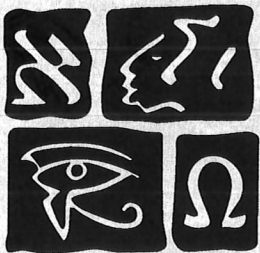




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Richard Lloyd Anderson

# Oliver Cowdery's Voice in Modern Scripture

Priesthood Restoration, Book of  
Mormon, and the Articles of Faith

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## Summary

Oliver Cowdery's records border on scripture. His supplementary testimonies are of the same eyewitness quality as the Joseph Smith references that have entered the standard works. Much of Cowdery's thinking and writing was modified and polished to a scriptural level by Joseph Smith.

## Transcript

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**Oliver Cowdery's Voice in Modern Scripture:  
Priesthood Restoration, Book of Mormon, and Articles of Faith**

Richard Lloyd Anderson

Oliver Cowdery laid siege to the traditional Protestant doctrine of the sole sufficiency of the Bible. A typical salvo precedes his detailed account of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood: "For the question might be asked, have men authority to administer in the name of Christ, who deny revelations? . . . And his religion [is] based, built, and sustained by immediate revelations in all ages of the world, when he has had a people on earth?"<sup>1</sup> Here and elsewhere Oliver's point is that the restored church was created by direct contact with God and his heavenly messengers. Oliver was the first to publish details about John the Baptist's appearing to him and Joseph Smith during the Book of Mormon translation. Oliver was also the first to publish particulars of the angel Moroni's instructions to Joseph Smith. These accounts of the coming of John and the last Nephite prophet were given in the official church newspaper, the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, in eight installments, mostly at monthly intervals during Oliver's term as first editor of that publication. At the outset he stated his goal of "a full history of the rise of the Church of the Latter Day Saints" and indicated "that our brother J. SMITH has offered to assist us."<sup>2</sup> This series stopped after covering only two main topics—the Aaronic Priesthood restoration and Moroni's first appearances to Joseph—yet Oliver blended much priceless information with his flights of commentary that characterized literary elegance then. These narratives on the coming of John the Baptist and Moroni are nearly as authoritative as the Prophet's own history, which covered the same ground four or five years later. The early portion of Joseph's 1838–39 narrative is reproduced in the Pearl of Great Price (JS—H 1:2, 60), and it is a part of modern sacred writings.<sup>3</sup>

Cowdery's semiofficial records border on scripture. He responsibly related Moroni's visits to Joseph, and Oliver gave his own memories of the visions where he was a coparticipant. His supplementary testimony is of the same eyewitness quality as Joseph Smith's references that

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<sup>1</sup>Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, 7 September 1834, *Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct. 1834): 15 (hereafter cited as *Messenger and Advocate*). This portion of the letter is reproduced in the Pearl of Great Price as a footnote to JS—H 1:71. The letter and its continuations were transcribed in uncorrected form into church records (see Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989]: 1:30). Historical quotations in this article may be conservatively modernized in spelling and punctuation. I am deeply indebted to the careful manuscript transcriptions of Dean C. Jessee and also Scott H. Faulring, my colleague in collecting and publishing full documents on Book of Mormon witnesses. Capable researcher Jed Woodworth has also given some source assistance.

<sup>2</sup>*Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 13.

<sup>3</sup>At his death, Joseph Smith had dictated or supervised his history up to the fall of 1838, the first part of the present third volume. It was then completed by his associates from recollections and



have entered the standard works. We can better see the Cowdery contributions after stating that the nature of scripture is mainly to record direct visions and inspired doctrinal messages from prophets divinely called to lead. The second elder's eyewitness reports of seeing angels are qualitatively as significant as those of Joseph Smith that are found in the scriptures. This is true of Oliver's descriptions of priesthood restorations and of the visitation to the Three Witnesses. Similarly, David Whitmer and Martin Harris talked freely about the supernatural experience of the Three Witnesses, and the more careful records of their testimonies are raw material for sacred literature. Yet Cowdery's statements are superior in time, since he died in 1850. For instance, almost all detailed interviews with David Whitmer are in the decade after 1878 and postdate Oliver Cowdery's reports by some thirty years or more.

