



Type: Journal Article

Priesthood Restoration Documents

Author(s): Brian Q. Cannon and BYU Studies Staff

Source: *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1995-1996), pp. 162–207

Published by: BYU Studies

Abstract: Few events in the history of the Restoration are as consequential as the bestowal of the priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The following excerpts from early Church documents recount all of the known direct statements from the first twenty years of Church history specifically concerning the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. In addition to compiling the descriptions that were written or dictated by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, this collection also includes the accounts by contemporaries of Joseph and Oliver up to the time of Cowdery's death in 1850. Reflecting information that was probably gleaned from conversations or unrecorded discourses of Joseph and Oliver, a few of these statements offer details unavailable elsewhere. Additionally, these statements help to reveal early Church members' understanding of the restoration of the priesthood and show how they described the priesthood restoration to others.



BYU Studies is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to BYU Studies and to scholarly research on The Book of Mormon. Archived by permission of BYU Studies.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/>



Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, by Tom Lovell (1909–). Oil on canvas, 61½" x 85", ca. 1970. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

John the Baptist returned to the earth to restore the Aaronic Priesthood. The event took place on the banks of the Susquehanna River in the spring of 1829. The artist was commissioned by the Church Public Communications Department to create this painting. Lovell has carefully painted a strong, adult male angel appearing near the river in the spring-time. The gender and maturity of the angel, as well as the time and place of the vision have all been respected in this work of art.

Priesthood Restoration Documents

A surprisingly large number of early Church documents impressively record crucial details about the restoration of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.

Brian Q. Cannon and BYU Studies Staff

Introduction

Few events in the history of the Restoration are as consequential as the bestowal of the priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The following excerpts from early Church documents recount all of the known direct statements from the first twenty years of Church history specifically concerning the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. In addition to compiling the descriptions that were written or dictated by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, this collection also includes the accounts by contemporaries of Joseph and Oliver up to the time of Cowdery's death in 1850. Reflecting information that was probably gleaned from conversations or unrecorded discourses of Joseph and Oliver, a few of these statements offer details unavailable elsewhere. Additionally, these statements help to reveal early Church members' understanding of the restoration of the priesthood and show how they described the priesthood restoration to others.

Long before he received the priesthood, Joseph Smith learned of it from Moroni. According to an account of Oliver Cowdery published in 1835, Moroni appeared to Joseph in September of 1823 and informed him, "When they [the golden plates] are interpreted the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water, and after that they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands."¹ While it is unclear to what extent this retrospective account may contain details that were actually learned after 1823,

Joseph definitely learned more about the priesthood as he translated the Book of Mormon in 1829. From the golden plates, Joseph learned that power was necessary to perform ordinances including baptism (3 Ne. 11:22), the sacrament (3 Ne. 18:5), and conferring the Holy Ghost (3 Ne. 18:37; Moro. 2:1-3); that this power was conferred by the laying on of hands (3 Ne. 18:38; Moro. 2:1; 3:2); that one could be ordained to the calling of disciple or elder, who in turn could ordain priests and teachers (Moro. 3:1); and that elders or disciples, unlike priests and teachers, could confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (Moro. 2:1-2). Additionally, a passage in Alma 13 discussed the calling and ordination of high priests including Melchizedek to the “high priesthood of the holy order of God” (Alma 13:6, 14, 18).

Having learned through the writings of ancient prophets that baptism by proper authority was necessary, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery sought that ordinance. In response to their supplication, John the Baptist appeared and conferred the priesthood of Aaron upon them. At a later date, Peter, James, and John appeared and bestowed what is known today as the Melchizedek Priesthood.²

The Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

The historical record clearly identifies the circumstances surrounding the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, including the date that it occurred, and unambiguous evidence links Joseph and Oliver’s quest for that priesthood to knowledge that they gained while translating the Book of Mormon. An 1829 document in Oliver Cowdery’s handwriting entitled “Articles of the Church of Christ” testified that Cowdery had been given power to baptize “of Jesus Christ” (document 1 below), and Cowdery made similar statements in 1830 (documents 20, 21).

Details regarding the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, including John the Baptist’s role in that event, were seldom if ever shared prior to 1832, though, “owing to a spirit of persecution,” as Joseph Smith indicated in 1838.³ Two of Joseph and Oliver’s close associates, David Whitmer and William McLellin, recalled in the late 1870s or mid-1880s that they first learned of John the Baptist’s appearance two to four years after the Church’s organization.⁴

In writing, Joseph Smith first referred to this event in 1832 (document 5), describing “the reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministring of Aangels to adminster the letter of the Gospel.” Oliver Cowdery offered the first detailed, recorded account of the restoration of the lower priesthood in 1834 (document 22). The following year, Cowdery specified the date and location of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood (document 24). Joseph Smith’s fullest account of the event (document 12) corroborated Oliver’s record and added new details: for instance, Joseph recorded words used by John regarding the nature of the keys that he bestowed; explained that John had acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John; and indicated that John promised them that later they would receive power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. In 1844 (documents 17-19), Joseph Smith referred to the preparatory priesthood as “the power of Elias” and indicated that John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Savior, was “the Spirit of Elias.”⁵

Early members read Joseph’s and Oliver’s testimonies regarding the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and used the information in their missionary work. For instance, Orson Hyde (documents 49, 50) quoted directly from Oliver Cowdery’s 1834 account (document 22), while Reuben Miller in an 1847 publication (document 66) relied on Joseph Smith’s accounts of John’s visitation (documents 12, 14). Many accounts mention John the Baptist by name (documents 4, 12, 27, 30, 65, 68, 69); others call him “the angel John” (document 24), “the angel of the Lord” (document 41), simply “the angel” (documents 10, 13, 14), or some other similar appellation (documents 7, 12, 28, 67).

Despite detailed accounts by Joseph and Oliver, some errors crept into the record: William Appleby, for instance, erroneously indicated in a tract published in 1844 that the power to baptize had been restored in 1830 (document 61). Additionally, ambiguity and imprecision arose through leaders’ and members’ frequent use of the phrase “the holy priesthood” to refer to the Aaronic Priesthood on some occasions (document 22), to the Melchizedek Priesthood on others (documents 7, 24, 57, 70), and to the priesthood in general on yet other occasions (documents 25, 29, 37, 47-48, 58, 61-62). Still, the documentary record demonstrates that detailed accounts of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

were available to members of the Church as early as 1834 and that early members used those accounts in teaching others about the Aaronic Priesthood's restoration.

The Events of the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood

The written record regarding the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood is less complete. Although repeatedly testifying that Peter, James, and John had appeared to them and restored this high priesthood authority (documents 4, 12, 15-16, 30) or referring alternatively to "apostles" (document 6), "Peter" (document 27), "angels" (documents 5, 28), or "those held in reserve" (document 7), neither Joseph Smith nor Oliver Cowdery specified the date of that restoration or reported the words used by Peter in ordaining them to this priesthood beyond "declar[ing] themselves as possessing the keys" (document 16; see also 40). Oliver Cowdery's accounts concerning the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood corroborate the accounts of Joseph; whereas Oliver Cowdery provided the earliest detailed report of the visit of John the Baptist, his accounts of the visit of Peter, James, and John seldom add new information.

Significant evidence suggests that the Melchizedek Priesthood may have been restored in connection with the translation of the Book of Mormon. A revelation dated June 1829 (documents 1, 3) referred to the apostolic calling of David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, likening their calling to that of Paul, although the revelation did not detail the restoration of priesthood authority or any ordination in connection with that calling. Additionally, David Whitmer recalled in 1887 that he was "baptized, confirmed, and ordained an Elder" in June 1829 and that "previous to this, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had baptized, confirmed and ordained each other to the office of an Elder."⁶ The Book of Mormon, which was being translated at that time, described the ancient ordination of disciples, known as elders, who had power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost (3 Ne. 18; Moro. 2-3). Inasmuch as the translation of 3 Nephi 11 had made Joseph and Oliver sensitive to their lack of power to baptize and impelled them to seek that power, it is possible that the translation of 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 2-3 had a similar effect upon

them, motivating them to pray to receive by the laying on of hands the additional power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The first printed reference to Joseph's and Oliver's ordination as apostles appeared in 1831. It indicated that Joseph and Oliver were "called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ" (document 2). In 1833, Joseph Smith discussed the restoration of apostolic authority in greater detail. Thereafter, most of his and Oliver's written accounts expressly mentioned that angels played a role in the restoration of apostolic authority and of the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. In 1833 (document 6), Joseph Smith testified that he had seen "the Apostles" and could perform miracles. The following year, Joseph met with the Kirtland Stake High Council. On February 12, 1834, he discussed "the dignity of the office which has been conferred upon me by the ministring of the Angel of God" (document 8). While this might have been a reference to John the Baptist, it is also possible that Joseph was referring to Peter's role in conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood upon him. Five days later he instructed the same group that anciently "the apostle Peter was the president of the Council and held the keys of the Kingdom of God."⁷ In a blessing which Oliver Cowdery dated 1833 and recorded in 1835, Joseph Smith referred to the reception of "the holy priesthood under the hands of those who . . . received it under the hand of the Messiah" (document 7).

In 1835 the original edition of the Doctrine and Covenants gave the first precise published account of the appearance of Peter, James, and John to Joseph and Oliver.⁸ This edition indicates that the three ancient apostles had "ordained" and "confirmed" Joseph and Oliver as "apostles" and granted them "the keys of your ministry" (document 4). In subsequent statements, Joseph reiterated the role of Peter, James, and John in the restoration of "the priesthood" and "the keys of the kingdom" (documents 15, 16) and indicated that the angelic ministrants' voices had come to them "in the wilderness" between Harmony, Pennsylvania, and Colesville, New York (document 16).⁹ Following the Prophet's death, Oliver Cowdery testified repeatedly and fervently that he had received the higher priesthood under the hands of angelic ministrants (documents 27-30).¹⁰ In 1846, he mentioned only Peter's role in the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood (document 27),

but in 1849 he confirmed that James and John had also been present (document 30).

