

LITTLE-
KNOWN
STORIES
ABOUT THE

DOCTRINE
&
COVENANTS

DAN BARKER

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SECTION 1

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: At a break in the conference of elders held in Hiram, Ohio, on November 1, 1831, Joseph Smith received this revelation. The elders voted to combine the revelations into a Book of Commandments

THE STORY: John Hancock, the president of the Second Continental Congress, will be remembered into the eternities for his flamboyant signature on the Declaration of Independence. Why was it so large and obvious? It's been said that Hancock wanted King George to be able to read the signature without spectacles.

Mr. Hancock can insinuate all he wants about the king's eyesight; however, I think the size of his signature runs far deeper than the possibility of the King of England misplacing his glasses and overlooking Hancock's surname. I seriously believe the reason John Hancock signed the way he did was due to his passion and conviction to the truth of the Declaration of Independence.

Little did John Hancock foresee when he signed the Declaration that in a little more than fifty years, one of his descendants would also be attaching his name to the truthfulness and validity on another inspired document: the Book of Commandments.

As the conference convened at Hiram, Ohio, the ten elders present determined that the revelations the Prophet Joseph had received should be published into a book titled the Book of Commandments. And the Lord commanded it to be so as he revealed to the Prophet during a recess in the conference these words as stated in verse 6, “Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth.”

Joseph required volunteers to step forward and bind their names to a statement he drafted concerning the legitimacy and truthfulness of the revelations. Five of the elders signed; however, four other elders in attendance—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Peter Whitmer Jr.—had already linked their names to the Book of Mormon as witnesses, and therefore they did not sign the Book of Commandment statement.

The revelations were compiled and circulated so additional names could be gathered as witnesses in the Kirtland, Ohio, and Jackson County, Missouri, areas. One elder who affixed his signature to the truth of the Book of Commandments was Levi Hancock. Levi didn't go overboard like his ancestor, John Hancock; nevertheless, there's something compelling about Levi's signature. He's the only one of the eighteen witnesses who autographed his name in pencil. Realizing this, he jotted the following after his name, “Never to be erased.” Although Levi's signature blended with the other seventeen signatures, these four simple words highlighted his, creating a holding effect similar to his ancestor, John Hancock.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705379193/Lost-Book-of-Commandments-witnesses-found.html>

THE FACT: The following is the testimony and the signatures of those witnesses who placed their names in the Book of Commandments:

We, the undersigners, feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of all the Earth and upon the islands of the sea, that God hath borne record to our souls, through the Holy Ghost shed forth upon us, that these commandments are given by inspiration of God and are profitable for all men and are verily true.

We give this testimony unto the world, the Lord being our helper;

And it is through the grace of God, the Father, and his son, Jesus Christ, that we are permitted to have this privilege of bearing this testimony unto the world, in the which we rejoice exceedingly, praying the Lord always, that the children of men may be profited thereby. Amen.”

Sidney Rigdon, Orson Hyde, Wm. E. McLellin, Luke Johnson, Lyman Johnson, Reynolds Cahoon, John Corrill, Parley Pratt, Harvey Whitlock, Lyman Wight, John Murdock, Calvin Beebe, Zebedee Coltrin, Joshua Fairchild, Peter Dustin, Newel Knight, **Levi Hancock; never to be erased**, Thomas B. Marsh

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705379193/Lost-Book-of-Commandments-witnesses-found.html>

QUESTION:

1. Who is Levi Hancock?
 - a. One of a number of bodyguards to the Prophet Joseph Smith (Mormon tough guy)
 - b. General Authority
 - c. Spiritual leader to the Mormon Battalion

d. All of the above

SECTION 2

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: On the evening of September 21, 1823, in his family home at Manchester, New York, Joseph received an appearance and communication from the angel Moroni.

THE STORY: It's been stated “the best things come in small packages.” If this really is the case, and I believe it is, then this section with all three of its verses provides us with a wealth of knowledge and understanding on the role of Elijah the prophet.

This revelation was received twelve years prior to the actual visitation of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple. Edersheim in his work *The Temple* says:

To this day, in every Jewish home, at a certain part of the Paschal service [i.e., when they drink the “third cup”]—the door is opened to admit Elijah the prophet as forerunner of the Messiah, while appropriate passages are at the same time read which foretell the destruction of all heathen nations. It is a remarkable coincidence that, in instituting his own Supper, the Lord Jesus connected the symbol, not of judgment, but of his dying love, with his “third cup.”