Though the subject here is how Oliver speaks in modern scripture, a short survey of his scribal work shows how close he was to Joseph Smith as new standard works were produced. In concise review, he was the Prophet's close associate in the founding years when most of the dramatic visitations took place. During the year before the church was organized, Oliver was the main transcriber for the Book of Mormon, both for the original and printer's manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> Soon after that book was published, he recorded chapter one through most of chapter five of the present Book of Moses, according to the handwriting.<sup>5</sup> Five years later he was enthusiastic about acquiring the Egyptian papyri and about their potential new information concerning Abraham. However, no narrative segments of the Book of Abraham have been discovered in Oliver's handwriting.<sup>6</sup> Yet from the beginning he aided the creation of the Doctrine and

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contemporary documents. It is published as Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols., 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950). Hereafter cited as HC.

<sup>4</sup>My source for Cowdery's Book of Mormon work on the original and printer's manuscripts is Royal Skousen, a professor of English at Brigham Young University, whose text project deals with originals and high quality photographs of Book of Mormon manuscripts. See Dean C. Jessee, "The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript," *Brigham Young University Studies* 10 (spring 1970): 259-78.

<sup>5</sup>See the scribal chart in Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation," *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 96.

<sup>6</sup>See the forthcoming *Book of Abraham: a Critical Edition*, to be published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). John Tvedtnes, general editor of the volume and FARMS senior project manager, lists the three known Kirtland manuscripts of the narrative, which are in the handwriting of Warren Parrish and William W. Phelps. The Abraham papyri came to the Prophet in early July 1835, and at this point Joseph Smith's history names Phelps and Cowdery as scribes with whom he "commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics" (HC, 2:236, July 1835). Yet this clearly describes preliminary work. The Prophet, Cowdery, and Phelps "labored on the Egyptian alphabet" (HC, 2:286, 1 October 1835, which borrows language from Joseph's journal). That clearly does not indicate continuous work in translation, as William W. Phelps's 11 September 1835 letter to his wife indicates: "Nothing has been doing in the translation of the Egyptian record for a long time, and probably will not for some time to come" ("Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters [1835-1836]," ed. Bruce A. Van Orden *Brigham Young University Studies* 33 [1993]: 563). In the letter to William Frye of Dec. 25, 1835, Oliver shows familiarity with the manuscripts but does not suggest that he was scribe or that much translation was finished by that date

Covenants by taking dictation for some revelations and by recopying others. In short, in the formative years of 1829 to 1830, Oliver Cowdery gave significant assistance in preserving the English text of every major book of scripture.

### Direct Testimony of the Three Witnesses

Attached to every official copy of the Book of Mormon is the "Testimony of The Three Witnesses," the declaration of the three men who saw an angel displaying the Book of Mormon plates and who heard the voice of God declare that the book was correctly translated. This testimony now conveniently appears with the introductory material at the front of the Book of Mormon, but in the four editions produced under direction of the Prophet, the testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses are at the end of the book. There was a forceful impact to this original arrangement. The witnesses' testimonies followed the intense warning of the last prophet, Moroni, who insisted his words would be remembered vividly on judgment day by those who took his message lightly. After reading this intense warning, contemporaries of the Prophet next turned to the powerful statement of the three who knew by open vision that the Book of Mormon was another sacred history.