Supplementing Joseph's and Oliver's own accounts in several respects are Addison Everett's recollections, written in 1881, 1882, and 1883, of statements he had heard Joseph Smith make in a conversation in 1844. According to Everett's longest account, Joseph Smith indicated that while translating the Book of Mormon in Harmony, Pennsylvania, he and Oliver had been arrested; after escaping from a courtroom, they spent the night in the woods eluding their enemies. At daybreak, Peter, James, and John appeared to them and "ordained us to the Holy Apostelship and gave unto us the Keys of the Dispensation of the fullness of times."¹¹

The foregoing accounts all seem to describe a single event: a restoration between Harmony and Colesville of what came to be known as the Melchizedek Priesthood under the Savior's direction by Peter with the assistance of James and John. However, the draft and final version of an 1839 account by Joseph Smith may describe a separate set of events connected with the restoration of "the Melchesidec Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost" (documents 13, 14). Those documents indicate that, after Joseph and Oliver had prayed for this authority, "the word of the Lord" came to them in a second location, the Whitmer home in Fayette, commanding them to ordain one another to the office of Elder once they had "called together our brethren and had their sanction" and then to "attend to the laying on of hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost."¹²

No single document written by the principals discusses both the appearance of Peter, James, and John and the revelation received in the Whitmer home, specifying the chronological order of these revelations, but the revelation described in documents 13 and 14 was definitely received prior to the organization of the Church, since Joseph Smith carried out its instructions on April 6, 1830. Joseph Smith's history indicates that he and Oliver ordained each other on April 6 "according to previous commandment."¹³

In their written accounts, most of which were produced for didactic purposes, many early members compressed all the events of priesthood restoration into a general reference to a visitation by a holy messenger or angel (documents 33-35, 39, 43-49, 51-52,



Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, by Gary E. Smith (1942–). Oil on canvas, 36" x 42", 1980. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

54-55, 59-62). Although a published revelation (document 4) referring to separate ministrations by John the Baptist and by Peter, James, and John was widely disseminated and readily available beginning in 1835, more details were circulated about the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, probably because that authority was more immediately relevant to the issue of conversion and baptism. Under these circumstances, it is possible that some members regarded the restoration of the authority to baptize as the primary facet of priesthood restoration and therefore focused on that restoration in their teachings.

It is also likely that some writers focused on a single messenger's role in the restoration of the priesthood in order to simplify the Restoration for hymns or missionary work, particularly when they desired to draw a parallel between the other angel mentioned in Revelation 14:6 and the Restoration of the gospel. Charles Thompson, for instance, borrowed heavily from John's prophecy in Revelation when he wrote, "God sent an holy angel from the midst of heaven, with the Priesthood and authority of Jesus Christ, to preach the everlasting Gospel unto them who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, kindred, tongue and people" (document 52).

Statements by William McLellin (document 67) and David Patten (document 41) demonstrate that some members who had studied Doctrine and Covenants 27 understood clearly that the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were restored on separate occasions. Similarly, other missionaries and leaders including Brigham Young (document 69) and Reuben Miller (documents 65, 66) referred to two separate appearances in their sermons and writings.

The accounts by Joseph's and Oliver's contemporaries show that early members arrived at different conclusions regarding the timing of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the 1880s, Everett calculated that it probably occurred in August 1829. Although William McLellin recognized the importance of Peter, James, and John's visitation (document 67), he seems to trace the reception of the Melchizedek Priesthood to the ordination of Joseph and Oliver as elders on April 6, 1830 (document 68). Hiram Page, one of the Eight Book of Mormon Witnesses was convinced that Joseph and Oliver received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John "before the 6th of april 1830" (document 70).

Agreeing with Hiram Page, in 1853 and again in 1874, Brigham Young emphasized that Joseph Smith received apostolic power from Peter, James, and John prior to the organization of the Church. D. Michael Quinn's reading of Brigham Young to the effect that "Peter, James, and John came to him [Joseph Smith] in Kirtland" omits key words and contextual information found in that discussion by President Young concerning several revelations regarding the priesthood.¹⁴

Modern readers have also arrived at divergent conclusions regarding the timing of the Melchizedek Priesthood restoration and Joseph Smith's early understanding of the distinction between the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. Two recent interpretations are illustrative. Larry C. Porter, a professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, maintains that "the evidence suggests a date near the end of May 1829" and "certainly before the organization of the Church on 6 April 1830."¹⁵ In support of this conclusion, Porter highlights the revelation received prior to June 14, 1829, and first printed in the "Articles of the Church of Christ" (documents 1, 3) that identifies Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer as apostles who are "called even with that same calling" as "Paul mine apostle." As evidence that this call to the apostleship included priesthood authority, Porter highlights the Prophet's preface to a later publication of this revelation: "The following commandment will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this Priesthood, as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after" (document 14). Porter also notes that Joseph and Oliver conferred the gift of the Holy Ghost upon members of the Church on April 6, 1830, and assumes that they used the priesthood that they had received from Peter, James, and John to do so. Based on Joseph Smith's later recollections of instructions he had received in 1829 from John the Baptist, Porter infers that by April 1830 "Joseph Smith recognized the limitations of John's power"¹⁶ and thus would not have conferred the Holy Ghost on members unless he had already received the power to do so from Peter, James, and John. To support this view, Porter cites Joseph Smith's 1844 statement:

John's mission was limited to preaching and baptizing; but what he did was legal; and when Jesus Christ came to any of John's disciples, He baptized them with fire and the Holy Ghost.

We find the Apostles endowed with greater power than John. . . . John did not transcend his bounds, but faithfully performed that part belonging to his office.¹⁷

Whereas Porter identifies the spring of 1829 as the time for the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, free-lance historian D. Michael Quinn concludes that Joseph Smith did not receive the higher priesthood from Peter, James, and John until July 1830.¹⁸ He acknowledges the 1829 reference to the calling of apostles (documents 1, 3), but he argues that the revelation merely likens Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer to Paul. Then, overlooking Paul's assertion in 1 Timothy 2:7, "I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not)," Quinn suggests that Paul may have been an unordained "charismatic apostle and special witness"¹⁹ rather than an ordained apostle, citing the LDS Bible Dictionary for general support. Quinn argues that Cowdery and Whitmer as witnesses of the Book of Mormon were called apostles in that sense prior to 1830.²⁰ Quinn admits that elders were ordained as early as mid-1829, but he suggests that those ordinations and all confirmations prior to that time might have been performed solely on the basis of the revelation received in June 1829 instructing Joseph and Oliver to ordain each other (documents 13, 14). He suggests further that the ordinations carried out on April 6, 1830, were reordinations.²¹

Quinn looks mainly to documents 9 and 16, and to the 1881 and 1882 Addison Everett accounts to support his conclusion that the Melchizedek Priesthood was formally restored by Peter, James, and John in July 1830. In document 9, Joseph Smith mentions the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood and the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Church after referring to the Church's organization. Quinn infers that this document as well as document 16 (also found in D&C 128:20) are a chronological listing of events. But document 16 helps Quinn's case only if one assumes that one can date to June 1830 the event referred to in document 16 as "the voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light."²² While he acknowledges that the date specified by Everett for the restoration of the higher priesthood is 1829, Quinn notes that this date does not match the events that Everett described surrounding

Joseph's arrest and court trial, which occurred in June and July 1830. Thus, for Quinn, Everett's account "seems to confirm the July 1830 date."²³

While Porter acknowledges the statements by Everett and believes that "Addison Everett was a man of veracity," he is more skeptical of Everett's statements because thirty-seven years had passed between the time that Everett heard the Prophet's statements and the time that he recorded them, and because Everett admitted his limitations and "lack of technical skills" as a historian. Porter concludes that "portions of his [Everett's] remembrance are inconsistent enough to warrant some obvious cautions when attempting to reconstruct the sequence of events surrounding the restoration process from his citations."²⁴

Conclusion

The fact that the historical record can be used to support different interpretations demonstrates how puzzling any fragmentary record of the past can be. Because Joseph and Oliver never identified a date for the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, they left room for speculation about the date of that priesthood's restoration. Further complicating the task is our inability using extant documents to determine with certainty Joseph Smith's full understanding of the nature of the priesthood at the time of the Church's organization.

While the documentary record is fragmentary regarding the date for the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the record is extensive and rich in many other respects. It strongly shows that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery repeatedly testified that they received power from on high to perform ordinances, first from John the Baptist and then from Peter, James, and John. Their testimonies began early in Church documents and intensified as these first and second elders drew closer to their own impending deaths. The powerful thrust of these accounts, corroborated by numerous statements from other early members of the Church, is intellectually challenging and spiritually invigorating.



Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, by R.M. Hadi Pranoto (1932–). Dyed fabric batik, 55" x 31", 1985. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art. Pranoto is former branch president of the Yogyakarta Branch and works in one of the most prestigious batik studios in Indonesia.

The Documents

The following collection of historical sources seeks to display every known statement directly concerning the restoration of the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthoods that was made during the lifetimes of Joseph Smith (who died in 1844) or Oliver Cowdery (who died in 1850). About half of these documents are firsthand declarations by Joseph or Oliver or secondhand reports of their words. In most other cases, Joseph or Oliver could have known of the statement. The documents are arranged by author (or speaker) in chronological order. The authors appear in the order of their earliest priesthood restoration statement. The statements by that author are then grouped in chronological order. A few later or additional statements appear in the footnotes. In a few documents, punctuation has been added for clarity.

