

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 6

This section is a revelation given through Joseph Smith, Jr. to Oliver Cowdery, apparently on the second day of his position as scribe to Smith's translation. The revelation appears to have served as a sign to Cowdery as to Smith's being a prophet of God.

1 A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men. 2 Behold, I am God; give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my words. 3 Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God. 4 Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God. 5 Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.

6 Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion; 7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. 8 Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you; and if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation. 9 Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.

v1-9 A general opening admonition that appears to be just as much aimed at the ecclesia in general as Cowdery in specific. Note the repeated warnings against seeking worldly treasure over spiritual treasure (v. 3, 7, 20, 27). It would appear Cowdery had something of a desire for material wealth and it was affecting his spiritual progress, as probably did, and still do, most of the ecclesia.

Verses 1-10 here are nearly identical to D&C 11:1-10, with the two texts diverging in the latter half of v. 10.

v1 Making reference to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

v3 "reap while the day lasts", i.e., the "day" of your life.

"treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation", because "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" cf. 3 Ne. 13:21.

10 Behold thou hast a gift, and blessed art thou because of thy gift. Remember it is sacred and cometh from above-- 11 And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that

thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways. 12 Make not thy gift known unto any save it be those who are of thy faith. Trifle not with sacred things. 13 If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.

v10-13 Compare D&C 8:1-5. Cowdery has the gift to perceive the great and marvelous mysteries of God by revelation for the convincing of people in error and bringing them to truth (v. 10-11). However, Cowdery is to be wise in the use of this gift and not make it publicly known and to take it seriously (v. 12). This gift and the gift of salvation (i.e., spiritual wealth) is contrasted with the material alluded to in v. 7.

14 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit. If it had not been so, thou wouldst not have come to the place where thou art at this time. 15 Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth; 16 Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart. 17 I tell thee these things as a witness unto thee--that the words or the work which thou hast been writing are true.

v14-17 A set of spiritual witnesses to Cowdery. The revelation of these witnesses to Cowdery via Smith provides evidence that Smith is a bona fide prophet of God as only God can know a man's thoughts a heart (v. 16).

18 Therefore be diligent; stand by my servant Joseph, faithfully, in whatsoever difficult circumstances he may be for the word's sake. 19 Admonish him in his faults, and also receive admonition of him. Be patient; be sober; be temperate; have patience, faith, hope and charity. 20 Behold, thou art Oliver, and I have spoken unto thee because of thy desires; therefore treasure up these words in thy heart. Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.

v18-20 Cowdery receives a specific admonition. Interestingly enough, the admonition shows that Smith and Cowdery are to admonish each other, and not just Smith admonishing Cowdery.

v20 "encircle thee in the arms of my love", a poetical way of reiterating the subject of v. 13, cp. 2 Ne. 1:15.

21 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the same that came unto mine own, and mine own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. 22 Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your

mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. 23 Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God? 24 And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth have you not received a witness?

v21-24 Another very personal witness delivered to Cowdery. The full nature and details of the event in question are not given, but it must have been a watershed event for Cowdery where he received his confirming witness that Smith was what he claimed.

That the Lord is reminding Cowdery of this event afterwards shows the human nature to forget their own past and be distracted by their present situation. All of us forget these spiritual times and events as memory fades and current worries cloud them even further. It seems like unless we keep having them or are kept reminded of them, we forget them and they lose their power and effect on our life.

25 And, behold, I grant unto you a gift, if you desire of me, to translate, even as my servant Joseph. 26 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that there are records which contain much of my gospel, which have been kept back because of the wickedness of the people; 27 And now I command you, that if you have good desires--a desire to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven--then shall you assist in bringing to light, with your gift, those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity. 28 And now, behold, I give unto you, and also unto my servant Joseph, the keys of this gift, which shall bring to light this ministry; and in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

v25-28 Another personal gift granted, as Cowdery wanted to translate as Smith was, cp. D&C 8, D&C 9. Cowdery is to assist Smith in bringing forth records of scripture that have been withheld due to due to wickedness.

v28 "the keys of this gift", referring to the revelation of the meaning of the Scriptures spoken of in v. 27. The "keys" here are not Priesthood keys, but the ability to unlock the meaning of the Scriptures, cp. Luke 11:52.