Oliver Cowdery evidently drafted these formal testimonies in cooperation with the other witnesses. The earliest text is at the end of the printers' manuscript, in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and with his personal signature as the first of the Three Witnesses.<sup>7</sup> Thus Oliver directly supports that statement. The names of the other Three and Eight Witnesses are also in Oliver's writing, and this confused David Whitmer in 1878 when he thought he had the original manuscript instead of the printers' copy. Probably speaking of the testimony of the Three Witnesses, David told Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith that "each signed his own name."<sup>8</sup> Six years later, however, James H. Moyle talked at length to David Whitmer and wrote the details in his journal the same day. Perhaps David had reflected on his earlier confusion, since he stated this to Moyle: "The witnesses did not sign the original manuscript, though were present and ordered Oliver Cowdery to sign for them."<sup>9</sup> This suggests that Oliver penned the phrases acceptable to the witnesses before they either signed or directed him to sign for them. Joseph Smith's account could indicate personal signing or authorized use of their names. After relating

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(see *Messenger and Advocate* 2 [December 1835]: 233-37; a fairly complete copy appears in James R. Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955], 95-97).

<sup>7</sup>I am indebted to Ron Romig, RLDS archivist, for copies of this page of the printer's manuscript, and to BYU professor Royal Skousen, who allowed me to examine color photographs.

<sup>8</sup>Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith to President John Taylor, 17 September 1878, found in *Deseret News*, 16 November 1878; copy also in Lyndon Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 44.

<sup>9</sup>James H. Moyle diary, 28 June 1885, from the long entry at end of the book supplementing the summary entry on that date, LDS historical department. This section is not in the Cook collection of Whitmer interviews.

God's command to bear record of their experience, the Prophet added that the Three Witnesses "drew up and subscribed their names to the following document."<sup>10</sup> Throughout his life each witness upheld the accuracy of this printed statement.

If this testimony of the Three Witnesses is not scripture, it is a first cousin. Two Book of Mormon prophets said God would raise up latter-day witnesses of the plates by his power and would hold those responsible who rejected that testimony (see 2 Nephi 27:12–14; Ether 5:2–4). Moroni specifically predicted that "the testimony of three . . . shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day" (Ether 5:4). Their solemn statement could not stand against the world if it was not authoritatively circulated to the world. As President Benson said, the words of these modern witnesses are part of God's "own proof system" of the Book of Mormon.<sup>11</sup> Two 1829 revelations promise the Three Witnesses that they may view the plates by God's power, and their written testimony of the dramatic fulfillment is as sacred as the revelations making the promise (see D&C 5, 17). In fact, the Prophet's inspired declaration on restored doctrines said that the Book of Mormon "is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and declared unto the world by them" (D&C 20:10, 1831 text).<sup>12</sup> In the present LDS edition of the Book of Mormon, the testimonies of the Three and of the Eight Witnesses are featured equally with the "Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith," which contains Joseph's story of Moroni's visits and obtaining the plates. These virtual affidavits of the Three and Eight Witnesses are designed to accompany the Book of Mormon, are printed right after the introduction to this scripture, and, in a practical sense, are part of Latter-day Saint scripture.

The Prophet is a twelfth witness, since he prayed with the Three Witnesses and saw the "angel whose countenance was as lightning" (D&C 20:6), who had so often instructed him concerning the plates and the translation. His history of these early visits has been taken into the Pearl of Great Price (see JS—H 1:27–54, 59–60),<sup>13</sup> but the Prophet's history also contains the his impressive record of seeing the angel and hearing God's voice with the Three Witnesses, and the record of this event has not yet been made scripture.<sup>14</sup> Even so, because they are objective evidence, the careful and detailed reports of the eyewitnesses to restoration visions are of scriptural importance.

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<sup>10</sup> 1839 Draft of the History of Joseph Smith, in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1: 237. *Their names to* was dropped out, evidently because it was redundant, in the finished manuscript (see *ibid.*, 1:297) and the various printed editions.

<sup>11</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 31.

<sup>12</sup> The phrasing follows the earliest known copy of D&C 20, published as "The Mormon Creed" in the *Painesville (Ohio) Telegraph*, 19 April 1831, agreeing here with the 1833 Book of Commandments.

<sup>13</sup> See the transcription of the early form of this account in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:276–84; HC, 1:11–19.

<sup>14</sup> For transcriptions of the first drafts recording the Prophet's experience, see Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:236–37, 295–97; HC, 1:54–55.