1. Articles of the Church of Christ (1829)

A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his church & the manner thereof. . . . I command all men every where to repent & I speak unto you even as unto Paul mine apostle for ye are called even with that same calling with which he was called Now therefore whosoever repenteth & humbleth himself before me & desireth to be baptized in my name shall ye baptize them And after this manner did he command me that I should baptize them Behold ye shall go down & stand in the water & in my name shall ye baptize them And now behold these are the words which ye shall say calling them by name saying Having authority given me of Jesus Christ I baptize you.²⁵

2. Doctrine and Covenants 20 ([1830]/April 1831)

The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being 1830 years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God, in the 4th month, and on the 6th day of the same, which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, jun. who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church, and also to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church, and ordained under his hand, and this according to the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory both now and ever—amen.²⁶

3. Doctrine and Covenants 18 ([June 1829]/1833)

And now Oliver, I speak unto you, and also unto David, by way of commandment: For behold I command all men every where to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called.²⁷

4. Doctrine and Covenants 27 ([September 1830]/1835)

. . . which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, jr. and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto this first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron. . . . And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry: and of the same things which I revealed unto them: unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times.²⁸

5. Joseph Smith (1832)

A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr. an account of his marvilous experience and of all the mighty acts which he doeth in the name of Jesus Chist the son of the living God of whom he beareth record and also an account of the rise of the church of Christ in the eve of time according as the Lord brought forth and established by his hand firstly he receiving the testamony from on high secondly the ministering of Angels thirdly the reception of the holy Priesthood by the ministring of Aangels to adminster the letter of the Gospel—the Law and commandments as they were given unto him—and the ordinencs, forthly 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 confered upon him and the continuation of the blessings of God to him &c.²⁹

6. Joseph Smith (March 2, 1833)

The following Curious occurrence occurred last week in Newburg about 6 miles from this Place [Cleveland, Ohio]. Joe Smith the great Mormonosity was there and held forth, and among other things he told them he had seen Jesus Christ and the Apostles and conversed with them, and that he could perform Miracles.³⁰

7. Joseph Smith ([December 18, 1833]/1835)

These blessings shall come upon him according to the blessings of the prophecy of Joseph, in ancient days, which he said should come upon the Seer of the last days and the Scribe that should sit with him, and that should be ordained with him, by the hand of the angel in the bush, unto the lesser priesthood, and after receive the holy priesthood under the hands of those who had been held in reserve for a long season, even those who received it under the hand of the Messiah while he should dwell in the flesh, upon the earth, and should receive the blessings with him, even the Seer of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saith he, even Joseph of old, by his hand, even God. And he shall inherit a crown of eternal life, at the end; and while in the flesh shall stand up in Zion and assist to crown the tribes of Jacob; even so. Amen.³¹

8. Joseph Smith (February 12, 1834)

Thursday evening, February 12, 1834. This evening the high Priests and Elders of the Church in Kirtland at the house of bro. Joseph Smith Jun. in Council for Church business. The council was organized, and opened by bro. Joseph Smith Jun in prayer. Bro. Joseph then rose and said: I shall now endeavor to set forth before this council, the dignity of the office which has been conferred upon me by the ministring of the Angel of God, by his own will and by the voice of this Church.³²

9. Joseph Smith (April 21, 1834)

Norton Medina Co. Ohio April 21, 1834. . . . Bro. Joseph Smith Jun. . . . then gave a relation of obtaining and translating the Book of Mormon, the revelation of the priesthood of Aaron, the organization of the Church in the year 1830, the revelation of the high priesthood, and the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the Church, &c. Take away the book of Mormon, and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none.³³

10. Joseph Smith (December 5, 1834)

The reader may further understand, that the reason why High Counsellor Cowdery was not previously ordained to the Presidency, was, in consequence of his necessary attendance in Zion, to assist Wm. W. Phelps in conducting the printing business; but that this promise was made by the angel while in company with President Smith, at the time they received the office of the lesser priesthood.³⁴

11. Joseph Smith (March 27, 1836)

Joseph Smith Jun. testified of the Angel of the Lord's appearing unto him to call him to the work of the Lord, & also of being ordained under the hands of the Angel of of [*sic*] the covenant.³⁵

12. Joseph Smith (1839)

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, saying unto us; "Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministring of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, untill the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness." He said this Aaronic priesthood had not the power of laying on of 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 afterward that he should baptize me.

Accordingly we went and were baptized, I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me, after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronick priesthood, and afterward he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same priesthood, for so we were commanded. The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this priesthood upon us said that 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 Melchisedeck, whi[c]h priesthood he said should in due time be conferred on us. . . . we were forced to keep secret the circumstances of our having been baptized, and having received the priesthood; owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood.³⁶

13. Joseph Smith (1839—Draft)

We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronick Priesthood had given us, viz, that provided we continued faithful, we should also have the Melchesidec Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the Chamber of Mr Whitmer's house in order more particularly to seek of the Lord information, and if possible obtain what we now so earnestly desired. After some time spent in solemn and fervent

prayer, the word of the Lord came unto us, in the Chamber, commanding us, that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, and that he also should ordain me to the same office, and that after having been thus ordained, we should proceed to ordain others to the same office, according as it should be made known unto us, from time to time, also commanding us, that as soon as practicable we should call together all those who had already been baptized by us, to bless bread, and break it with them, also to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them doing all these things in the name of the Lord, but to defer our own ordination untill we had called together our brethren and had their sanction, and been accepted by them as their teachers, after which we were commanded to proceed to ordain each other and call out such men as the spirit should dictate unto us, and ordain them, and then attend to the laying on of hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

The following commandment [Doctrine and Covenants 18] will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this Priesthood as well as others who were yet to be sought after.³⁷

14. Joseph Smith (1839)

We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the Angel that conferred upon us the Aaronick Priesthood had given us, viz: that provided we continued faithful; we should also have the Melchisedec Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the Chamber of Mr Whitmer's house in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired: and here to our unspeakable satisfaction did we realize the truth of the Saviour's promise; "Ask, and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you;" for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord, came unto us in the Chamber, commanding us; that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, And that he also should ordain me to the same office, ~~accordin~~ and then <to> ordain others as it should be made known unto us, from time to time: we were however commanded to defer this our ordination untill, such times, as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers, or not, when also we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them, and to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them, afterward proceed to ordain each other according to commandment, then call out such men as the Spirit should dictate, and ordain them, and then attend to the laying

on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon all those whom we had previously baptized; doing all things in the name of the Lord.

The following commandment [Doctrine and Covenants 18] will further illustrate the nature of our calling to this Priesthood as well as that of others who were yet to be sought after.³⁸

15. Joseph Smith (1839)

The Priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, & Elias—gave the Keys to Peter, James & John on the Mount when they were transfigured before him. The Priesthood is everlasting, without beginning of days or end of years, without Father, Mother &c,—

If there is no change of ordinances there is no change of Priesthood. Wherever the ordinances of the Gospel are administered there is the priesthood. How have we come at the priesthood in the last days? They it [*sic*] came down, down in regular succession. Peter James & John had it given to them & they gave it up.³⁹

16. Joseph Smith (September 6, 1842)

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an Angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book. The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light. The voice of Peter, James, and John, in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broom county, on the Susquehanna River, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times. And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulation of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood.⁴⁰

17. Joseph Smith (March 10, 1844)

Showing the difference between the Spirit of Elias, Elijah and the messiah. J Smith P[rophet]. of the spirit of Elias I must go back to the time at Susquehannah river when I retired in the woods pouring out my soul in prayer to Almighty God. An Angel came down from heaven and laid his hands upon me and ordained me to the power of Elias and that

authorised me to bapltise with water unto repentance. It is a power or a preparatory work for something greater. you have not power to lay on hands for the gift of the holy ghost but you shall have power given you hereafter, that is the power of the Aronick preisthood.⁴¹

18. Joseph Smith (March 10, 1844)

On Sunday March 10 Joseph the Priest delivered the following concernin the Spirits & Powers of Elias Elijah & of Messiah The power of Elias is not the power of Elijah related the vision of his ordination to the priesthood of Aaron on the Susquehannah river to preach the preparatory gospel. This said the Angel is the Spirit of Elias.⁴²

19. Joseph Smith (March 10, 1844)

I went into the woods to inquire of the Lord by prayer his will concerning me— & I saw an angel & he laid his hands upon my head & ordained me to be a priest after the order of Aaron & to hold the keys of this priesthood which office was to preach repentance & Baptism for the remission of sins & also to baptise but was informed that this office did not extend to the laying on of hands for the giving of the Holy Ghost that that office was a greater work & was to be given afterwards but that my ordination was a preparatory work or a going before which was the spirit of Elias for the spirit of Elias was a going before to prepare the way for the greater, which was the Case with John the Baptist.⁴³

20. Oliver Cowdery (November 16, 1830)

About two weeks since some persons came along here with the book, one of whom pretends to have seen Angels, and assisted in translating the plates. He proclaims destruction upon the world within a few years,—holds 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. . . . The name of the person here, who pretends to have a divine mission, and to have seen and conversed with Angels, is *Cowdry*.⁴⁴

21. Oliver Cowdery (December 7, 1830)

Mr. Oliver Cowdry has his commission directly from the God of Heaven, and that he has credentials, written and signed by the hand of Jesus Christ, with whom he has personally conversed, and as such, said Cowdry claims that he and his associates are the only persons on earth who are qualified to administer in his name. By this

authority, they proclaim to the world, that all who do not believe *their* testimony, and be baptised by them for the remission of sins . . . must be forever miserable.⁴⁵

22. Oliver Cowdery (1834)

From *his* [Joseph Smith's] hand I received baptism, by the direction of the angel of God—the first received into this church, in this day. . . . On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the vail was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance! . . . [O]ur eyes beheld—our ears heard. . . . We listened—we gazed—we admired! 'Twas the voice of the angel from glory . . . we were rapt in the vision of the Almighty! . . . [W]e received under [the angel's] hand the holy priesthood, as he said, “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!” . . . The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel; the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me, past description.⁴⁶

23. Oliver Cowdery (February 21, 1835)

Brethren you have your duty presented in this revelation. You have been ordained to the Holy Priesthood. You have received it from those who had their power and authority from an angel. You are to preach the gospel to every nation.⁴⁷

24. Oliver Cowdery (October 2, 1835)

The following blessings by the spirit of prophecy, were pronounced by Joseph Smith, jr. the first elder, and first patriarch of the Church: for although his father laid hands upon, and blessed the fatherless, thereby securing the blessings of the Lord unto them and their posterity, he was not the first elder, because God called upon his son Joseph and ordained him to this power and delivered to him the keys of the kingdom, that is, of authority and spiritual blessings upon the Church, and through him the Lord revealed his will to the Church: he [Joseph Smith] was ministered unto by the angel, and by his direction he obtained the Records of the Nephites, and translated by the gift and power of God: he 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 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] in the same: for we desired to be followers of righteousness and the possessors of greater knowledge, even the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Therefore, we repaired to the woods, even as our father Joseph said we should, that is to the bush, 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. Let it suffice, that others had authority to bless, but after these blessings were given, of which I am about to write, Joseph Smith, Sen. was ordained a president and patriarch, under the hands of his son Joseph, myself, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, presidents of the Church. These blessings were given by vision and the spirit of prophecy, on the 18th of December, 1833, and written by my own hand at the time; and I know them to be correct and according to the mind of the Lord.⁴⁸