<http://books.google.com/books?id=LHT6a0E909QC&lpg=PA177&ots=0ux8bScCSf&dq=edersheim-passover&pg=PA177#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Some may refer to it as coincidence or sheer irony that Elijah appeared in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836. April 3 of that year also coincided with the third day of the Paschal feast, the day that the Jews opened their homes to invite Elijah. Little did they realize that he did appear, not in their homes, but in the Kirtland Temple.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/23.4RicksAppearance-0b45aald-d798-495f-a063-6afe95da6fdc.pdf>

THE FACT: As interesting as the above story is, the significance of the situation is enhanced when one discovers the actual time of day that Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery was also the very hour of the day, in their time zone, that Jewish families were preparing to begin the feast of the Passover.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/23.4RicksAppearance-0b45aald-d798-495f-a063-6afe95da6fdc.pdf>

QUESTION:

2. In what year did [section 2](#) first appear in the Doctrine and Covenants?
 - a. The 1921 edition
 - b. The 1835 edition
 - c. In 1876
 - d. In the 1833 Book of Commandments

SECTION 3

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: During July 1828, Joseph received revelation at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in connection to the lost 116 pages of manuscript translated from the Book of Mormon.

THE STORY: As members we're well versed with the story of Martin Harris losing the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon translation. It's common knowledge that Martin was instructed by the Prophet to show the manuscript to only a select few individuals, two of which were Martin's wife, Lucy, and her sister, Polly Cobbs. Many believe Lucy Harris is responsible for the theft of the manuscript due to the antagonism she felt toward Joseph Smith and his wanting to “defraud” her husband out of his money to pay for the publishing cost of the Book of Mormon. Because of these feelings, Lucy hauled Joseph before a magistrate in Lyons, New York. A number of witnesses were called to the stand to prove Lucy's certainty that young Joseph Smith was only interested in her husband's money, nothing more. One witness stated that Joseph Smith really didn't have gold plates, but rather the box he housed them in was empty. Others stated the box was filled with sand or

lead and was part of his demented ploy to fool Mr. Harris. It was Martin's testimony that relieved Joseph Smith of the false claims laid against him. Martin states the following:

I can swear that Joseph Smith has never got one dollar from me by persuasion. ... I have never seen in Joseph Smith, a disposition to take any man's money without giving him a reasonable compensation in return.

At the conclusion of Martin's testimony, the Judge instructed those in attendance to keep such ridiculous matters out of his court room and then closed court, allowing Joseph to walk free.

Lucy Harris's feelings toward the Prophet and the work was actually positive early in the translation of the Book of Mormon, showing a complete interest in the project.

The question might be asked, who was the first monetary donor toward the cause of the Book of Mormon translation? Most would answer Martin Harris; however, another came forward with money before Martin did. While Lucy Mack Smith visited with both Lucy Harris and Polly Cobbs, she shared the story of the gold plates and how it was that her young Joseph had them in his possession. Enthralled by the story, and obviously believing the mother of the prophet, both Lucy Harris and Polly offer money to help in the translation of the record. When Lucy Mack turned down the offer, Lucy Harris visited Joseph Smith, again with the offer of a money donation. Joseph only succeeded in gaining Lucy Harris's displeasure when he stated: "I always prefer dealing with men rather than their wives." With such a statement, most would turn and walk away; nevertheless, after claiming to see a dream of the gold plates, Lucy Harris returned to Joseph and again offered him money. This time, not refusing, Joseph accepted her gift of twenty-

eight dollars, money that had been given to her as an inheritance at the passing of her mother.

<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/jbms/?vol=14&num=2&id=373>

THE FACT: After the loss of the 116 pages, finger-pointing ensued. Lucy Mack Smith placed the blame on not only Lucy Harris but also on Martin. Lucy Harris vehemently denied the accusations. What's fascinating is Joseph Smith's attitude during this black time in his life. He could have been caught up in the same spirit of allegation and accusation, but rather, if there was to be finger-pointing, he pointed the finger at himself, realizing that the loss was a direct “consequence of my having wearied the Lord in asking for the privilege of letting Martin Harris take the writings.” The Lord solidified Joseph's grief when he stated: “And when thou deliveredst up that which God had given thee sight and power to translate, thou deliveredst up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man” (Doctrine and Covenants 3:12; 10:1, 7). Martin had “set at naught the counsels of God, and [had] broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and [had] depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom” (D&C 3:13).