## Direct Testimony of Aaronic Priesthood Restoration

The category of sacred writings also fits Oliver Cowdery's personal description of the coming of John the Baptist, which he penned to introduce his 1834 series on the rise of the church. As stated, the Prophet began to dictate his own history four years later, and in 1851 Elder Franklin D. Richards included the early portion in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price, which he subtitled "a choice selection from the revelations, translations and narrations of Joseph Smith."<sup>15</sup> As in the current printing, Richards ceased quoting the Joseph Smith history right after the coming of John the Baptist, and, as in the current printing, Richards inserted a footnote with Oliver's eloquent report of the same event, extracted from the beginning of Cowdery's history in the 1834 *Messenger and Advocate*. Oliver's testimony of the Aaronic Priesthood was a footnote in the Pearl of Great Price until 1920, including the editions in use when the volume was accepted as scripture in the general conferences of 1880 and 1902. In 1921 a new double-column format was adopted for this book, and the footnoted testimony about John the Baptist was no longer included, possibly a formatting casualty of the new design.<sup>16</sup> The note was deleted in printings between 1921 and 1929, but Cowdery's account was restored to the volume by 1935 and has remained in the Pearl of Great Price since.<sup>17</sup>

In this small standard work Oliver Cowdery confirms and supplements Joseph Smith's record of the reappearance of the desert forerunner of Christ. The Prophet pictures the two translators praying about baptism, followed by the sudden appearance of a resurrected angel who "descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us," saying, in part, "Upon you my fellow servants . . . I confer the Priesthood of Aaron" (JS—H 1:68–69). This testimony of Joseph Smith contains an asterisk calling attention to the long Cowdery corroboration. Thus the Pearl of Great Price ends the Joseph Smith story with what could be called the "Testimony of Two Witnesses," a record of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood. Because John the Baptist appeared to both Joseph and Oliver, Oliver's full account belongs with the Prophet's record. As stated, Oliver's testimony was a continuing component of the Pearl of Great Price long before scholarly notes and references were added; this page-and-a-half

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<sup>15</sup> The *Pearl of Great Price* was published in Liverpool, England, by Franklin D. Richards in 1851. Compare the title page of the current edition.

<sup>16</sup> See the First Presidency's report about "new issues of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, with double-column pages, index and other helps, all conforming in general to the style and arrangement of the latest edition of the Book of Mormon" ("Official Announcement," *Deseret News*, 17 December 1921, found in James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971] 5:207).

<sup>17</sup> I have not located a printing of the Pearl of Great Price in the decade after 1920 that contains Oliver's long description of the appearance of John the Baptist. It is absent in volumes issued in the following years: 1921, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1928, 1929.

footnote by the second elder was twice ratified as scripture by the assembled members of the church.

### Joint Testimony of Higher Priesthood Restoration

Joseph and Oliver joined to attest a Doctrine and Covenants revelation that is essentially the "Testimony of Two Witnesses" to the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Section 27 contains two elements: the August 1830 sacrament revelation and the Savior's overview of major restoration messengers, which the Prophet's history says was given later that year.<sup>18</sup> That appended document implied that Elijah (see D&C 27:9) and Elias, or Gabriel (see D&C 27:6–7; Luke 1:13–17), had yet to come and indicated that Moroni, John the Baptist, and Christ's ancient apostles had already come. Addressing Joseph and Oliver, the Lord first said that he had sent John the Baptist "to ordain you unto this first priesthood which you have received" (D&C 27:8). The Lord afterward spoke of the ancient apostles "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" (D&C 27:12–13).