25. Oliver Cowdery (October 1835, relating Moroni's instructions to Joseph Smith on September 22, 1823)

When they [the gold plates] are interpreted the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water, and after that they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands.⁴⁹

26. Oliver Cowdery (April 1836)

The least among us values more highly his profession, and holds too sacredly that heavenly communication bestowed by the laying on of the hands of those who were clothed with authority, than all that frail, worse than thread-bare hypocritical pretention, which came down through the mother of abominations, of which himself [a reverend] and all others of his profession can boast.⁵⁰

27. Oliver Cowdery (March 23, 1846)

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.⁵¹

28. Oliver Cowdery (October 21, 1848)

The priesthood is here. I was present with Joseph when an holy angle from god came down from heaven and confereed or restored the Aronic priesthood. And said at the same time that it should remain upon the earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the Melchiesideck priesthood was confereed by the holy angles of god—this was the more necessary in order that which we then confirmed on each other by the will and commandment of god. This priesthood is also to remain upon the earth until the Last remnant of time.⁵²

29. Oliver Cowdery, as reported by George A. Smith (October 31, 1848)

Oliver Cowdery, who had just arrived from Wisconsin with his family, on being invited, addressed the meeting. He 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 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.” His [Oliver Cowdery'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.⁵³

30. Oliver Cowdery (January 13, 1849)

While darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people; long after the authority to administer in holy things had been taken away, the Lord opened the heavens and sent forth his word for the salvation of Israel. In fulfilment of the sacred Scripture the everlasting Gospel was proclaimed by the mighty angel, (Moroni) who, clothed with the authority of his mission, gave glory to God in the highest. This Gospel is the “stone taken from the mountain without hands.” John the Baptist, holding the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood; Peter, James and John, holding the keys of the Melchisedek Priesthood,

have also ministered for those who shall be heirs of salvation, and with these ministrations ordained men to the same Priesthoods. 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.⁵⁴

31. *Painesville Telegraph* (December 7, 1830)

Those who are the friends and advocates of this wonderful book [Book of Mormon], state that Mr. Oliver Cowdry has his commission directly from the God of Heaven, and that he has credentials, written and signed by the hand of Jesus Christ, with whom he has personally conversed, and as such, said Cowdry claims that he and his associates are the only persons on earth who are qualified to administer in his name. By this authority, they proclaim to the world, that all who do not believe *their* testimony, and be baptised by them for the remission of sins, and come under the imposition of *their* hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . must be forever miserable.⁵⁵

32. *The Reflector* (1831)

They [missionaries] then proclaimed that there had been no religion in the world for 1500 years,—that no one had been authorized to preach &c. for that period—that Jo Smith had now received a commission from God for that purpose. . . . Smith (they affirmed) had seen God frequently and personally—Cowdery and his friends had frequent interviews with angels.⁵⁶

33. William W. Phelps (December 25, 1834)

The next item I shall notice, is, (a glorious one,) when the angel conferred the “priesthood upon you, his fellow servants.” That was an august meeting of men and angels, and brought again, upon earth, the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom of God.⁵⁷

34. LDS Hymnal (1835)

Hymn 26. P.M.

And an angel surely, then,
For a blessing unto men,
Brought the priesthood back again,
In its ancient purity.⁵⁸

35. Parley P. Pratt (1835)

SONG III. Long Metre.

The Opening of the Dispensation
of the Fulness of Times.

A voice commissioned from on high,
Hark, hark, it is the angel's cry,
Descending from the throne of light,
His garments shining clear and white.

He comes the gospel to reveal
In fulness, to the sons of men;
Lo! from Cumorah's lonely hill,
There comes a record of God's will!

Translated by the power of God,
His voice bears record to his word;
Again an angel did appear,
As witnesses do record bear.

Restored the priesthood, long since lost,
In truth and power, as at the first;
Thus men commissioned from on high,
Came forth and did repentance cry.⁵⁹

36. Parley P. Pratt (1840)

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS was first organized in the State of New York, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty, on the sixth day of April. At its first organization, it consisted of six members. The first instruments of its organization were Joseph Smith, jun., and Oliver Cowdery, who profess to have received their authority and priesthood, or apostleship, by direct revelation from God—by the voice of God—by the ministering of angels—and by the Holy Ghost.⁶⁰

37. Parley P. Pratt (January 1842)

Some of those who held the holy priesthood in ancient times, the priesthood which is after the power of an endless life, without beginning of days or end of years—some of those, I say, being raised from the dead, and others translated, still hold the apostleship and priesthood; and it has pleased God to send them as holy angels to earth to reintroduce the pure gospel, and to commission and ordain the first instruments of the Latter-day Saints.⁶¹



Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, by C.C.A. Christensen (1831–1912). Lithograph print, 18" x 14", 1887. Printed by F. E. Bording, Copenhagen, Denmark. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art. John the Baptist appears as a mature adult with a physical body. Note, for example, the drapery on John's right knee. The artist had this image printed in Copenhagen while he was on his fourth and final mission to his native Scandinavia. He sent fifteen hundred copies of this print back to his families in Utah so his wives could sell them and help support themselves while he was away.

38. Orson Pratt (June 26, 1836)

June 26th [1836]. Being the Sabbath preached in Antwerp village in the forenoon and also in the afternoon upon the faith once delivered to the saints, the falling away of the church, the losing of the authority of the priesthood, the restoration of the church by Ministering of an Angel, Rev. [1]4th chap. In the afternoon at 5 o'clock the members of the church with several others that were favorable met together. The sacrament was administered and also confirmation was administered to three.⁶²

39. Orson Pratt (1840)

Also, in the year 1829, Mr Smith and Mr Cowdery, having learned the correct mode of baptism, from the teachings of the Saviour to the ancient Nephites, as recorded in the "Book of Mormon," had a desire to be baptized; but knowing that no one had authority to administer that sacred ordinance in any denomination, they were at a loss to know how the authority was to be restored, and while calling upon the Lord with a desire to be informed on the subject, a holy angel appeared and stood before them, and laid his hands upon their heads, and ordained them, and commanded them to baptize each other, which they accordingly did. . . . In the foregoing, we have related the most important facts concerning the visions and the ministry of the angel to Mr Smith; the discovery of the records; their translation into the English language, and the witnesses raised up to bear testimony of the same. . . . We have also given an account of the restoration of the authority in these days, to administer in the ordinances of the gospel; and of the time of the organization of the church; and of the blessings poured out upon [t]he same [while yet] in its infancy.⁶³

40. Orson Pratt (September 30, 1848)

A revelation and restoration to the earth of the "*everlasting gospel*" through the angel Moroni would be of no benefit to the nations, unless some one should be ordained with authority to preach it and administer its ordinances. . . . But why not confer authority by ordination, as well as reveal the everlasting gospel [referring to Moroni]? Because in all probability he had not the right so to do. . . . How then did Mr. Smith obtain the office of an apostle, if Moroni had no authority to ordain him to such office? Mr. Smith testifies that Peter, James, and John came to him in the capacity of ministering angels, and by the laying on of hands ordained him an apostle, and commanded him to preach, baptize, lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and administer all other ordinances of the gospel as they themselves did in ancient days. . . . If Mr. Smith had pretended that

he received the apostleship by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, without an ordination under the hands of an apostle, we should at once know that his pretensions were vain, and that he was a deceiver. . . . Did John predict the restoration of the gospel by an angel? It is included in Mr. Smith's system. . . . Can any man show that the gospel will not be restored by an angel?⁶⁴

41. David W. Patten (July 1838)

[Referring to Rev. 14:6-7, previously mentioned in the text.] The authority connected with the ordinances, renders the time very desirable to the man of God, and renders him happy, amidst all his trials, and afflictions. To such an one, through the grace of God, we are indebted for this dispensation, as given by the angel of the Lord. . . . And they who sin against this authority given to him—(the before mentioned man of God,)—sins not against him only, but against Moroni, who holds the keys of the stick of Ephraim. And also with Elias, who holds the keys of bringing to pass the restitution of all things, or the restoration of all things. And also John, the son of Zacharias which Zacharias Elias visited, and give promise that he should have a son, and his name should be John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias, which John I have sent unto you, my servants Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you to this first priesthood, even as Aaron. . . . And also, Peter, and James and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you, and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry, and of the same things I revealed unto them; unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last time, and for the fulness of times.⁶⁵

42. Oliver Granger (September 10, 1839)

Br. [Oliver] Granger occupied the fore part of the day, and gave a very interesting account of his life; of the administration of angels, who testified of the work of God in the world; a vision of the Book of Mormon, the means by which he was brought into the church, and then bore testimony to the restoration of the Priesthood.⁶⁶

43. John Taylor (February 11, 1840)

11 [February 1840] Tuesday. . . . Mr Bradshaw said he could tell if [a] man had the Holy Ghost—yet could not tell how. We shewd him a Man might have the Gift of Wisdom, etc. and he not see it—told him he did not know what the H.[oly] G.[host] was. Mr. M[atthews] asked Bro. [John] Taylor where he got his Authority. Ans: By Prophecy

and laying on of hands of those who had Authority, etc. This came by the Ministration of an holy Angel. Bro. T.[aylor] then asked where he got his. Ans: from the Bishop of Lincoln, and that was as good as his Angel, “and you have no more Power than I have and if you have, let us see it. I say if you have any Power shew it, either from Heaven or Hell. I don’t fear you. I say if you have any Power from Heaven or Hell shew it.” We said we were sent not [to] shew Signs but to call on all to repent, Priests and People.⁶⁷