29 Verily, verily, I say unto you, if they reject my words, and this part of my gospel and ministry, blessed are ye, for they can do no more unto you than unto me. 30 And even if they do unto you even as they have done unto me, blessed are ye, for you shall dwell with me in glory. 31 But if they reject not my words, which shall be established by the testimony which shall be given, blessed are they, and then shall ye have joy in the fruit of your labors. 32 Verily, verily, I say unto you, as I said unto my disciples, where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them--even so am I in the midst of you. 33 Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if

ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward. 34 Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. 35 Behold, I do not condemn you; go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you. 36 Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not. 37 Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

v29-37 Another general admonition, the admonition is made more obviously broad by referencing the "flock" and so forth. The admonition is to "fear not" despite their being rejected of, persecuted by and murdered by the world.

v32 is a paraphrase of Matt. 18:18-20. The "touching one thing" from the KJV is better translated "concerning any matter". Note they are gathered together "in my name", that is, using the Priesthood.

v37 Here, the Lord is indicating that He is the one Who has performed the Atonement and is in a position to offer eternal life to those who do what He tells them to do.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 6

Four excerpts follow, each being a compilation of quotations regarding the contemporary events to the revelation. The first two mix some historical commentary with the quotations. The final two are strictly quotations. Overall, we are quite fortunate to have so much historical material to establish the context of this section.

This revelation was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, and then in the Kirtland edition of the Doctrine & Covenants in 1835. It was subsequently published in the Times and Seasons (Volume 3, Number 17, pages 832-833, July 1, 1842) and the Millennial Star (Volume 3, Number 8, pages 132-134 December, 1842).

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

While Joseph Smith was still residing in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Oliver Cowdery was teaching school in Palmyra. Because it was customary for school teachers to board with the families of their pupils, Oliver Cowdery came to live with the Smith family, where he first learned about Moroni's appearances to Joseph Smith and the translation of the plates. When school closed in the spring, Oliver Cowdery traveled to Harmony to meet the Prophet. Arriving on 5 April 1829, he received a first-hand account of the glorious work of the Restoration, and on 7 April he began serving as Joseph Smith's scribe.

Concerning Cowdery's involvement in the translation, Joseph Knight, Sr., wrote,

In the spring of 1829 Oliver Cowdery a young man from Palmyra went to see old Mr. Smith about the Book that Joseph had found. And he told him about it and advised him to go Down to Pennsylvania and see for him self and to write for Joseph. He went Down and Received a Revelation Concerning the work and he was Convinced of the truth of the work and he agreed to write for him till it was Done. Now Joseph and Oliver Came up to see me if I Could help him to some provisions, [they] having no way to Buy any....I Bought a Barral of Mackrel and some lined paper for writing....some nine or ten Bushels of grain and five or six Bushels taters and a pound of tea, and I went Down to see him and they ware in want. Joseph and Oliver ware gone to see

if they Could find a place to work for provisions, and found none. They returned home and found me there with provisions, and they ware glad for they ware out.
(Jessee, Joseph Knight's Recollections)

Of his experience with Joseph Smith during the translation of the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery wrote,

These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the *inspiration* of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the *Urim* and *Thummim*, or as the Nephites would have said, "Interpreters," the history, or record, called "The Book of Mormon." (Oliver Cowdery, Messenger and Advocate 1, October 1834:14, italics in original).

(Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 13)

Excerpt from Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants

Even though he received the plates once again from the angel in the summer of 1828, Joseph did not resume the translation immediately but rather worked on his farm to support his family. Recalling some of the difficulties he encountered when he resumed translating, Joseph wrote, "Now my wife had writen some for me to translate and also my Brother Samuel H Smith but we had become reduced in property and my wives [wife's] father was about to turn me out of doors & I had not where to go and I cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me to accomplish the work whereunto he had commanded me" (Jessee, Personal Writings, p. 8).

The answer to Joseph's prayer was Oliver Cowdery, a school teacher temporarily boarding with the Smith family in Manchester, New York. He traveled approximately one hundred miles to Joseph Smith's home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph's 1832 history explained why Oliver was willing to make such a trip:

"[The] Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowdry [Cowdery] and shewed unto him the plates in a vision and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me his unworthy servant therefore he was desirous to come and write for me and translate" (Jessee, Personal Writings,

p. 8).