While this declaration of authority from angels is in form a revelation, it is also the testimony of the Prophet and his scribe. Initially printed in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, this revelation summarizes the higher authority given and who brought it, and it supplements the Prophet's reference to the restoration of two priesthoods in a journal record in 1832.<sup>19</sup> Oliver was made a fourth member of the First Presidency in late 1834, and he noted his ordination and added that the angel restoring the lesser priesthood said that he should rank first after Joseph.<sup>20</sup> Also in late 1834, the Prophet and his three counselors were named as a committee to select and correct the revelations, many of which had appeared in church periodicals or in the aborted 1833 Book of Commandments.<sup>21</sup> Oliver was in effect the general church editor when the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was prepared, and his position and comments suggest that he was very close to the Prophet in reviewing manuscripts and

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<sup>18</sup>Speaking of D&C 27, Joseph Smith's draft history says that the initial four verses were written in August 1830 "and the remainder in the September following" (as quoted in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:321, with clarified language in *HC*, 1:106).

<sup>19</sup>See the Prophet's 1832 history, found in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:3.

<sup>20</sup>See Manuscript History of the Church, 5 December 1834, found in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:21.

<sup>21</sup>See *HC*, 1:242 for a transcription of the Kirtland Council Minute Book, which indicates the naming of the committee of four on 24 September 1834. Rigdon and Cowdery had been given this assignment earlier, on 19 April 1834, as indicated in *HC*, 2:51, an entry based on Joseph Smith's journal of that date.

revising the text of the revelations.<sup>22</sup> Oliver's name appeared right after Joseph's on the title page of the new Doctrine and Covenants and at the end of the preface, where the presidency explained the collection and closed with this testimonial: "We do not present this little volume with any other expectation than that we are to be called to answer to every principle advanced, in that day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed and the reward of every man's labor be given him."<sup>23</sup> This sentence is remarkably close to Cowdery's words about responsibility that appeared in his editorials and letters. In this 1835 preface the first and second elders approved the revelation that proclaimed they had received the apostleship and the keys of the kingdom from the Savior's messengers.

The testimony of Three Witnesses, which states that an angel had shown the plates and God's voice declared the translation to be correct, circulated to the world in every copy of the Book of Mormon. In like manner, the priesthood restoration revelation, stating that apostolic authority came to Joseph and Oliver through the personal appearance of Christ's ancient leaders, went to the world with every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. A thousand copies of the new scriptural book were bound in 1835 and another five hundred the following spring.<sup>24</sup> When the Prophet later included the published revelations in his history, the list of restoration messengers was included, and this installment appeared in 1843 in the church journal at Nauvoo and in early 1844 in the church journal in the British Isles.<sup>25</sup> In the meantime, the Prophet had vigorously promoted another printing of the revelations and helped edit them. The priesthood restoration revelation was retained in the approved second edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which came off the press soon after the martyrdom.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>See Oliver's January 1835 editorial comments concerning publishing corrected copies of the revelations in reprinting the *Evening and the Morning Star*: "We have given them a careful comparison, assisted by individuals whose known integrity and ability is uncensurable" (*Evening and Morning Star*, June 1833, 16). The name of the *Evening and Morning Star* was originally the *Evening and the Morning Star*. The June 1833 issue was reprinted under the title *Evening and Morning Star*, keeping the original date. The corrected text of these revelations carried over to the 1835 D&C.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph Smith Jr. et al., eds., *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: Williams, 1835), vi. Compare the errata page at the end (xxv), where Oliver Cowdery's name again precedes that of Sidney Rigdon.

<sup>24</sup>See *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835): 270, which tells us that "one thousand copies have already been delivered to the binder." See also HC, 2:434, which quotes the Kirtland Council Minute Book for 2 April 1836 and indicates that the Missouri presidency would "have five hundred books of Doctrine and Covenants, when bound."

<sup>25</sup>See *Times and Seasons* 4 (1 March 1843): 117–18, 122–23; *Millennial Star* 4 (February 1844): 151.

<sup>26</sup>See HC, 5:264, 273, for the Prophet's 1843 work on the text of the second edition of the D&C. For the original Willard Richards notes, see Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: the Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Book, 1989), 298, 305.