44. Erastus Snow (December 1840)

(Erastus Snow to Benjamin Winchester, Letter, December 1840, Philadelphia.) Little more than ten years has passed since the organization of the church of Christ in these last days; since the angel of the Lord said to our much esteemed brother J. Smith, and his faithful companion, O. Cowdery, “To you my fellow servants am I sent to confer this priesthood, that through you it may be conferred upon others.” The morning that heavenly messenger executed this important mission, is one long to be remembered by all the saints.⁶⁸

45. Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester (1841)

We also believe and testify, that the Lord has renewed the gospel dispensation and in fulfilment of numerous predictions of the prophets and apostles, sent his holy angel to commission men to preach the fulness of the everlasting gospel to all nations.⁶⁹

46. Benjamin Winchester (February 15, 1841)

God does not send his angels to act as priests on earth, but to bear his messages to men; also to make known his covenants to them. It is not said that this angel in person should preach the gospel to all nations [referring to the angel prophesied of in Rev. 14:6-7]; but that he should come with it, or have it to preach to all nations. It is the work of the servants of God, to preach the gospel to all nations. Indeed, in consequence of apostacy, the Lord has taken the priesthood, or authority from the church; therefore, this angel was to be sent to restore this authority, or commission men to preach the gospel to all nations.⁷⁰

47. Benjamin Winchester (April 1, 1841)

As soon as the Book of Mormon was translated, the Lord sent his holy angel with the holy priesthood, which was conferred upon men; thus fulfilling the saying of John: “I saw another angel fly in the

midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, &c." . . . the Book of Mormon has come forth on this land, and the Lord has sent his angel to confer the holy priesthood upon his servants once more, or renewed the gospel dispensation, and organized his kingdom, &c . . . the Lord has sent forth the Book of Mormon, also his angel to confer the holy priesthood and organized his church.⁷¹

48. Benjamin Winchester (1843)

Soon after this Book was discovered, the Lord sent His angel with the Holy priesthood, which was conferred upon Mr. Smith, and O. Cowdery who as a scribe assisted in the work of translation: they immediately baptized each other, and also others that believed the work.⁷²

49. Orson Hyde (June 15, 1841)

I began with the Priesthood, and showed that the saints were not under the necessity of tracing back the dark and bloody stream of papal superstition to find their authority, neither were they compelled to seek for it among the floating and transient notions of Protestant reformers; but God has sent his holy angel directly from heaven with this seal and authority, and conferred it upon men with his own hands: quoting the letter and testimony of O. Cowdery.⁷³

50. Orson Hyde (1842)

While calling upon the Lord with a desire to be informed on the subject, a holy angel appeared, stood before them, and laid his hands upon their heads and ordained them. Then he commanded these two men to baptize each other, which they did accordingly. [Hyde then gives Oliver Cowdery's 1834 *Messenger and Advocate* account of the Aaronic priesthood restoration.]⁷⁴

51. Heber C. Kimball and Wilford Woodruff (September 15, 1841)

[The Lord] sent a holy angel, who hath committed the everlasting Gospel, and restored the priesthood.⁷⁵

52. Charles Thompson (1841)

Immediately after it was translated God sent an holy angel from the midst of heaven, with the Priesthood and authority of Jesus Christ, to preach the everlasting Gospel unto them who dwell on the earth, and

to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, saying, with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water. And this Priesthood and authority has been conferred upon many men, (and will be conferred upon many more,) who have escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust.⁷⁶

53. George J. Adams (1841)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was first organized in the State of New York, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty, on the sixth day of April. At its first organization, it consisted of six members. The first instruments of its organization were Joseph Smith, Jun. and Oliver Cowdery, who received their authority and priesthood, or apostleship, by direct revelation from God—by the voice of God—by the ministering of angels—and by the Holy Ghost.⁷⁷

54. George J. Adams (1849)

[Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery] were at a loss to know how the authority was to be restored, and while calling upon the Lord with a desire to be informed upon the subject, a holy angel appeared—stood before them—laid his hands upon their heads—ordained them—and commanded them to baptize each other, which they accordingly did.⁷⁸

55. Ebenezer Robinson (January 1, 1842)

These preachers profess no authority from antiquity to administer gospel ordinances, but say that an angel has come down from the midst of heaven, and conferred on them the priesthood and authority to preach and administer the everlasting gospel unto them that dwell on the earth.⁷⁹

56. Alfred Cordon (April 18, 1842)

Monday 18th [April 1842] . . . as soon has [*sic*] I got home I discovered that Mr Brabazon Ellis, Incumbent of St Pauls Church Burslem, had sent desiring to hold a little conversation with one or more of the Latter Day Saints, immediately I went Elder Wm Lloyd accompanied me we found another Minister with him, and after the usual compliments he said let us pray we kneeled down and he prayed that the Lord would enlighten both our hearts that we might be blessd with wisdom and Intelligence, and I felt in my heart to say—Amen—After Prayer He asked me who Ordained me in the Church

of Latter Day Saints I told him Wm Clayton, I then said and Sir, Who ordained you He answered The Bishop, He then asked me who Ordained Wm Clayton I answered Heber C. Kimball, I then asked him who Ordained the Bishop; He answered; Another Bishop; He then asked me who Ordained Heber C. Kimball; I answered, Joseph Smith and said I; Joseph Smith was Ordained by Holy Angels that were sent by commandment from the Most High God.⁸⁰

57. Warren Foote (August 29, 1842)

29th [August 1842] We returned home, satisfied with sectarian nonsense, and feeling thankful to the Lord for the revelation of His gospel through His servant Joseph Smith, on whom he bestowed his Holy Priesthood through the laying on of hands of the ancient Apostles' Peter James and John thereby opening up the way whereby mankind can be saved and exalted in His Celestial Kingdom, through repentance and baptism and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, by those ordained into this Holy Priesthood.⁸¹

58. Moses Martin (1842)

I, now, as a living witness of God, feel it my indispensable duty, to declare to all men, who may chance to peruse this little work, that the Angel of God has committed the everlasting gospel, with the Holy Priesthood, unto man, in fulfilment of John's prediction: that God has now a church on earth, organized after the apostolic order, with all the gifts and graces which belong to it.⁸²

59. James Henry Flanigan (April 14, 1844)

Sunday 14 [April 1844] Mr Fishers ___ 21, & 22 verses of 28 cptr of Isa _____ Book of Mormon, Gathering of Israel, 2nd coming of Christ, restoration of _____, Resurrection of _____, Milenium, & the manner & means ___ will make use of bringing _____ about, for _____ by giving _____, sending his Angel with _____ Priesthood, ___ up a Prophet, sending Fishers & hunters to gather sons of Irael & build up Zion &c &c.⁸³

60. Lorenzo Snow (1844)

I now bear testimony, having the highest assurance, by revelation from God, that this prophecy [Rev. 14:6] has already been fulfilled, that an *Angel from God* has visited man in these last days, and restored that which has long been lost, even the priesthood,—the keys of the kingdom,—the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.⁸⁴

61. William I. Appleby (1844)

In the year 1830, after the Book was translated and published, the Angel of God according to promise conferred the Holy priesthood upon Mr. Smith, and gave unto him commandments to Baptize with water in the name of Jesus, and build up the Church of Christ; which accordingly was organized April 6th, A.D. 1830, with six members.⁸⁵

62. William I. Appleby (December 30, 1848)

He [Oliver Cowdery] was one of the first Apostles in this Church, and baptised Br. Joseph the Prophet at first, and then Br. Joseph administered to him the same ordinance, after they had both received the Holy Priesthood from under the hands of the angel of God!⁸⁶

63. Jedediah M. Grant (1844)

After he had obtained and translated the ancient American Records, (commonly called the Book of Mormon,) and had received authority from the Legates of Heaven, delegated and sent unto him by the Lord to ordain him to the Holy Priesthood, giving him the right to ordain others, that the Gospel might be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.⁸⁷

64. Quorum of the Twelve (April 6, 1845)

The great Elohim, Jehovah, had been pleased once more to speak from the heavens, and also to commune with man upon the earth, by means of open visions, and by the ministration of HOLY MESSENGERS.

By this means the great and eternal High Priesthood, after the order of his Son (even the Apostleship) has been restored or returned to the earth.

This High Priesthood or Apostleship, holds the keys of the kingdom of God, with power to bind on earth that which shall be bound in heaven, and to loose on earth that which shall be loosed in heaven; and, in fine, to do and to administer in all things pertaining to the ordinances, organization, government, and direction of the kingdom of God.⁸⁸

65. Reuben Miller (September 1846)

Who was Joseph Smith? A man appointed of God to lay the foundation of this, "The Dispensation of the fullness of Times." He was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist, and received the keys of the kingdom and the keys of "the Dispensation of the

fulness of Times” from Peter, James and John: and the restoring power of the Melchisedek Priesthood from Elias, and the sealing and binding powers of the same from Elijah.⁸⁹

66. Reuben Miller (1847)

[Miller briefly retells Joseph Smith’s account of the Aaronic priesthood restoration as given in the *Times and Seasons*, then] . . . Now when I speak of the Melchisedek priesthood, I wish so to be understood. And when I speak of the Aaronic, I do not wish the reader to understand that I hold its jurisdiction or authority as being over that of the greater, or Melchisedek. They are two priesthoods and when restored to earth through Joseph, by different angels, and at different times. . . . He [Joseph Smith] received from John the baptist, according to promise, the priesthood after the order of Aaron, on the 15th day of May, 1829, in the manner and form as I have already shown. And a short time after, the Melchisedek priesthood from Peter, James, and John, the ancient Apostles.⁹⁰

67. William E. McLellin (March and April 1847)

[The Church] very soon increased in numbers, and branches of it were organized and established in various places, by the labors, and through the instrumentality of its first Ministers, who had received their authority direct from Heaven—from the great Head of the Church—even Christ the Lord; as did men in days of old—by the ministrations of holy Angels, and by the direct commandments of God from heaven. . . . Joseph was first called by an holy angel, Strang was first called by Joseph—not a like here Again, when the holy angel visited and ordained Joseph, Oliver was with him, that it might be as the Lord had said: “In the mouth of TWO or three witnesses shall every word be established.” 2 Cor. 13:1. Who was with Strang, when he was ordained? No person. Not alike here. “And also with Peter and James and John, whom I have sent unto you [Joseph and Oliver,] by whom I have ordained you, and confirmed you to be Apostles, and especial witnesses of my name.”⁹¹

68. William E. McLellin (March 1848)

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: and that on the 6th day of April, 1830, the day on which the *church* was organized, they by a revelation from *Jesus Christ* by the unanimous consent and vote of those whom they had baptised, and by the laying on of hands Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith were ordained to the

office of Elder, in the *high* priesthood: And that on the same day JOSEPH SMITH was ordained under the hands of O. Cowdery, to the offices in the Melchisedek priesthood.⁹²

69. Brigham Young (August 15, 1847)

When Brother Joseph received the Priesthood He did not receive all at once, but He was A prophet Seer & Revelator before He received the fulness of the Priesthood & keys of the kingdom.