<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/jbms/?vol=14&num=2&id=373>

QUESTION:

3. While in the Grandin printing shop, when the first sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon were pulled off the press, which future original member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles did Martin Harris meet?

- a. Sidney Rigdon
- b. Brigham Young
- c. Thomas B. Marsh
- d. George A. Smith

SECTION 4

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Joseph Smith received the following revelation for his father, while his father visited him at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in February of 1829.

THE STORY: The father of the Prophet, Joseph Smith Sr., was anxious to know what the Lord would have him do to help the cause of the kingdom. Many members approached the prophet with this same request. The Lord didn't disappoint the senior Smith making clear to him that he was to open his mouth and share the gospel. The following story illustrates how seriously Joseph Smith Sr. obeyed the Lord's counsel.

In the fall of 1830 a man came to the Smith home in Manchester, New York, and demanded payment on a fourteen-dollar debt. The man was quick to point out that he would forgive the debt if Joseph Smith Sr. would renounce his religion and burn all the copies of the Book of Mormon in their home. Joseph Sr. refused, leading to his arrest and confinement in the Canandaigua jail. While in jail he recorded these feelings:

I shuddered when I first heard these heavy doors creaking upon their hinges; but then I thought to myself, I was not the first man

who had been imprisoned for the truth's sake; and when I should meet Paul in the paradise of God, I could tell him that I, too, had been in bonds for the Gospel which he had preached. And this has been my only consolation.

Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*(Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 185

Joseph Sr. was imprisoned for thirty days. Remembering the Lord's instructions, he taught the gospel to his fellow prisoners and, upon his release, baptized them into the Church.

Kelly, Brian and Petrea, *Illustrated History of The Church*(American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2008), 68

THE FACT: AS a young missionary called to serve in the Massachusetts Boston Mission, I can recall well standing in the old mission home across the street from the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City with two to three hundred other elders reciting in unison [section 4](#) of the Doctrine and Covenants. It was powerful and left a lasting impression that has never diminished over the years. If the field is truly “white for the harvest,” as the Lord stated, then it would seem reasonable to expect that Church growth since 1830 would reflect this. From the Church's initial inception of six members in 1830, it took 117 years (until 1947) to reach the one million mark. The two million member mark was surpassed in 1963, in a short span of sixteen years. Then in 1971, eight years after the two million mark, Church membership had grown to three million Latter-day Saints. Currently, Church growth adds an additional million members every three years. The present population of the Church stands at about 14 million.

<http://newsroom.lds.org/topic/church-growth>

QUESTION:

4. In what year was the greatest percent growth in Church membership?
 - a. 1830
 - b. 1996
 - c. 2010
 - d. 1857

SECTION 5

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Martin Harris had humbly repented for losing the 116 pages of manuscript and desired to physically see the plates. Joseph Smith received revelation from the Lord in March 1829, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, informing Martin, that if humble and faithful, his desire would be realized.

THE STORY: Martin did see the plates and remained true to his testimony as first recorded in the back of the original copies of the Book of Mormon. It's true that Martin did leave the Church for a time. Nevertheless, he was never forgotten by the leaders of the Church as the following story depicts.

In 1869, an Elder Stephenson was called on a mission to the Eastern States. On his way, he stopped in Kirtland to visit with Martin Harris. It was on this visit that he gave Martin Harris the idea to migrate to Salt Lake City and surround himself with the Saints. At first opposed to the suggestion, Martin Harris eventually wrote Brigham Young in 1870 in favor of the move west. Elder Stephenson accompanied Martin Harris on the train trip west and then relates a time when he, Martin Harris, President George A.

Smith, and John Henry Smith were riding in a carriage to enjoy a bath at the warm springs in the vicinity of Salt Lake City. As the group came to a rise in the landscape, they stopped and looked down on the city spreading out below them. It was here that Martin could get a view of the temple lot with the temple still under construction and the immense Tabernacle. After enjoying the vista for a moment, Martin exclaimed, “Who would have thought that the Book of Mormon would have done all this?”

On occasion, while attending baptisms and noting the number of individuals in attendance, Martin Harris, with an uplifted heart, would cry out, “Just see how the Book of Mormon is spreading!”

Martin Harris passed away July 10, 1875, in Clarkston, Cache County, Utah. Previous to his passing that July afternoon, he held a Book of Mormon in his hands and bore testimony to those present surrounding his bed. He had seen the angel, he had seen the plates turned leaf by leaf before his eyes, and he knew what he had seen and never denied it to his dying breath. A story tells that just a few hours before his passing, Bishop Simon Smith entered his room and broke the news to Martin, “It's just been announced, the Book of Mormon will be translated into Spanish!” Martin was so energized by the news that the bishop noted Martin's voice had strength and a vigor not seen since prior to Martin's decline. Bishop Smith noted just the mere mention of the Book of Mormon infused new life into Martin. Brother Harris spoke for two additional hours prior to his passing.