## Influence on Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants

Oliver Cowdery's most powerful scriptural contributions are certainly the testimonies of the coming of Moroni, John the Baptist, and the highest ranking New Testament apostles. These angelic visits to Oliver and the Prophet took place in the year before the church was organized in New York.<sup>27</sup> By the second half of 1829, some elders had been ordained and the first ordinances were being performed.<sup>28</sup> In the winter of 1829–30 type was being set for the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith obviously waited for it to be published before he formally organized the church the following spring. Reaching back in memory almost six decades, David Whitmer said, "In August, 1829, we began to preach the gospel of Christ. . . . The Book of Mormon was still in the hands of the printer, but my brother, Christian Whitmer, had copied from the manuscript the teachings and doctrine of Christ, being the things which we were commanded to preach."<sup>29</sup> David was probably confused on authorship, for a document penned by Christian Whitmer is not known, though the above is a good description of Oliver Cowdery's manuscript headed "A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his Church and the manner thereof." At the end of the manuscript, 1829 is noted as the date of composition, with the closing line being the real title: "A true copy of the Articles of the Church of Christ, &c" (the manuscript can be examined in the transcription published by Robert J. Woodford).<sup>30</sup> Oliver wrote fervently of the restored gospel and how all should be invited to repent and accept it.

The Prophet created an inspired summary, now section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, of the teachings and ordinances of the restored church. It was read at the first church conference on 9 June 1830 and went by the title "Articles and Covenants."<sup>31</sup> It is about twice as long as Oliver's three-page manuscript and is of a much broader scope.<sup>32</sup> Cowdery's narrower work quoted heavily from the missionary portion of section 18 and was primarily a handbook of ordinances, extracting Book of Mormon information on baptism, the sacrament, and ordination, with the briefest indication of authority of priesthood offices. By contrast, the Prophet's organizational revelation reviewed restoration events and stated distinctive gospel

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<sup>27</sup>For dates of these appearances, see HC, 1:39–40, 52–61; Larry C. Porter, "The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods," *Ensign* (December 1996): 30–47.

<sup>28</sup>See HC, 1:51 for Joseph Smith's summary of the prechurch ministry. David Whitmer's summary is in his *Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887), 32.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>As cited in Robert J. Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants* (n.p.: Woodford, 1974) 1:287–90.

<sup>31</sup>"Minutes of the first conference," 9 June 1830, found in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 1. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Organizational Revelations," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume One: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 109 ff.

<sup>32</sup>Cowdery's "Articles of the Church of Christ" contains some thirteen hundred words. Section 20 basically doubles that.

doctrines at some length; its instructions on ordinances paralleled Cowdery's presentation but gave full detail on what could be done in each priesthood office. The Prophet was apparently aided by Cowdery's summary, but he transformed that small church handbook into a broad declaration of beliefs and practices. In a recent informative study, Scott Faulring used statistics to show the increased revelatory content of the Prophet's founding charter: "More than half of Cowdery's revelation is either direct quotes from the Book of Mormon text or direct paraphrase. . . . Only 21% of section 20's text depends on the Book of Mormon."<sup>33</sup> Faulring's work counters an assumption that Joseph relied mainly on Oliver's 1829 articles. Although Oliver anticipated the pattern of section 20, the Prophet may have suggested this format to him. When the Prophet received ideas or copy from others, as encouraged by the revealed system of counselors, he regularly imprinted his inspiration and forthright style on the final product.

As the church grew, Oliver became its most important editor in Ohio and directly influenced the form or content of several sections of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. His inside role in this first edition was discussed above in connection with publishing the revelation on the coming of Peter, James, and John (see D&C 27:12–13). This Kirtland printing of the revelations was necessitated after the 1833 Independence mob had interrupted publication of the smaller compilation, the Book of Commandments. Cowdery is commonly credited with authorship of two statements of church policy that were printed at the end of the 1835 edition: one containing beliefs about marriage and another entitled "Of Governments and Laws in General." The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was presented to the church in solemn assembly and approved by quorums, with the final "vote of all the members present, male and female."<sup>34</sup> After the revised book of scripture was fully approved, the two declarations were voted in as attachments. First, the "Rules for Marriage" were read. These outlined the Latter-day Saint preference that marriages be performed by priesthood holders and occur between church members in a ceremony committing the parties to the relationship "wholly for each other . . . during your lives."<sup>35</sup> Minutes indicate a vote of acceptance and add: "It is therefore to be attached to the book."<sup>36</sup> Though the "Rules for Marriage" were later replaced by the eternal marriage revelation that is now section 136, Oliver Cowdery's impact on the original statement is a definite but undefined part of scriptural history.