He first received the Aronick Priesthood and Keys from under the hands of John the Baptist. He then had not power to lay on hands to confirm the Church but afterwards He received the Patriarchal or Melchisedick Priesthood from under the Hands of Peter James & John who were of the Twelve Apostles & were the Presidency when the other Apostles were Absent. From those Apostles Joseph Smith received every key power, Blessing, & Privilege of the Highest Authority of the Melchizedick Priesthood ever committed to man on the earth which they held.⁹³

70. Hiram Page (March 4, 1848)

In the beginning we find the first ordinations were by Peter James and John they ordained Joseph and Oliver; to what priesthood were they ordained; the answer must be to the Holy priesthood on the office of an elder or an apostle which is an additional grace added to the office of an elder these offices Oliver received from those holy messengers before the 6th of april 1830.⁹⁴

Brian Q. Cannon is Assistant Professor of History at Brigham Young University and Historical Documents Editor of *BYU Studies*; John W. Welch, Professor of Law and Editor-in-Chief of *BYU Studies*, and several editorial interns at *BYU Studies*, particularly Trevor Packer, assisted in preparing the introduction and these materials for publication. *BYU Studies* expresses appreciation to members of the staff at the Archives Division of the LDS Church Historical Department for their valuable assistance in locating and verifying these priesthood restoration documents.

NOTES

¹*Messenger and Advocate* (October 1835): 199. Further words given by Moroni at that time, now found in Doctrine and Covenants 2, were provided by Joseph Smith in 1838: "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah" (D&C 2:1).

²As Gregory Prince has observed, the earliest occurrences of the word *priesthood* in written Mormon sources outside the Book of Mormon begin in 1831 (27). Moreover, although priesthood authority had been restored prior to that time, the terms *Aaronic Priesthood* and *Melchizedek Priesthood* “were not adopted until 1835” (14). Gregory A. Prince, *Having Authority: The Origins and Development of Priesthood during the Ministry of Joseph Smith* (Independence, Mo.: Independence Press, 1993). William E. McLellin’s journal entry for October 25, 1831, speaks of “the High-Priesthood” and “the lesser Priest-Hood.” Jan Shippy and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1994), 45, 283.

³Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:43 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

⁴While remaining true to his testimony as a witness to the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer rejected any aspect of the Restoration that recognized or promoted central Church authority. In 1885, Whitmer stated:

I moved Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to my fathers house in Fayette Seneca County New York, from Harmony, Penn. in the year 1829, on our way I conversed freely with them upon this great work they were bringing about, and Oliver stated to me in Josephs presence that they had baptized each other seeking by that to fulfill the command—And after our arrival at fathers sometime in June 1829, Joseph ordained Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder, and Oliver ordained Joseph to be an Elder in the church of Christ and during that year Joseph both baptized and ordained me an elder in the church of Christ. . . . I never heard that an Angel had ordained Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic priesthood until the year 1834 5. or 6—in Ohio.

Notwithstanding numerous attestations to the contrary by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer in 1885 maintained, “I do not believe that John the Baptist ever ordained Joseph and Oliver as stated and believed by some.” Zenas H. Gurley, Interview, January 14, 1885, Gurley Collection, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives), quoted in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 154–55. Earlier, Whitmer had been very impressed, however, by Oliver Cowdery’s testimony regarding the visitation of Peter, James, and John; see note 10 below.

In 1878, William E. McLellin wrote:

In 1831 I heard Joseph tell his experience about angel visits many times, and about finding the plates, and their contents coming to light. . . . But I never heard one word of John the baptist, or of Peter, James, and John’s visit and ordination till I was told some year or ~~two~~ afterward [that is in 1832] in Ohio.

William E. McLellin statement, 10, numbered item 28, quoted in D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994), 19.

⁵Part of a revelation dated August and September 1830 (D&C 27) and published for the first time in 1835 stated that Elias had informed the father of John the Baptist that John would “be filled with the spirit of Elias” (D&C 27:7).

⁶David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Richmond, Mo.: By the author, 1887), 32.

⁷Kirtland High Council Minutes, February 17, 1834, LDS Church Archives.

⁸These verses did not appear in the earlier text of the revelation printed in the *Book of Commandments*, 1833. Joseph Smith recalled in 1839 that all of section 27 was received as a revelation in August 1830 but that most of the revelation, including these words, was not recorded until September 1830. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–), 1:320–21 (hereafter cited as *PJS*).

⁹This passage mentions “the voice of Peter, James, and John” but does not discuss a physical ordination. The reason is that this is part of a response to the preceding question, “What do we *bear*?” (italic added).

¹⁰David H. Cannon reported an 1861 visit with David Whitmer during which Whitmer allegedly recalled yet another testimony given by Cowdery regarding the appearance of Peter, James, and John:

The thing which impressed me most of all was, as we stood beside the grave of Oliver Cowdery the other Witness, who had come back into the Church before his death, and in describing Oliver's action, when bearing his testimony, said to the people in his room, placing his hands like this upon his head, 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,” 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.

David H. Cannon, *Autobiography*, March 13, 1917, 5, photocopy of holograph in possession of Richard L. Anderson, quoted in Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Priesthood,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 9, no. 3 (May 3, 1995): 10.

¹¹Addison Everett wrote:

A few days Before Br Joseph & Hiram ware calld to Carthage By Gov. Ford I wus Passing the Mansheon House I observed Bro Joseph & Hiram & some five or six Brethren in earnest conversation Before the Door of the House. I opened the gate and staped in. . . . Br Joseph Ex[p]resed Greate simpathy for Br Oliver saying Poor Boy[,] Poor Boy[,] casting his eyes to the ground. And then Said as they Ware Tran[s]lating the Book of Mormon at His Father In Laws in Susquhanah County Penny. T[h]ey ware thretned By a Mob and in the same time Father Kn<i>ghts came Down from Cole[s]vill[e] Broom[e] County New York and Desired them to go home with him and preach to them in his Neighbourhood And on Account of the Mob Spirit prevailing they concluded to goe. And they ware teachi[n]g And preaching the Gospele they ware taken with <a>

writ and Before a Judge as fals[e] Prophets. And the Prosscuting Atorny had conceived in his own Mind That A few simple qu[e]stions would Convince the Court By the Answers Bro Joseph would giv[e] <to> that <the> charge was Correct. So he calls out Jo which was the first Merical Jesus raught[?] Why <said Br Joseph> we read He Created the worlds And what He done previous to that I have not as yet Learned. This answer completly confounded the Prosscuting Atorny that he requested the Judge to Dismis the case. and went out To Organ<ize> the Mob that was on the Out Side. At about this time a Lawyer By the Name of Reede I think was his name came in to the court and Stated He was Mr Smiths Atorney and wished to see him <in> a Private room And was <put> in to <a> Back room and when in he hoisted a window and told Br Joseph & Oliver to flee in to the forest which was close at hand. And they wandered in a dense Forest all Night and often times in Mud and water up to thare Knees. And Brother Oliver got quite exausted in the After Part of the Night and Brother Joseph had to put his arm arround him and allmost carry him. And Just as the day Broke in the East Brother Oliver gave out Entirely and he[,] Br Joseph[,] leaned him against an Oake tree Just out side a field fenc[e] Br Oliver Crying out how long O Lord O how Long Br Joseph hav[e] we got to suffer these things[?] Just this moment Peter James & John came to us and Ordained ~~to~~<us to> the Holy Apostelship and gave <unto> us the Keys of the Disp<e>nsation of the fullness of times. And we had some 16 or 17 miles to goe to reach our place of residence and Brother Oliver could travel as well as I could <after the Endowment>. Now as to time and Place. I heard the Name of the Banks of the Susquehanah river spoken <of> But whare it was pla[c]ed I cannot till. No doubt the Oake tree and the field fence was ajacent to the river. As to time I cannot Be Very Explsit. But as the Mob spirit had not abated when they returned they had to remove to Father Whitmores <at Fayet[te] Seneca Co> to finish the Translation. I should <jud[g]e> it to <Be> the Latter part of August.

Now Beloved Brother I am Not Writing as wone of the Lords Historians But as your friend reproduc<i>ng the last words I heard our Beloved and Gods Holy Prophet Speake before his depart[ure] Into the Eternal Heavens to Dwell with the Holy & Eternal gods forever & Ever!

Addison Everett to Joseph F. Smith, January 16, 1882, Joseph F. Smith Collection, Personal Papers, LDS Church Archives; underlining in the original, quoted in Porter, "Restoration," 8. Angle brackets <> designate material inserted by Everett above the line. See also Addison Everett to Oliver B. Huntington, February 17, 1881, recorded in "Oliver Boardman Huntington Journal no. 14," under backdate of January 31, 1881; and "Oliver Boardman Huntington Journal no. 15," entry for February 18, 1883, Archives and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as BYU Archives), quoted in Porter, "Restoration," 7. The 1881 entry reads as follows:

Joseph went on to state that “at Coalville he & Oliver were under arrest on charge of Deceiving the people & in court he stated that the first miracle done was to create this earth. About that time his attorney told the court that he wanted to see Mr. Smith alone a few moments. When alone Mr. Reid said that there was a mob in front of the house, & ho[i]sting the window, Joseph & Oliver went to the woods in a few rods, it being night, and they traveled until Oliver was exhausted & Joseph almost carried him through mud and water. They traveled all night and just at the break of day Olive[r] gave out entirely and exclaimed “O! Lord! How long Brother Joseph have we got to endure this thing,”

Brother Joseph said that at that very time Peter, James, & John came to them and ordained them to the Apostleship.

