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Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood/"Near Harmony"

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Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood



As Joseph translated the record engraved on the plates of gold, Martin Harris, and later Oliver Cowdery, served as scribes. Oliver described this memorable time.

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.’¹²

As the translation progressed, Joseph and Oliver decided to “inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins”¹³ which was mentioned in the sacred record. On 15 May 1829, they went to the woods to pray. As they called upon the Lord, an angel appeared, laid his hands on their heads, and conferred upon them the Priesthood of Aaron. This priesthood, they were told, “holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”¹⁴ As directed by the heavenly messenger, John the Baptist, Joseph baptized Oliver and then Oliver baptized Joseph. Joseph then ordained Oliver to the Aaronic Priesthood, after which Oliver ordained Joseph. Oliver described this marvelous event.

What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world was racked and distracted—while millions were groping as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld, our ears heard, as in the ‘blaze of day’; yes, more—above the glitter of the May sunbeam, which then shed its brilliancy over the face of nature! Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, ‘I am thy fellow-servant,’ dispelled every fear. We listened, we gazed, we admired! ‘Twas the voice of an angel from glory, ‘twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty! Where was room for doubt? Nowhere; uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk no more to rise, while fiction and deception had fled forever! ¹⁵

The angel John, in restoring the authority to baptize, explained to Joseph and Oliver that he “acted under the direction of Peter, James and John who held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which Priesthood . . . would in due time be conferred.” ¹⁶

Near Harmony

Where the Susquehanna rolls
to bay and ocean—
birthplace of clouds—
Pennsylvania approaches summer.
Fields, plowed and planted,
prepare for future harvest.

Near brown earth banks
Joseph and Oliver
bow in fervent prayer.
In the brilliant beam of May,
John, whom Jesus
sought at Jordan,
dispels deception,
manifests God's will.
Messiah-sent,
this fellow servant
ministers in glory.

Priesthood power bestowed
transforms heart, mind, river, time.
Cleansing baptismal waters
flow like pure desire running
continually to the fountain
of righteousness and joy.

... the veil 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. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! (JS—H 1:71 footnote)