administered since the days of the Apostles, till the said Smith and himself commenced the work.”²¹ So Oliver’s testimony has always been contested. What interests me is the ways in which it has been contested over time. How does one refute the testimonies of two witnesses that they have been “ordained under the hands” of John, Christ’s formerly beheaded baptizer?²² Can one disprove Cowdery’s claim that “upon this head has Peter James and John laid their hands and conferred the Holy Melchisedic Priesthood?”²³ “Where was room for doubt?” Cowdery asked.²⁴ But there was plenty of doubt, if not disproof. And note the distinction—disbelieving Oliver Cowdery does not make him credulous. Saying that he pretended to see angels does not mean he did not. So who cares what I or anyone else has to say about the merits or nuances or the literary quality of his testimony or the reliability of hearsay? Let us hear from Oliver himself. He and Joseph are the ones who know whether they were ordained by angels.

My point is that whenever Oliver spoke for himself, he expressed certainty—corporeal, historical certainty. “I am aware,” he wrote in 1835, “that a rehearsal of visions of angels at this day, is as inconsistent with a portion of mankind as it formerly was, after all the boast of this wise generation in the knowledge of the truth; but there is a uniformity so complete, that on the reflection, one is led to rejoice that it is so.”²⁵ Oliver was ready, as he wrote, to stand “before the Judge of all for inspection, as I most assuredly believe that before HIM I must stand and answer.”²⁶

Yes, but he was clearly deceived, some say, noting that Oliver once said he and Joseph received the priesthood from angels “while we were in the heavenly vision.”²⁷ Such critics assume that anything visionary is unreliably subjective. But Oliver Cowdery did not. He thought he was confirming, not compromising, the

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nature of his experience by describing it as a vision. Still, there was no doubt in Cowdery's mind that the events were historical. Remember, he wrote that Joseph "was ordained by the angel John, unto the lesser or Aaronic priesthood, in company with myself, in the town of Harmony, Susquehannah County, Pennsylvania, on Fryday, the 15th day of May, 1829, after which we repaired to the water, even to the Susquehannah River, and were baptized . . . and while we were in the heavenly vision the angel came down and bestowed upon us this priesthood; and then, as I have said, we repaired to the water and were baptized. After this we received the high and holy priesthood."²⁸

Oliver criticized his generation's tendency to explain away the marvelous "figuratively"—what he called "spiritualizing." He insisted that the scriptures "are meant to be understood according to their *literal* reading." It seems unlikely, then, that Cowdery, who of all men knew whether he had been ordained by angels, would mince words or confuse illusions with historical events.²⁹ One does not find him waffling, spiritualizing, or speaking figuratively. Listen to what he told one audience: "The priesthood is here. I was present with Joseph when an holy angle from god came down from heaven and conferred or restored the Aaronic priesthood. . . . I was also present with Joseph when the Melchisedek priesthood was confered by the holy angles of god."³⁰

Some have charged Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery with inventing the idea in 1834 that angels ordained them to holy priesthoods beginning May 15, 1829.³¹ Their motive, according to this argument, was a need to establish authority in the midst of a credibility crisis caused by an investigation of Joseph's past. This logic puzzles me. Joseph had a credibility problem, but it began the day he announced his First Vision precisely because he claimed a visit from heavenly messengers. But he testified

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anyway. Well before the conspiracy theory has Joseph in need of shoring up his authority by claiming to have received it from angels, his 1832 history plainly claims “reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministering of Aangels to administer the letter of the Gospel,” followed by “a confirmation and reception of the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God power and ordinance from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit the Kees of the Kingdom of God.”³²

The *Painesville Telegraph* challenged Oliver’s authority as early as 1830 by pejoratively referring to his claim to ministering angels.³³ How, then, did Oliver Cowdery improve public relations by holding forth “that the ordinances of the gospel, have not been regularly administered since the days of the Apostles, till the said Smith and himself commenced the work?”³⁴ Moreover, why did he consistently declare the same testimony, even when his relationship with Joseph soured and they were estranged? Instead, in a deeply moving 1846 letter, written without pretense, Cowdery affirmed,