They had 16 or 17 miles to travel to get back to Mr. Hales his father in law and Oliver did not complain anymore of fatigue.”

Compare these comments with the early history of Joseph Smith by Joseph Knight, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History,” ed. Dean Jessee, *BYU Studies* 17 (autumn 1976): 37–38.

¹²The first ordinations to the office of elder occurred in 1829. On April 6, 1830, Joseph and Oliver reordained one another as First and Second Elder and then “laid our hands on each individual member of the Church present, that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the Church of Christ.” *History of the Church*, 1:78. Both Joseph and Oliver were elders prior to this time. See Porter, “Restoration,” 3.

¹³*History of the Church*, 1:77–78.

¹⁴On April 6, 1853, President Young said, “I know that Joseph received his Apostleship from Peter, James, and John, before a revelation on the subject was printed, and he never had a right to organize a Church before he was an Apostle.” Brigham Young and others, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 1:137 (hereafter cited as *JD*). On June 23, 1874, Brigham Young indicated:

[Joseph Smith] received the Aaronic Priesthood, and then he received the keys of the Melchisedek Priesthood, and organized the Church. He first received the power to baptise, and still did not know that he was to receive any more until the Lord told him there was more for him. Then he received the keys of the Melchisedek Priesthood, and had power to confirm after he had baptized, which he had not before. He would have stood precisely as John the Baptist stood, had not the Lord sent his other messengers, Peter, James and John, to ordain Joseph to the Melchisedek Priesthood. (*JD*, 18:240)

In 1861, in a discourse on the priesthood, President Young said:

How came these Apostles, these Seventies, these High Priests, and all this organization we now enjoy? It came by revelation. Father Cahoon, who lately died in your neighbourhood, was one of the first men ordained to the office of High Priest in this kingdom. In the year 1831 the Prophet Joseph went to Ohio. He left the State of New York on the last of April, if my memory serves me, and arrived in Kirtland

sometime in May. They held a General Conference, which was the first General Conference ever called or held in Ohio. Joseph then received a revelation, and ordained High Priests. You read in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants how he received the Priesthood in the first place. It is there stated how Joseph received the Aaronic Priesthood. John the Baptist came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When a person passes behind the veil, he can only officiate in the spirit-world; but when he is resurrected he officiates as a resurrected being, and not as a mortal being. You read in the revelation that Joseph was ordained, as it is written. When he received the Melchizedek Priesthood, he had another revelation. Peter, James, and John came to him. You can read the revelation at your leisure. When he received this revelation in Kirtland, the Lord revealed to him that he should begin and ordain High Priests; and he then ordained quite a number, all whose names I do not now recollect; but Lyman Wight was one; Fathers Cahoon and Morley, John Murdock, Sidney Rigdon, and others were also then ordained. These were the first that were ordained to this office in the Church. I relate this to show you how Joseph proceeded step by step in organizing the Church. At that time there were no Seventies nor Twelve Apostles. (*JD*, 9:88-89)

Readers may judge for themselves if the Kirtland revelation referred to here was the visit of Peter, James, and John or the revelation instructing Joseph Smith to begin ordaining High Priests. Likewise, when Brigham Young said that Joseph Smith “was taken in the spirit to the 3d heavens & all this with the aronic priesthood” (Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 26) before he was ordained an apostle, Brigham need not have been referring to the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory received by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in February, 1832, as Quinn argues. It was common for people to use the phrase “third heaven” from 2 Corinthians 12:2 in connection with Paul’s gift of vision in general, as in *History of the Church*, 5:30, but this phrase is ambiguous.

¹⁵Porter, “Restoration,” 3, 6-7.

¹⁶Porter, “Restoration,” 3.

¹⁷Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 336, quoted in Porter, “Restoration,” 3.

¹⁸Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 22.

¹⁹Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 10.

²⁰Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 10; “Apostle,” in LDS Bible Dictionary.

²¹Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 10, 27-30. Quinn argues that Joseph and Oliver could have felt justified in ordaining elders using the authority that they received from John the Baptist because they did not at that time associate the office of elder exclusively with the Melchizedek Priesthood. In support of this position, Quinn indicates that Joseph Smith conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon several who had previously been ordained elders in June 1831. At the October 1831 conference in Kirtland, “the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood was manifested and conferred for the first time upon several of the Elders.” *History of the Church*, 1:175-76. A September 1832 revelation specified that “elder and bishop are necessary appendages belonging unto the high priesthood” (D&C 84:29).

²²Quinn dates this event only by indirect association with two other events. Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 23.

²³Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 25. Quinn also cites a discourse by Erastus Snow in 1882:

In due course of time, as we read in the history which he has left, Peter, James and John appeared to him—it was at a period when they were being pursued by their enemies and they had to travel all night, and in the dawn of the coming day when they were weary and worn who should appear to them but Peter, James and John, for the purpose of conferring upon them the Apostleship, the keys of which they themselves had held while upon the earth, which had been bestowed upon them by the Savior. This Priesthood conferred upon them by those three messengers embraces within it all offices of the Priesthood from the highest to the lowest. (*JD*, 23:183)

²⁴Porter, “Restoration,” 8–9.

²⁵Oliver Cowdery’s 1829 manuscript, “A Commandment from God” (or “Articles of the Church of Christ”), LDS Church Archives, quoted in Robert J. Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 1:288. This document ends with the declaration: “Behold I am Oliver I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father & the Lord Jesus Christ.”

All manuscript sources, unless otherwise attributed, are found in the Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (LDS Church Archives), and are used with permission.

²⁶“The Mormon Creed,” *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, April 19, 1831, 4. The same text with minor changes was also published in the *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (June 1832): 1; and *Book of Commandments* (1833), ch. 24, pp. 47–48. For a listing of early printings of this text, see Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 1:296–97. In addition to changes in punctuation, the Book of Commandments and the *Evening and Morning Star* versions contain the following differences from the *Telegraph* printing: Both later renditions spell out the dates instead of using numbers and write “sixth day of the month” instead of “sixth day of the same.” In these versions, the last names “Smith” and “Cowdery” are omitted, and the repeated phrase is “elder of this church” instead of “elder of the church.” They do not contain the words “God the Father,” but read “Lord and Savior” instead of just “Lord.” They close with the word “forever” as opposed to the “ever” of the earlier version. Furthermore, the Book of Commandments rendition opens with a lowercase “church of Christ,” and the *Evening and Morning Star* capitalizes “Elder,” “Apostle,” and “Amen.”

²⁷Book of Commandments (1833), ch. 15, p. 35.

²⁸*Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, comp. Joseph Smith and others (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams, 1835), 180; see also *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1833, 78; May 1836, 155; *Times and Seasons* 4 (March 1, 1843): 122; *Millennial Star* 4 (February 1844): 151. These verses did not appear in the earlier text of the revelation printed in the Book of Commandments, 1833. Joseph Smith recalled in 1839 that all of Section 27 was received as

a revelation in August of 1830 but that most of the revelation, including these verses, was not recorded until September of 1830.

Early in the month of August Newel Knight and his wife paid us a visit at my place in Harmony; Neither his wife nor mine had been as yet confirmed, it was proposed that we should confirm them, and partake together of the sacrament, before he and his wife should leave us—In order to prepare for this I set out to procure some wine for the occasion, but had gone only a short distance when I was met by a heavenly messenger, and received the following revelation, the first paragraph of which was written at this time, and the remainder in the September following. (*PJS*, 1:320-21)

No manuscript copy of these verses dating from before the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835 has been identified. See Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,” 1:395-97.

²⁹Joseph Smith, History (dated by Dean C. Jessee between July 20 and November 27, 1832), in *PJS*, 1:3.

³⁰Reverend Richmond Taggart to Reverend Jonathon Goings, Cleveland, Ohio, March 2, 1833. In Jonathon Goings Collection, American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, New York.

³¹Patriarchal Blessings, Book 1 (1835), 12. The end of this blessing contains this information about its origin: “Oliver Cowdery, Clerk and Recorder. Given December 18th, 1833, and recorded in this book October 2, 1835.” This particular blessing was evidently given for Oliver Cowdery, but the name specifying the recipient has been omitted. This passage comes from the last sixth of the blessing.

³²Kirtland High Council Minutes, February 12, 1834, 27. Compare the further report by Orson Hyde of the following testimony by Joseph Smith:

Brother Joseph observed to Bishop that he knew he had lied before he confessed it; that his declarations were not only false in themselves, but they involved a false principle. An angel, said Joseph, may administer the word of the Lord unto men, and bring intelligence to them from heaven upon various subjects; but no true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; and the priesthood being once established on earth, with power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more. He referred to the angel that came to Cornelius and told Cornelius to send for Peter; but if there had been no Peter with keys and power to administer, the angel might have done it himself; but as there was, the angel would not interfere. Saul was directed to go to Ananias for instruction and to be administered to by him; but if there had been no Ananias with power and authority on the earth to administer in the name of Christ, the Lord might have done it himself. You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church.

This testimony was delivered in an upper room, in the southwest corner of the White Store and dwelling-house, formerly occupied by Whitney and Gilbert, situate on Kirtland Flats. (*Millennial Star* 8 [November 20, 1846]: 139)

³³Kirtland High Council Minutes, April 21, 1834, 43–44.

³⁴Joseph Smith, History, 1834–1836, in *PJS*, 1:21.

³⁵Stephen Post, Journal, Stephen Post Papers, March 27, 1836, microfilm.

³⁶Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in *PJS*, 1:290–91, also published with minor changes in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in *Times and Seasons* 3 (August 1, 1842): 865–66.

³⁷Joseph Smith, History [1839 Draft], in *PJS*, 1:238–39.

³⁸Joseph Smith, History, 1839, in *PJS*, 1:299–300, reprinted with only slight changes in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in *Times and Seasons* 3 (September 15, 1842): 915.