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<sup>33</sup>Scott H. Faulring, "The Articles and Covenants of the Church: D&C 20 and Its Antecedents," (FARMS, 1997), 22–23.

<sup>34</sup>Kirtland Council Minute Book, closing portion of the 17 August 1835 entry. HC, 2:246 contains the short form of these minutes, condensed in *Messenger and Advocate* (August 1835).

<sup>35</sup>Reprinted in HC, 2:246–47.

<sup>36</sup>Kirtland Council Minute Book, closing portion of the 17 August 1835 entry. HC, 2:246 contains the condensed minutes, as does *Messenger and Advocate* (August 1835).

Although Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) was born after the Kirtland period, he claimed that Oliver composed the marriage declaration and included it in the Book of Commandments on his own authority. President Smith was a counselor to Brigham Young for eleven years and wrote that the pioneer leader said that Joseph Smith resisted publishing the marriage statement with the revelations, but that Oliver Cowdery was persistent.<sup>37</sup> The document was at that time section 109. The *Deseret News* reported the speech as follows: “President Young made some brief remarks in relation to the 109th section of the book of Doctrine and Covenants, showing how it was introduced there by Oliver Cowdery, against the wish of the Prophet Joseph.”<sup>38</sup> Later Joseph F. Smith stressed that, without the Prophet’s permission, Oliver had drafted language that technically allowed polygamy in order to justify his own personal initiative: “Hence the publication by O. Cowdery about this time, of an article on marriage, which was carefully worded, and afterwards found its way into the Doctrine and Covenants without authority.”<sup>39</sup> Supposedly, one verse did not limit male marriages but stated that a wife should have “but one husband”: “We declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again” (1835 D&C 101:4).<sup>40</sup> It is plausible that Oliver composed the marriage declaration on the basis of information that traces back to Brigham Young.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, little information exists on the authorship of the second policy statement at the end of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. It continues in modern scripture as section 134, a classic digest of principles of liberty and responsibility for church and society. Most commentators agree that Oliver created this statement on government, but they do so on

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<sup>37</sup>This information is quoted from the Smith journal, 9 October 1869, found in Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 348–49.

<sup>38</sup>*Deseret News*, 9 October 1869, reporting the Saturday morning conference session.

<sup>39</sup>Joseph F. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:29 (hereafter cited as *JD*).

<sup>40</sup>Full context is in *HC*, 2:247.

<sup>41</sup>Perhaps there was some tendency to blame Oliver for operational imperfections. An unidentifiable bishop’s counselor is quoted in a priesthood conference in 1851 as saying, “It was remarked by a counselor present that when the Word of Wisdom was first given, it was then made a test of fellowship. Referred to the case of Zerubabel Snow, who was cut off from the Church for taking a cup of tea while on a mission. That Joseph said the caption to the Word of Wisdom was put there by Oliver Cowdery, not by his consent, and that it was just as binding as any other commandment.” No one knows whether the nameless informant heard this from the Prophet or simply relayed a rumor. The comment obviously refers to the clause of “not by commandment or constraint” (D&C 89:2). It is true that high councils in Kirtland and Missouri seriously regarded the prohibitions against tobacco, alcohol, tea, and coffee. But it is questionable whether editor Cowdery would have published the long original preface (see D&C 89:1–4) without authority from his president. Furthermore, the Prophet had considerable input in the 1844 edition of the D&C, which retained the preface. Though the first four verses were printed as a headnote to section 89 until Orson Pratt’s 1876 edition, the official handwritten copy in the Kirtland Revelation Book includes this preamble as part of the revelation.