I have cherished a hope, and that one of my fondest, that I might leave such a character as those who might believe in my testimony, after I shall be called hence, might do so, not only for the sake of the truth, but might not blush for the private character of the man who bore that testimony. I have been sensitive on this subject, I admit; but I ought to be so—you would be, under the circumstances, had you stood in the presence of John, with our departed brother Joseph, to receive the Lesser Priesthood—and in the presence of Peter, to receive the Greater, and look down through time, and witness the effects these two must produce.³⁵

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There have always been critics of Oliver's testimony. The earliest ones made their case not by proving the testimony false but by assuming its absurdity. Charles Dickens, for one, noted what he thought was the unthinkable, that "in the age of railways," Joseph Smith, "the ignorant rustic . . . pretends to communion with angels."³⁶ More recent critics selectively present hearsay statements made by people who said they "never heard" that angels restored the priesthood until years after the fact.³⁷ Respondents cite the same men saying that years after the events took place they heard and believed that Oliver and Joseph were ordained by angels.³⁸ "When the holy angel visited and ordained Joseph, Oliver was with him," wrote William McLellin in 1847, adding a year later, "We hold that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, in May 1829, received the authority of the lesser priesthood, and the keys of it, by the visitation and the administration of the angel John, the Baptist."³⁹ In 1861, David Cannon visited Oliver Cowdery's grave in Richmond, Missouri, with David Whitmer, who reiterated Oliver's testimony, saying, "I know the Gospel to be true and upon this head has Peter James and John laid their hands and conferred the Holy Melchisedic Priesthood." Cannon continued, "The manner in which this tall grey headed man went through the exhibition of what Oliver had done was prophetic. I shall never forget the impression that the testimony of . . . David Whitmer made upon me."⁴⁰

What has been proved by this expenditure of ink? Only that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery both testified early and often that angels ordained them to the holy priesthood. This is little more than what both sides were already willing to grant. But note what this fact does. The fact that Oliver Cowdery claimed that "upon this head has Peter James and John laid their hands and conferred the Holy Melchisedic Priesthood" compels me to choose whether to believe him. Witnesses force me to choose. That seems

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to be the purpose of witnesses in God's economy, to make me choose for myself whether to believe their testimony.

Remember that youth activity I began with, in which my father and others introduced us to the Book of Mormon witnesses? As part of that or a similar occasion, we gathered at our church building and watched a film depicting Alexander Doniphan interviewing David Whitmer. As Whitmer reminisced, he recounted Oliver Cowdery's testimony. A few years ago I was invited to teach the youth of my stake about Oliver Cowdery. I relished the opportunity to try to do something as meaningful for them as my father and leaders had done for me. I remembered the film. I thought I could write an interview that would let Oliver Cowdery speak for himself. I wanted it to be historically accurate even as it communicated as powerfully as that film did to me. I believed that if I composed an interview that enabled Oliver Cowdery to answer in his own words, his own written statements, the young people would be compelled to choose whether to believe. The work of the witness in God's economy would be accomplished. Moreover, I believed that the Holy Spirit would confirm Oliver's words for others as it has for me. I did my best to assume the role. I wrote the interview using much of the material I have presented here. I dressed in period clothing and memorized my, that is, Oliver's, lines.

I did a poor job playing the part, but it worked anyway. Oliver's testimony was transmitted. I did not prove it, only declared it, but there were many who experienced a confirming kind of proof. Count me among that number. I know that Oliver Cowdery told the remarkable truth when he wrote that

John the Baptist, holding the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood;
Peter, James, and John, holding the keys of the Melchizedek

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Priesthood, have . . . ministered for those who shall be heirs of salvation, and with these administrations ordained men to the same Priesthood. These Priesthoods, with their authority, are now, and must continue to be, in the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Blessed is the elder who has received the same, and thrice blessed and holy is he who shall endure to the end. Accept assurances, dear brother, of the unfeigned prayer of him, who, in connection with Joseph the Seer, was blessed with the above ministrations, and who earnestly and devoutly hopes to meet you in the celestial glory.”⁴¹

NOTES

1. Richard L. Anderson, “The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration,” *Improvement Era*, September 1968, 15.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 53.
3. Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, March 22, 1839, in Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 421.
4. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1937, 121, cited in Jeffrey R. Holland, “Our Most Distinguishing Feature,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 43; see also Dallin H. Oaks, “Joseph Smith in a Personal World,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005): 154.
5. A History of the Life of Joseph Smith Jr., Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. For a published account, see Dean C. Jessee, “The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 4.

