

Church

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Wound #2

[If you have not read [Mandate](#) and [Joseph's Call](#), please do so before continuing.]

When God answered Joseph's prayer about which church he should join, he was instructed to join none of them. In truth, what God and the Lord knew but which Joseph did not yet understand was that "The Church" was synonymous with "The Believers" as stated in [D&C 10:67](#). Why did Joseph start a church if it wasn't part of his call? Luckily we are not left to guess, but have the first hand account of one of Joseph's closest associates - David Whitmer.

The Whitmer family took Joseph and his scribe Oliver Cowdery in to provide them safe refuge while they completed the record. Mother Whitmer questioned the work, then had a personal visit by an angel who showed her the gold record and gave her assurances that it was o.k. and to help them with the work. (If she did so, she would be putting her family at great risk since the world knew the record was made of gold and wanted to take it from Joseph for its monetary value.)

David was one of eight children, and became one of the *Three* special Book of Mormon [Witnesses](#) to see the angel and the record.

Later in life David produced a booklet entitled *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, dated 1887. It is widely circulated, but not within the Mormon Church. In it, David describes why Joseph started a church, and why it grew into something unlike the church of The Book of Mormon.

It was actually Joseph's scribe Oliver Cowdery who received the mandate to start a church and he even wrote up the articles for it in *The Articles of the Church of Christ* by Oliver Cowdery.

It starts out:

**"A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his church and the manner thereof."
(Oliver received the mandate, not Joseph.)**

And ends with:

"And now if I have not authority to write these things judge ye behold ye shall know that I have authority when you and I shall be brought to stand before the judgment seat of Christ...Behold I am Oliver I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Behold **I have written the things which he hath commanded me** for behold his word was unto me as a burning fire shut up in my bones and I was weary with forbearing and I could forbear no longer Amen

Written in the year of our Lord **1829**" (*BYU Studies* 43 no. 4 (2004):76-79.)

Everything the Articles contain come from The Book of Mormon. It details how to perform baptisms, communion and ordination; with specific verbiage and methodology; plus the manner and timing of church meetings; church offices being made up of elders, priests, and teachers. The instructions were simple and

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in harmony with the New Testament church.

Indeed, this is how the church was run before a formal organization occurred on April 6, 1830. David Whitmer said:

In this month (June 1829) I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained an Elder in the Church of Christ by Bro. Joseph Smith. Previous to this, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had baptized, confirmed and ordained each other to the office of an Elder in the Church of Christ. I was the third person baptized into the church. In August, 1829, we began to preach the gospel of Christ. The following six Elders had then been ordained: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Samuel H. Smith, Hyrum Smith and myself. 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. We preached, baptized and confirmed members into the Church of Christ, **from August, 1829, until April 6th, 1830, being *eight months* in which time we had proceeded rightly; the offices in the church being Elders, Priests and Teachers.**

Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches of the "Church of Christ," in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, N. Y.; one at Manchester, N. Y., and one at Colesville, Pa. It is all a mistake about the church being *organized* on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully *organized*—spiritually—before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N. Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land; you can see this from Sec. 17 Doctrine and Covenants: the church was organized on April 6th "*agreeable to the laws of our country.*" (Whitmer, p.32-33)

The church that emerged on that day was one where Joseph became the sole leader and Oliver's articles were replaced by the "Articles and Covenants of the Church" or D&C 20, which later introduced a priesthood hierarchy inclusive of a priesthood with high priests. David Whitmer said this sounded good at the time, but later he found it was not the best course for them to have taken. He said:

Just before April 6, 1830, some of the brethren began to think that the church should have **a leader, just like the children of Israel** wanting a king. Brother Joseph finally inquired of the Lord about it. He must have had a desire himself to be their leader, which desire in any form is not of God, for Christ said "*If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*" "*He that would be great, let him be your servant.*" "*For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*" A true and humble follower of Christ will never have any desire to lead or be first, or to seek the praise of men or brethren. Desiring any prominence whatever is not humility, but it is pride; it is seeking praise of mortals instead of the praise of God. **Joseph received a revelation that he should be the leader; that he should be ordained by Oliver Cowdery as "Prophet Seer and Revelator" to the church, and that the church should receive his words as if from God's own mouth.** Satan surely rejoiced on that day, for he then saw that in time he could overthrow them. Remember, "*Some revelations are of God; some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the devil.*" **God allowed them to be answered according to their erring desires.** They were like the children of Israel wanting a king, and God gave them a king, but it was to their final destruction. He gave the church a leader, but it proved their destruction and final landing of the majority of them in the Salt Lake valley in polygamy, believing that their leader had received a revelation from God to practice this abomination. **This was the first error that crept into the church.** None of us detected it then. We had all confidence in Brother Joseph, thinking that as God had given him so great a