³⁹Joseph Smith, Sermon (ca. 1839), Willard Richards Pocket Companion, in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 9; also, James Burgess apparently had access to and copied this passage into his own journal around 1841; James Burgess Journals, 1841–1848. See also *History of the Church*, 3:387. On March 22, 1839, Joseph Smith had affirmed in a letter from Liberty Jail to Isaac Galland the following related general principle: “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 by being ordained by some one whom God hath sent by revelation.” Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 421.

⁴⁰Joseph Smith to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, September 6, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois, in *Times and Seasons* 3 (October 1, 1842): 935–36; Doctrine and Covenants 128:20–21.

⁴¹Joseph Smith, Sermon, March 10, 1844, recorded by James Burgess in his notebook, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 332–33. For an 1870 recollection of these words of Joseph Smith, see “Biography of David Osborne, Senior,” typescript, BYU Archives, 63–64:

He spoke of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Moses, The patriarchs and some of the Prophets, telling what keys each one held, and the work he accomplished in his day, down to Jesus and the apostles. Now, says he, having told you so much about these ancient men of God, I will proceed to tell you something of myself. . . . He told us that Peter, James, and John, having held the Keys of the Kingdom in their day had come and conferred the same upon him and his brethren.

⁴²Joseph Smith, Sermon, March 10, 1844, in Franklin D. Richards, “Scriptural Items,” in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 334.

⁴³Joseph Smith Sermon, March 10, 1844, recorded by Wilford Woodruff in his journal, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 327.

⁴⁴“The Golden Bible,” *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, November 16, 1830, 3.

⁴⁵*Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, December 7, 1830.

⁴⁶Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, Norton, Ohio, in *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 14–16.

⁴⁷Kirtland High Council Minutes, February 21, 1835. The occasion was the blessing of several new members of the Twelve Apostles. Following their blessings, Oliver Cowdery gave them this charge.

⁴⁸Patriarchal Blessings, Book 1 (1835): 8–9. The end of this blessing contains this information about its origin: “Oliver Cowdery, Clerk and Recorder. Given in Kirtland, December 18, 1833, and recorded September 1835.”

⁴⁹*Messenger and Advocate*, October 1835, 199.

⁵⁰Oliver Cowdery, “The Atlas Article,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (April 1836): 303.

⁵¹Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, March 23, 1846, Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio. Quoted in Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), 161.

⁵²Reuben Miller Journal, October 21, 1848, 14. Report of “Conference held on Misqueto Creek Council Bluffs October 21st [“21st” may have been added later as it was written in a different color ink] 1848.”

⁵³George A. Smith to Orson Pratt, October 20 and 31, 1848, Carbonca, Council Bluffs, Iowa, photocopy of typescript; reprinted, with a few minor differences, in Manuscript History of Brigham Young, October 31, 1848, 77–78.

⁵⁴Oliver Cowdery to Elder Samuel W. Richards, January 13, 1849, in *Deseret Evening News* 17 (March 22, 1884): 2. The location of the original letter is unknown, but scholars find little reason to doubt the authenticity of this piece and its 1849 date.

⁵⁵*Painesville Telegraph*, December 7, 1830.

⁵⁶*The Reflector* (Palmyra, [N. Y.]), February 14, 1831, 102.

⁵⁷William W. Phelps, “Letter No. 4,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (February 1835): 66.

⁵⁸Emma Smith, *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for The Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: F. G. Williams, 1835), 33; also published in *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, selected and published by David W. Rogers (New York: C. Vinten, 1838), 12; and in Benjamin C. Elsworth, *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of Christ of the Latter Day Saints* (N.p.: Benjamin C. Elsworth, 1839), 13. See also LDS Hymnal (1835), Hymn 72: The keys which Peter did receive, / To rear a kingdom God to please. / Have once more been confer’d to man, / To bring about Jehovah’s plan; and LDS Hymnal (1835), Hymn 76: Such blessings to the human race, / Once more are tender’d by God’s grace; / The Priesthood is again restor’d, / For this let God be long ador’d. See further *A Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Use of All Saints*, selected by a Committee in a Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Austin: New Era Office, 1847), 77, Hymn 55: The chosen of God and the friend of men, / He [Joseph Smith] brought the priesthood back again.

⁵⁹Parley P. Pratt, *The Millennium, a Poem* (Boston: Parley P. Pratt, 1835), 38; also published without the title and with several minor punctuation changes in Rogers, *Collection of Sacred Hymns*, 104, and in Elsworth, *Collection of Sacred Hymns*, 105–6.

⁶⁰Parley P. Pratt, *Late Persecution of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1840), iii.

⁶¹Parley P. Pratt, "Dialogue between a Latter-day Saint and an Enquirer after Truth," *Millennial Star* 2 (January 1842): 131; also published as a pamphlet by the author in Manchester, England (1842).

⁶²Elden Jay Watson, comp., *The Orson Pratt Journals* (Salt Lake City: Watson, 1975), 84–85.

⁶³Orson Pratt, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840), 23–24.

⁶⁴Orson Pratt, *Divine Authority; or, The Question Was Joseph Sent of God?* (Liverpool: R. James, September 30, 1848, 1851), 4–5, 7; an almost exact duplicate of this is in *The Frontier Guardian* 1 (February 7, 1849): 1.

⁶⁵David W. Patten, "To the Saints Scattered Abroad," *Elders' Journal of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* 1 (July 1838): 41–42. This passage includes a quotation from what was at that time section L in the Doctrine and Covenants.

⁶⁶John P. Green[e] to D. C. Smith and E. Robinson, September 10, 1839, Monmouth County, N. J., in *Times and Seasons* 1 (December 1839): 28.

⁶⁷Joseph Fielding Diary, typescript, BYU Archives, 55.

⁶⁸*The Gospel Reflector* 1 (January 1, 1841): 22.

⁶⁹Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester, *An Address to the Citizens of Salem and Vicinity*, photocopy of original, BYU Archives (N.p., [1841]), 5.

⁷⁰*The Gospel Reflector* 1 (February 15, 1841): 89.

⁷¹*The Gospel Reflector* 1 (April 1, 1841): 177, 183, 187.

⁷²Benjamin Winchester, *A History of the Priesthood from the Beginning of the World to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking, and Guilbert, 1843), 147.

⁷³Orson Hyde to President [Joseph] Smith, *Times and Seasons* 2 (October 1, 1841): 551.

⁷⁴Orson Hyde, *Ein Ruf aus der Wüste, eine Stimme aus dem Schoose der Erde* (A Cry from the Wilderness, a Voice from the Dust of the Earth) (Frankfurt: O. Hyde, 1842), typescript, 27; translated from the German by Justus Ernst.

⁷⁵Heber C. Kimball and Wilford Woodruff, "The Word of the Lord to the Citizens of London of Every Sect and Denomination: And to Every Individual into Whose Hands It May Fall," *Times and Seasons* 2 (September 15, 1841): 538.

⁷⁶Charles Thompson, *Evidence in Proof of the Book of Mormon Being a Divinely Inspired Record* (Batavia, N.Y.: D. D. Waite, 1841), 144–45. Similarly, Benjamin Winchester held that Revelation 14:7 "relates to the renewal of the gospel covenant, the restoration of the priesthood." *The Gospel Reflector* 1 (February 15, 1841): 86.

⁷⁷George J. Adams, *A Few Plain Facts, Shewing the Folly, Wickedness, and Imposition of the Rev. Timothy R. Matthews; also a Short Sketch of the Rise, Faith, and Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Bedford, England: C. B. Merry, 1841), 12. Reprinted in *Times and Seasons* 4 (March 15, 1843): 141.

⁷⁸George J. Adams, *A True History of the Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—of the Restoration of the Holy Priesthood, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Baltimore: Hoffman, [1849]), 27.

⁷⁹Ebenezer Robinson, ed., "Evidences in the Proof of the Book of Mormon," *Times and Seasons* 3 (January 1, 1842): 644.

⁸⁰Alfred Cordon, *Reminiscences and Journals*, April 18, 1842, microfilm, 77-79.

⁸¹Warren Foote, *Autobiography and Journals*, August 29, 1842, typescript, BYU Archives, 53. Because this diary appears to be a combination of reminiscences and other texts copied from a journal that was kept earlier, it is difficult to ascertain whether this is a reflection or a contemporary observation.

⁸²Moses Martin, *A Treatise on the Fulness of the Everlasting Gospel* (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1842), 54-55.

⁸³James Henry Flanigan *Diaries*, April 14, 1844, 105. Much of this section is in a form of shorthand and undecipherable to this writer. Blank lines have been inserted in those areas that cannot be read.

⁸⁴Lorenzo Snow, *The Only Way to Be Saved* (London: F. Shephard, 1844), 11-12.

⁸⁵William I. Appleby, *A Dissertation on Nebuchadnezzar's Dream . . . Together with a Synopsis of the Origin and Faith of the Church of "Latter-day Saints"* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking, and Guilbert, 1844), 23.

⁸⁶William I. Appleby, *Biography and Journal*, December 30, 1848, microfilm, 247.

⁸⁷Jedediah M. Grant, *Collection of Facts Relative to the Course Taken by Elder Sidney Rigdon* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking, and Guilbert, 1844), 1.

⁸⁸*Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To all the Kings of the World, to the President of the United States of America; to the Governors of the Several States, and to the Rulers and People of all Nations* (Liverpool: Wilford Woodruff, dated April 6, 1845), 1-2 (written by Parley P. Pratt from New York).

⁸⁹Reuben Miller, *James J. Strang, Weighed in the Balance of Truth, and Found Wanting. His Claims as First President of the Melchisedek Priesthood Refuted* (Burlington, Wis.: n.p., September 1846), 12-13.

⁹⁰Reuben Miller, *Truth Shall Prevail: A Short Reply to an Article Published in the Voree Herald (Reveille), by J. C. Bennett and the Willful Falsehoods of J. J. Strang* (Burlington, Wis.: n.p., 1847), 7, 9.

⁹¹*The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* 1 (March and April 1847): 2, 31.

⁹²*The Ensign of Liberty of the Church of Christ* 1 (March 1848): 67.

⁹³Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 3:257.

⁹⁴Hiram Page to William, Letter, March 4, 1848, Fishing River, photocopy of original, Archives, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Mo.