THE OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH
OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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of the revelations to be printed, and approximately on November 12, 1831, preparations were complete for Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer to start for Missouri. 101

On September 12, 1831, the Prophet removed from Kirtland to Hiram, Portage County, Ohio. 102 In that place, as the guest of John Johnson, and with Sidney Rigdon serving as scribe, he commenced a revision of the Bible. 105 Through the late months of 1831, the Prophet applied himself to the work of revision, but his greatest

101 History of the Church, I, 235.


103 Of John Johnson, Elder B. H. Roberts has written: "The Johnson family was one of the typical American families of old colonial times—the men were large, strong, brave, sensible, honest, well-to-do. 'My grandfather, Israel Johnson,' writes Luke Johnson in his autobiographical sketch, 'lived in Chesterfield, New Hampshire, and was much respected by his neighbors for his honesty, integrity, and industry. My father, John Johnson, was born in Chesterfield, New Hampshire, April 11, 1779. He followed the occupation of farming on a large scale, and was noted for paying his debts and living independently. He moved from Pomfret, Vermont, to Hiram, Portage County, Ohio. He was connected with the Methodist church for about five years previous to receiving the Gospel.' Luke Johnson then relates the circumstance of the Prophet, through the power of God, healing his mother of chronic rheumatism in the arm, which converted Ezra Booth as already related on page 215, and then resumes: 'My father was satisfied in regard to the truth of "Mormonism," and was baptized by Joseph Smith, Jun., in the winter of 1830-1, and furnished him and his family a home, while he translated a portion of the Bible.'" History of the Church, I, 206. The record is silent as to the exact date Joseph Smith terminated his residence at the Johnson home at Hiram, Ohio, but it is felt to be an important date because it tends to clarify the period of time during which the Prophet began to teach selected friends relative to the doctrine of plural marriage. With such justification, the following facts are noted. Joseph Smith moved to Hiram, Ohio, on September 12, 1831. The Journal History, September 12, 1831. Late in March, 1832, the
labors were in anticipation of Oliver Cowdery's mission to take the revelation manuscripts to Missouri for printing.  

Sometime prior to Oliver's departure for Independence, the Prophet instructed him regarding the doctrine of plural marriage.

Prophet was mobbed at Hiram, and on April 1, 1832, he left Hiram and commenced a journey to Jackson County, Missouri. While enroute, and still in April, 1832, he wrote back to his wife suggesting that she transfer the family to Kirtland. The transfer was effected probably in the same month, for when the Prophet returned to Ohio from his journey to Missouri, he went immediately to Kirtland. History of the Church, I, 259-272. Thus, the Prophet Joseph Smith's residence at Hiram occupied some six and one-half months, from September 12, 1831, until approximately April 1, 1832.

104 The Prophet had apparently located at Hiram with the intent of revising the Bible. It was not his object, however, to prosecute the revision to the neglect of his other responsibilities. During October and early November, 1831, he presided at several important conferences, to the end of publishing certain of the revelations. During the first weeks of November, 1831, particularly, his attention was required in conference labor. After Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had departed for Missouri, with the revelations in trust, the Prophet again devoted his efforts to the Bible revision. History of the Church, I, 215-266.

105 Elder Orson Pratt testified that it was while the Prophet was living at the home of John Johnson that he received a revelation on plural marriage. The Millennial Star, XL (December 16, 1878), 788. Elder B. H. Roberts certified that the revelation about plural marriage was received by the Prophet at Hiram, Ohio, while he, with Sidney Rigdon for his scribe, was engaged in revising the Bible. B. H. Roberts, The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo (2nd ed.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1965), p. 114, hereafter cited as The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo. See also The Diary of Charles L. Walker, July 26, 1872, on file in the Special Collections Division of the J. Reuben Clark, Jr. Library at Brigham Young University, hereafter cited as Charles L. Walker Diary. President Joseph F. Smith stated that the Prophet received a revelation on plural marriage as early as 1831, and President Smith further stated that the Prophet taught both Lyman E. Johnson and Oliver Cowdery about the revelation in or before 1832. Deseret News [Salt Lake City], May 20, 1886, hereafter cited as the Deseret News. Compare President Joseph F. Smith, Address at Salt Lake City, July 7, 1878, Journal of Discourses, reporter George F. Gibbs, XX, 29. The Prophet commenced his residence at Hiram, Ohio, September 12, 1831. History of the Church, I, 215. Several of the
Joseph informed Oliver that the order of plural marriage had been established under divine direction in ancient dispensations, and that the time would come when it would be legitimately practiced by faithful saints in the last dispensation. The Second Elder of early Church leaders—among them, President Brigham Young, President Joseph F. Smith, and President George Q. Cannon—and Elder B. H. Roberts, have all testified that Joseph Smith taught Oliver Cowdery about plural marriage at a very early date, probably as early as 1831, or thereabouts. See The Charles L. Walker Diary, July 26, 1872; Journal of Discourses, XX, 29; The Juvenile Instructor, XVI (September 15, 1881), 206, hereafter cited as The Juvenile Instructor; and The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo, p. 115. Oliver Cowdery left Kirtland approximately November 12, 1831, and he was never again in the vicinity of Kirtland while the Prophet was revising the Bible at Hiram. In fact, from the date of his departure from Kirtland until August 21, 1833—a period of over eighteen months subsequent to the Prophet's receipt of the revelation to which the above sources are testimony—Oliver Cowdery received but slight notice in the journal of the Prophet. History of the Church, I, 235, 238, 267, 270, 395, 407, and 409. Therefore, in all probability, Joseph Smith taught Oliver Cowdery about plural marriage sometime between September 12, and November 12, 1831.