Oliver arrived in Harmony on 5 April 1829, and two days later he became a scribe for Joseph Smith. During that month, four revelations were directed to Joseph and Oliver (D&C 6-9). In the first of these, the Lord referred to a spiritual experience that Oliver had had while still in Manchester (D&C 6:23-24). Joseph recalled that after receiving this revelation, Oliver confided to him the details of what had happened: "Oliver Cowdery stated to me that after he had gone to my father's to board, and after the family had communicated to him concerning my having obtained the plates, that one night after he had retired to bed he called upon the Lord to know if these things were so, and the Lord manifested to him that they were true, but he had kept the circumstance entirely secret, and had mentioned it to no one; so that after this revelation was given, he knew that the work was true, because no being living knew of the thing alluded to in the revelation, but God and himself" (History of the Church, 1:35).

The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon and the writings of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery provide historical evidence that nearly all of the Book of Mormon was translated in less than three months. Between April and sometime in June 1829, Joseph dictated possibly an average of about eight pages a day.

Five years later, Oliver Cowdery described his feelings about his role in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. "These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, 'Interpreters,' the history, or record, called 'The Book of Mormon'" (Messenger and Advocate, Oct. 1834, p. 14).

Ten years after his excommunication, Oliver Cowdery rejoined the Saints, who were then in their exodus to the Great Basin. He bore a powerful testimony at a conference at Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1848, regarding the divine origins of the Book of Mormon:

"Friends and brethren,—My name is Cowdery—Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of this Church I stood identified with her, and [was] one in her councils. True it is that the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Not because I was better than the rest of mankind was I called; but, to fulfil the purposes of God, he called me to a high and holy calling. I wrote, with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages,) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as

he translated it by the gift and power of God, by the means of the Urim and Thummim, or, as it is called by that book, 'holy interpreters.' I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was transcribed. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the 'holy interpreters.' That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. It contains the everlasting Gospel, and came forth to the children of men in fulfilment of the revelations of John, where he says he saw an angel come with the everlasting Gospel to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. It contains principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God" (Millennial Star, 20 Aug. 1859, p. 544). (Milton V. Backman, Jr. and Richard O. Cowan, Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants, pages 13-15)

Excerpt from A Companion to Your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants

"Previous to joining the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery had met David Whitmer at Palmyra, and conversed with him concerning the rumors rife in that vicinity about the finding of the Book of Mormon plates. This chance meeting resulted in a friendship between the young men, and finally when Cowdery determined to visit the Prophet in Harmony, he went via the Whitmer residence, at Fayette, which was near the town of Waterloo, at the head of Seneca Lake, Seneca county, New York; and promised his friend David Whitmer that after visiting the Prophet he would write him his impressions as to the truth or untruth of Joseph Smith's having an ancient record." (Footnote, HC 1:32.)

"When Oliver Cowdery went to Pennsylvania, he promised to write me [David Whitmer] what he should learn about these matters, which he did. He wrote me that Joseph had told him [Oliver's] secret thoughts, and all he had meditated about going to see him, which no man on earth knew, as he supposed, but himself, and so he stopped to write for Joseph." (David Whitmer, Historical Record: Church Ency. Book 1, 6:208 [May 1887].)

"On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house, until which time I had never seen him. He stated to me that, having been teaching school in the neighborhood where my father resided, and my father being one of those who sent to the school, he went to board for a season at his house, and while there the family related to him the circumstances of my having

received the plates, and accordingly he had come to make inquiries of me. Two days after the arrival of Mr. Cowdery (being the 7th of April) I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, and he began to write for me, which, having continued for some time, I inquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim, and obtained the following: [Section 6, follows.]

"After we had received this revelation, Oliver Cowdery stated to me that after he had gone to my father's to board, and after the family had communicated to him concerning my having obtained the plates, that one night after he had retired to bed he called upon the Lord to know if these things were so, and the Lord manifested to him that they were true, but he had kept the circumstance entirely secret, and had mentioned it to no one; so that after this revelation was given, he knew that the work was true, because no being living knew of the thing alluded to in the revelation, but God and himself" (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Volume 1, pages 32-35). (Daniel H. Ludlow, A Companion to Your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants, page 75)

Excerpt from Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration

The Lord appeared to a young man by the name of Oliver Cowdery and showed [the plates] to him in a vision and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me, his unworthy servant. Therefore, he was desirous to come and write for me [as I translated.] Now, my wife had written some for me and also my brother, Samuel H. Smith, but we had become reduced in property and my wife's father was about to turn me out of doors.... I had nowhere to go... I cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me to accomplish the work whereunto he had commanded me. (Joseph Smith, 1832 History)