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gift as to translate the Book of Mormon, that everything he would do must be right. That is what I thought about it. **You see how we trusted too much in man instead of going to God in humility, and to his written word, to see if we were proceeding rightly.** It grieves me much to think that I was not more careful, and did not rely upon the teachings of Christ in the written word. But we were then young in years, and all of us were mere babes in Christ. Brother Joseph and myself were only twenty-five years of age. (Whitmer, p. 34)

Not long after this, a man with an established congregation came to Joseph and inticed him to come and join their group as its leader. This was Sydney Rigdon, a Restorationist preacher. It was from him that Joseph learned about the Restoration framework; and by whom they added a priesthood hierarchy.

This is what David Whitmer said of that period:

The next grievous error which crept into the church was in ordaining high priests in June, 1831. **This error was introduced at the instigation of Sydney Rigdon.** The office of high priests was never spoken of, and never thought of being established in the church until Rigdon came in. Remember that we had been preaching from August, 1829, until June, 1831—almost two years— and had baptized about 2,000 members into the Church of Christ, and had not one high priest. During 1829, several times we were told by Brother Joseph that an elder was the highest office in the church. **In December, 1830, Sydney Rigdon and Edward Partridge came from Kirtland, Ohio, to Fayette, N. Y., to see Brother Joseph, and in the latter part of the winter they returned to Kirtland.** In February, 1831, Brother Joseph came to Kirtland where Rigdon was. Rigdon was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. **He soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph's affections, and had more influence over him than any other man living.** He was Brother Joseph's private counsellor, and his most intimate friend and brother for some time after they met. Brother Joseph rejoiced, believing that the Lord had sent to him this great and mighty man Sydney Rigdon, to help him in the work. Poor Brother Joseph! He was mistaken about this, and likewise all of the brethren were mistaken; for we thought at that time just as Brother Joseph did about it. But alas! in a few years we found out different. **Sydney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church.** (Whitmer, p. 35)

We now know why Joseph started his church, and we know why it grew into the Old Testament priesthood framework. This was however not part of the work God called him to, and that type of church was not supported by [The Book of Mormon](#).

In the end, all surviving Book of Mormon witnesses left Joseph Smith and his church, but none of them ever recounted their testimony of The Book.

David said this about his calling:

In June, 1829, the Lord called Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and myself as the **three witnesses**, to behold the vision of the Angel, as recorded in the fore part of the Book of Mormon, and to bear testimony to the world that the Book of Mormon is true. **I was not called to bear testimony to the mission of Brother Joseph Smith any farther than his work of translating the Book of Mormon**, as you can see by reading the testimony of us three witnesses. (Whitmer, p. 32)

Brethren (Of the LDS church.), I have this to say in conclusion. I will not argue and dispute with you. In the spirit of love and meekness I have told you in plain and simple words what the Spirit of God has moved upon me to speak. I am now past eighty-two years of age, and my work in this world is about done. God has given to this generation the **Book of Mormon**, and **how plain and simple is the doctrine of Christ**

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set forth therein. Now brethren, remember—remember the words of Him who reigns in heaven and on earth; which will ye hear, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in that which is written, or the words of man? Choose for yourselves whom you will hear. I am not asking you to hear me; I refer you to the words of eternal truth, as they are contained in the two sacred books. **I will always pray for you, that you may some day see that you are in error in believing and teaching the doctrines which men have added to the doctrine of Christ.** My days to stay here are not many more; I soon go to rest with those who have gone before me; but I have rid my garments of your blood and the blood of all men. You may not understand by what spirit I speak, until at the judgment bar of God; then you will understand. May God have mercy upon you to humble your hearts before him, that you may be guided into the light of truth, is my prayer through the name of Christ. Amen. (Whitmer, p. 75)

Joseph did his part in bringing forth The Book of Mormon, but it was not his part to sequester The Book to a church.

All denominations were meant to embrace The Book of Mormon as the *Second Witness* of Jesus Christ. But because Joseph tied it to his church, it has forever been wrongly associated with the doctrine of his church.

Some of his doctrines were and are:

- Mother in heaven.
- Plurality of Gods.
- Progression of God.
- Pre-birth estate.
- Polygamy as a requirement for exaltation.
- Temple endowment as a requirement for exaltation.
- Word of Wisdom as a requirement for exaltation.
- Washings, anointings, garment wearing, etc. as requirements for exaltation.
- Eternal marriage/sealing as a requirements for exaltation.
- One true church - the Mormon Church, all others are wrong.
- God will only work through a Mormon prophet .

None of these doctrines are found in The Book of Mormon, therefore none of them should be associated with it.