President Joseph F. Smith wrote: "The great and glorious principle of plural marriage was first revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831, but being forbidden to make it public, or to teach it as a doctrine of the Gospel, at that time, he confided the facts to only a few of his intimate associates. Among them were Oliver Cowdery and Lyman E. Johnson, the later confiding the fact to his traveling companion, Elder Orson Pratt, in the year 1832." Deseret News, May 20, 1886. The testimony of Elder Orson Pratt was reported: "[Elder Orson Pratt said] that Joseph Smith the Prophet, had not only commenced the practice of that principle himself, and taught it to others before President Young and the Twelve had returned from their missions in Europe, in 1841, but that Joseph actually received revelation upon that principle as early as 1831. [Orson Pratt] Said 'Lyman Johnson, who was very familiar with Joseph at this early date, Joseph living at his father's house, and who was also very intimate with me, we having traveled on several missions together, told me himself that Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle. Joseph declared to Lyman that God had revealed it to him, but that the time had not come to teach or practice it in the Church, but that the time would come.' To this statement Elder Pratt bore his testimony." The Millennial Star, XL (December 16, 1878), 788.
the Church became convinced and expressed to Joseph his desire to enter the order of plural marriage.\textsuperscript{107} The Prophet cautioned Oliver that, even though the doctrine of plural marriage was true, the Lord had not revealed the command or keys to practice it.\textsuperscript{108} Oliver gained but little wisdom from the Prophet's warning, however. He expressed his determination to practice plural marriage, even though

\textsuperscript{107}President Brigham Young is reported to have taught that when Oliver learned concerning the institution of plural marriage, he said to Joseph: "Br Joseph why don't we go into the Order of Polygamy, and practice it as the ancients did we know it is true then why delay?" The Charles L. Walker Diary, July 26, 1872.

\textsuperscript{108}President Brigham Young reported the Prophet's counsel to Oliver Cowdery thus: "I know that we know it is true and from God, but the time has not yet come." The Charles L. Walker Diary, July 26, 1872. President George Q. Cannon testified: "The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph in an early day, some points connected with the doctrine of celestial marriage. He was told that it was to obey God's will that His ancient servants had taken more wives than one; and he probably learned, also, that His servants in these days would be commanded to carry out this principle. The Prophet Joseph, however, took no license from this. He was content to await the pleasure and command of the Lord, knowing that it was as sinful to enter upon the practice of a principle like this before being commanded to do so, as it would be to disobey it when required to carry it into effect. Not so with Oliver Cowdery. He was eager to have another wife." The Juvenile Instructor, XVI (September 15, 1881), 206. The keys to bind a man and woman together in marriage were restored by Elijah in the Kirtland Temple, April 3, 1836. Of this, President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "Elijah's mission was the sealing power. He held the keys by which the parents could be sealed together and children sealed to parents." And again: "It is the power which unites into marriage according to the eternal plan." Further: "They are the authorities which prepare men to enter the celestial kingdom and to be crowned as sons and heirs of God. These keys hold the power to seal husbands and wives for eternity as well as for time." Doctrines of Salvation, II, 115-120. When Elder Orson Pratt was called upon to make a public announcement of the Mormon belief in plural marriage, he described the keys and authorities that authorized that practice, and then said: "They are the sealing keys of power, or in other words, of Elijah, having been committed and restored to the earth by Elijah, the Prophet, who held many keys, among which were the keys of sealing." Address at Salt Lake City, August 29, 1852, Journal of Discourses, I, 63, 64.
he was ignorant of the correct order, and even though he was naive to the results that would eventuate from such an unauthorized course. The Prophet apparently continued to counsel Oliver, but to no avail, for when the Second Elder left for Missouri, approximately November 12, 1831, the matter had not been settled.