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6. Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 15–16.
7. Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, 8, Joseph Smith Papers, Oliver Cowdery, Clerk and Recorder, given in Kirtland, December 18, 1833, and recorded September 1835, Church History Library.
8. Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 153.
9. Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, 8–9, Church History Library.
10. Joseph Smith Sermon (about 1839), recorded in Willard Richards Pocket Companion, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 9.
11. In addition to Joseph Smith's reminiscences about the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, in a letter from Charles M. Neilsen to Heber J. Grant, Neilsen reports hearing Robert Barrington, age eighty-two, testify to hearing Oliver Cowdery tell a jury that after John the Baptist had brought the Aaronic Priesthood, Joseph and Oliver returned to the woods to seek the power to bestow the Holy Ghost. "A glorious light encircled us," this report says, "and as we arose on account of the light, three persons stood before us dressed in white, their faces beaming with glory. The person in the center addressing Joseph and me, said, 'My name is Peter and (pointing to the others) these are James and John. We have come here according to command from the Almighty to confer upon you the Apostleship to which we have been ordained.' After having made these few remarks they proceeded to ordain us" (Charles M. Neilsen to Heber J. Grant, February 10, 1898, in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998], 2:476. See also Charles M. Neilsen to Heber J. Grant, November 14, 1899, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:477).
12. Kirtland Council Minute Book, February 21, 1835, 159, Church History Library.

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13. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–1992), 2:209; see also D&C 110.
14. Oliver Cowdery, “Valedictory,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, August 1837, 548, emphasis in original.
15. Kirtland Council Minute Book, February 21, 1835, 159.
16. Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, March 23, 1846, Church History Library.
17. Pottawattamie High Council minutes, November 5, 1848, Church History Library.
18. George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, October 20 and 31, 1848, Council Bluffs, Iowa, photocopy of typescript, Church History Library.
19. Interview of Joel Tiffany with Martin Harris, January 1859, *Tiffany’s Monthly* 5 (1859): 168.
20. Joseph Smith, “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, August 1, 1842, 866.
21. “The Golden Bible,” *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, 3.
22. Stephen Post, Journal, Stephen Post Papers, March 27, 1836, Church History Library.
23. David H. Cannon, autobiography, quoted in Brian Q. Cannon, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 198 n. 10.
24. Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, 153.
25. Oliver Cowdery to William Phelps, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, March 1835, 95.
26. Oliver Cowdery to William Phelps, December 1834, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, February 1835, 42.
27. Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 227.
28. Patriarchal Blessing Book 1, 8–9, Church History Library.
29. Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, February 1835, *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, February 1835, 78; emphasis in original.

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30. Reuben Miller, Journal, October 21, 1848, microfilm of holograph, 14, Church History Library.
31. See Palmer, *Insider's View*, 215–34.
32. Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:3.
33. See *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, and December 7, 1830, as cited in Cannon, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 181 (numbers 20 and 21).
34. “The Golden Bible,” *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, 3; cited in Cannon, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 181 (number 20).
35. Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, March 23, 1846, Church History Library.
36. Charles Dickens, “In the Name of the Prophet—Smith!” *Household Words*, July 1851, 69.
37. See Palmer, *Insider's View*, 217, 224–25.
38. Steven C. Harper, “Trustworthy History?” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 (2003): 274–307.
39. See William E. McLellin, *The Ensign of Liberty, of the Church of Christ*, March and April 1847, 2, 31; and March 1848, 67; as cited in Cannon, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 195 (numbers 67–68).
40. David H. Cannon, autobiography, as cited in Cannon, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 198 n. 10.
41. Oliver Cowdery to Samuel W. Richards, January 13, 1849, in *Deseret Evening News*, March 22, 1884, 2.