<http://www.gapages.com/harriml.htm>

THE FACT: Not only was Martin Harris instrumental in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, but little did he know, as a result of his missionary efforts, one of his posterity would one day serve in the leading councils of the Church. The following is from

Elder Dallin H. Oaks April 1999 conference address titled, “The Witness: Martin Harris”:

In 1832 Martin Harris's older brother, Emer, who is my great-greatgrandfather, was called on a mission from Ohio (see D&C 75:30). Emer spent a year preaching the gospel near his former home in northeastern Pennsylvania. During most of this time Emer's companion was his brother Martin, whose zeal in preaching even caused him to be jailed for a few days. The Harris brothers baptized about 100 persons. Among those baptized was a family named Oaks, which included my great-great-grandfather. Thus, my middle name and my last name come from the grandfathers who met in that missionary encounter in Susquehanna County in 1832–33.

http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/conferences/99_apr/oaks_martin.htm

QUESTION:

5. While still living in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1860, Martin Harris told a census taker that his occupation was what?
- A farmer
 - A witness
 - A Mormon preacher
 - The caretaker of the Kirtland Temple

SECTION 6

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: The Prophet Joseph Smith received revelation for Oliver Cowdery at Harmony, Pennsylvania, during April 1829.

THE STORY: Oliver was anxious and desired a witness from the Lord concerning the inspired work that Joseph Smith is involved in. The Lord reminded Oliver in verses 22–24 that he had already received a witness of the truth of the work and if he desired a further witness he must “cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.” What manifestation did Oliver Cowdery receive?

Joseph Smith records that while in conversation with Oliver Cowdery, Oliver shared with the Prophet how it was confirmed to him that this work was true. Oliver stated that while boarding at the Smith home in Manchester, New York, and after hearing the account from the Smith family of Joseph Smith and the gold plates (Joseph and Emma were living in Harmony, Pennsylvania, at this time) that Oliver approached the Lord in prayer and the Lord answered his prayer, although he kept this manifestation secret.

Oliver's secret? The Lord showed to him a vision of the plates and a confirmation of its truthfulness. Lucy Mack Smith describes Oliver Cowdery's enthusiasm for the work after he received his affirmation from the Lord. She states:

From this time, Oliver was so entirely absorbed in the subject of the record that it seemed impossible for him to think or converse about anything else.

Alexander L. Baugh, *Days Never to be Forgotten*(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 27

THE FACT: In verse 14 of [section 6](#), the Lord tells Oliver, “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 are at this time.”

What drove Oliver to journey to Harmony to be with the Prophet Joseph? According to Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph's mother, one afternoon it had rained incessantly. Because of rain and condition of the roads, Lucy honestly thought there would be little chance that Oliver would be coming home that night from school, and most likely he would stay with friends much closer to the schoolhouse. Regardless of the rain, Oliver was determined to reach the Smith home. After entering the home, Oliver announced, “I have now resolved what I will do[,] for the thing which I told you seems working in my very bones insomuch that I cannot for a moment get rid of it.” Lucy wrote that after hearing Joseph Sr. explain the marvelous circumstances surrounding the unearthing of the gold plates, Oliver pondered continually on the subject and became convinced that he was the person who was to act as scribe

for the Prophet. Once Oliver had established this course of action, I imagine he had a difficult time keeping his mind on teaching the children he had a responsibility to educate. As the Lord stated, “Thou hast received instructions of my Spirit,” and it's obvious that because of the Spirit, Oliver's mind was consumed with what he should do. Oliver then revealed his intention to travel to Harmony with Samuel and there speak with Joseph Smith. Oliver added, “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.”

Oliver did become the scribe for Joseph. In light of his experience with the Spirit and the answer to his prayers, it is not surprising that Oliver would pen the following statement:

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!

Alexander L. Baugh, *Days Never to be Forgotten*(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 26, 38

QUESTION:

6. Surprisingly, it wasn't Oliver Cowdery who originally contracted to teach school in Manchester, New York. If it wasn't Oliver, then who was it?
- a. Porter Rockwell
 - b. Samuel Smith
 - c. Lucy Mack Smith
 - d. Lyman Cowdery

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