109 Even though Oliver was with Joseph when the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored in 1829, and even though Oliver was with the Prophet in the Kirtland Temple in 1836, and with Joseph, received the proper keys from Elijah, still the order was that only one man held those keys actively, and that man was Joseph Smith. Oliver had received the keys but he held them dormantly. Joseph alone actively held the keys of the sealing power. See Chapter 4 of the present study. See also Doctrines of Salvation, II, 116-126; III, 134-136. Elder Orson Pratt plainly announced the order of plural marriage in 1852, when he said: "So in these days: let me announce to this congregation, that there is but one man in all the world, at the same time, who can hold the keys of this matter; but one man has power to turn the keys to inquire of the Lord, and to say whether I, or these my brethren, or any of the rest of this congregation, or the Saints upon the face of the whole earth, may have this blessing of Abraham conferred upon them, he holds the keys of these matters now, the same as Nathan, in his day." Journal of Discourses, I, 63, 64. See also President George Q. Cannon, Address at Salt Lake City, December 2, 1883, Journal of Discourses, reporter John Irvine, XXIV, 363-365.

110 President George Q. Cannon wrote that Oliver Cowdery was not content to wait until the proper keys were restored, for, in the language of President Cannon, the Second Elder "was eager to have another wife." The Juvenile Instructor, XVI (September 15, 1881), 206. President Brigham Young reported: "Joseph's reply was 'I know that we know it is true and from God but the time has not yet come.' This did not seem to suit Oliver who expressed a determination to go into the order of Plural Marriage anyhow, altho he was ignorant of the order and pattern and the results. Joseph said 'Oliver if you go into this thing it is not with my faith or consent.'" See The Charles L. Walker Diary, July 26, 1872.

111 President Brigham Young and President George Q. Cannon both testified that Oliver ignored the caution of the Prophet and married a second wife without authority. See The Charles L. Walker Diary, July 26, 1872; and The Juvenile Instructor, XVI (September 16, 1881), 206. Obviously then, the matter was not favorably settled. And as will be demonstrated later, Oliver, by such an independent course, delayed his rightful ordination to the office of Associate President of the Church.
Oliver Cowdery, and his companion John Whitmer, arrived at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, sometime in January, 1832. Oliver was absent in Missouri at the time of the Amherst conference, and was, therefore, not acknowledged in his station as Second Elder of the Church.

In early April, 1832, the Prophet traveled from Kirtland to Missouri. At Independence, April 26, 1832, a "general council" of the Church was called and the same assembly sustained Joseph Smith as President of the High Priesthood. Oliver was present at the Independence conference. He probably expected to be sustained

\[112\textit{Witnesses of The Book of Mormon, p. 38.}\]

\[113\text{Elizabeth Ann Whitmer was seventeen years old. Oliver was twenty-five. See }\textit{Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248; Witnesses of The Book of Mormon. It should be noted that Stanley R. Gunn, a biographer of Oliver Cowdery, listed a different date for Oliver's marriage to Elizabeth Ann. }\textit{Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe} (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1962), pp. 211-223, hereafter cited as }\textit{Oliver Cowdery.}\]

\[114\textit{Essentials in Church History, p. 562. Compare }\textit{History of the Church, I, 242-244.}\]

\[115\textit{History of the Church, II, 176.}\]

\[116\text{The Journal History, April 26, 1832.}\]

\[117\text{Andrew Jenson recorded that Oliver was not only present at the conference at Independence, April 26, 1832, but that he was one of the seven high priests appointed by that conference to preside over the Church in Missouri. See }\textit{Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248; and The Historical Record, p. 199.}\]
and set apart to the promised *other office* at that time. Perhaps because of his unsettled disagreement with the Prophet regarding the propriety of entering plural marriage, his appointment to the *other office* was deferred.\(^{118}\) Instead, Oliver continued to labor in Missouri as a high priest.