On the fifteenth [5th] day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery [whom I had never previously seen] came to my house [Harmony], Pennsylvania].... He stated to me that having been teaching school in the neighborhood where my father resided, and my father being one of those who sent to the school, he went to board for a season at his [my father's] house, and while there the family related to him the circumstance of my having received the plates.... Accordingly he had come to make enquiries of me. (Joseph Smith, JS-H 1:66 and Times & Seasons 3:832 [July 1, 1842])

Soon after we returned from [visiting Joseph in] Harmony, a man by the name of Lyman Cowdery, came into the neighborhood,

and applied to Hyrum, (as he was one of the trustees,) for the district school. A meeting of the trustees was called, and Mr. Cowdery was employed. But the following day, this Mr. Cowdery brought his brother Oliver to the trustees, and requested them to receive him instead of himself, as circumstances had transpired which rendered it necessary for him to disappoint them, or which would not allow of his attending to the school himself; and he would warrant the good conduct of the school under his brother's supervision. All parties being satisfied, Oliver commenced his school, boarding for the time being at our house. He had been in the school but a short time, when he began to hear from all quarters concerning the plates, and as soon began to importune Mr. Smith upon the subject, but for a considerable length of time did not succeed in eliciting any information. At last, however, he gained my husband's confidence, so far as to obtain a sketch of the facts relative to the plates.

Shortly after receiving this information, he told Mr. Smith that he was highly delighted with what he had heard, that he had been in a deep study upon the subject all day, and that it was impressed upon his mind, that he should yet have the privilege of writing for Joseph. Furthermore, that he had determined to pay him a visit at the close of the school, which he was then teaching.

On coming in on the following day, he said, "The subject upon which we were yesterday conversing seems working in my very bones, and I cannot, for a moment, get it out of my mind, finally, I have resolved on what I will do. Samuel, I understand, is going down to Pennsylvania to spend the spring with Joseph; I shall make my arrangements to be ready to accompany him thither, by the time he recovers his health; for I have made it a subject of prayer, and I firmly believe that it is the will of the Lord that I should go. If there is a work for me to do in this thing, I am determined to attend to it." ... In April, Samuel, and Mr. Cowdery set out for Pennsylvania. The weather, for some time previous, had been very wet and disagreeable—raining, freezing, and thawing alternately, which had rendered the roads almost impassable, particularly in the middle of the day. Notwithstanding, Mr. Cowdery was not to be detained, either by wind or weather, and they persevered until they arrived at Joseph's.

Joseph had been so hurried with his secular affairs, that he could not proceed with his spiritual concerns so fast as was necessary for the speedy completion of the work; there was also another disadvantage under which he laboured, his wife had so

much of her time taken up with the care of her house, that she could write for him but a small portion of the time. On account of these embarrassments, Joseph called upon the Lord, three days prior to the arrival of Samuel and Oliver, to send him a scribe, according to the promise of the angel; and he was informed that the same should be forth coming in a few days. Accordingly, when Mr. Cowdery told him the business that he had come upon, Joseph was not at all surprised.

They sat down and conversed together till late. During the evening Joseph told Oliver his history, as far as was necessary for his present information, in the things which mostly concerned him. And the next morning they commenced the work of translation, in which they were soon deeply engaged. (Lucy Mack Smith, Biographical Sketches, pages 128-131 [the same as Lucy Mack Smith, The History of Joseph Smith, by his Mother, pages 139-141])

Two days after the arrival of Mr. Cowdery, (being the 17th of April,) I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, and he commenced to write for me, which having continued for some time, I enquired of the Lord, through the Urim and Thummim, and obtained the following revelation: [text of D&C Section 6:10-13, 18-19, 22-25 quoted] (Joseph Smith, Times & Seasons 3:832).

After we had received this revelation, he [Oliver Cowdery], stated to me that after he had gone to my father's to board, and after the family communicated to him concerning my having got the plates, that one night, after he had retired to bed, he called upon the Lord to know if these things were so and that the Lord manifested to him that they were true, but that he had kept the circumstance entirely secret and had mentioned it to no being, so that after this revelation having been given, he knew that the work was true, because no being living knew of the thing alluded to in the revelation but God and himself.

During the month of April, I continued to translate and he to write with little cessation (Joseph Smith, Times & Seasons 3:853). (Milton V. Backman, Jr., Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration, pages 101-104)

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