On May 1, 1832, he was appointed with W. W. Phelps and John Whitmer to prepare the revelations and commandments for printing.\(^{119}\) He also assisted in preparing for the publication of *The Evening and Morning Star*, the first copies of which issued from the press late in June, 1832.\(^{120}\)

\(^{118}\)When Oliver Cowdery was set apart as Associate President of the Church, December 5, 1834, apparently some inquiry was made as to the long delay in properly acknowledging his station as Second Elder in relation to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The minutes of the meeting, December 5, 1834, suggest as an excuse the fact that Oliver was absent in Missouri at the time of the Amherst conference, which sustained Joseph Smith as the President of the High Priesthood, and which convened January 25, 1832. *History of the Church*, II, 176. However, both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were present at the conference at Independence, April 26, 1832, which also sustained the Prophet as President of the High Priesthood. At that conference, there was ample opportunity to properly acknowledge Oliver's station if indeed chance were wanting. See *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248; *The Historical Record*, p. 199; *History of the Church*, I, 267. It should also be noted that the minutes of the December 5, 1834 meeting were taken by Oliver Cowdery. The Manuscript History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Book A, I, December 5, 1834, located at the Church Historian's Office, hereafter cited as The Manuscript History. Therefore, the probable reason that Oliver did not receive his setting apart, January 25, or April 26, 1832, was not because he "was absent in Missouri," but rather because he was at odds with the Prophet regarding the proper time for his entry into plural marriage. But for whatever reason, the Lord did not direct that Oliver be set apart in 1832.

\(^{119}\) *History of the Church*, I, 267-270.

\(^{120}\) *History of the Church*, I, 259, 270, 273; and *The Evening and Morning Star* [Independence, Missouri], June, 1832, p. 1, cited hereafter as *The Evening and Morning Star*. 
In 1833, probably early in the year, Oliver Cowdery began an unauthorized practice of plural marriage. His unlawful second

As has been noted, the Prophet Joseph received revelation on the principle of plural marriage late in 1831. Of such, Hubert Bancroft stated: "It is said that as early as 1831, the will of the Lord in this respect had been revealed to Joseph. In translating the bible he had come upon the passages relating to plural wives and concubines, and had inquired of the Lord what he should do. He was told to wait, and not make the matter public then, the people not yet having faith to receive it." History of Utah (San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1891), p. 161, hereafter cited as History of Utah. Elder Orson Pratt testified of having learned of plural marriage from Elder Lyman Johnson while they served together as missionary companions. The Millennial Star, XL (December 16, 1878), 788. The only mission to which Elders Pratt and Johnson were called together commenced January 25, 1832, and ended approximately in September, 1832. History of the Church, I, 244, 286. Therefore, the doctrine of plural marriage was taught by the Prophet prior to January 25, 1832. Oliver Cowdery married his first wife, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer, January 22, 1832. Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248. He could not, of course, have been involved in plural marriage prior to that date. Joseph Smith was in Missouri as late as May 6, 1832, but did not, by his activities there, hint at any serious concern relating to the Second Elder of the Church. History of the Church, I, 267-271. By January 14, 1833, however, the Prophet was extremely displeased with the managers of The Evening and Morning Star: W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, and John Whitmer. History of the Church, I, 317. Such is not to suggest that the Prophet's displeasure with the management of the paper resulted from Oliver's unlawful course. Instead, the fact and date of January 14, 1833, is cited as the first hint of the Prophet's displeasure with Oliver Cowdery. The Second Elder left Missouri in July, 1833, and did not return for some time, certainly not before October, 1835, and probably not until the late summer of 1837. History of the Church, I, 395; II, 513; and Oliver Cowdery, pp. 215-219. According to the record of President Joseph F. Smith, Oliver Cowdery "ran before he was sent" sometime before he prepared the Article on Marriage, which was approved for publication in August, 1835. Address at Salt Lake City, July 7, 1878, Journal of Discourses, reporter George F. Gibbs, XX, 29; History of the Church, II, 243. Therefore, Oliver Cowdery commenced his unlawful course between January 22, 1832, and August, 1835. However, Oliver was in Kirtland between July, 1833, and August, 1835, and from the evidence of the record, he was active and in full fellowship with the Prophet during that time. See, for example, Oliver Cowdery, p. 216; and History of the Church, I, 395; II, 243. The evidence does suggest, then, that the Second Elder entered upon his unauthorized course sometime between January 14, and late July, 1833, probably in the forepart of 1833.
wife was Annie Lyman, reported to be a cousin of George A. Smith. Of course, the keys authorizing the practice of plural marriage had not, at that time, been revealed. Oliver's relationship with Annie Lyman, into which he proceeded with distain for the Prophet's warnings, was therefore adultery.

In a revelation, March 8, 1833, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick

122 President George Q. Cannon testified: "Not so with Oliver Cowdery. He was eager to have another wife. Contrary to the remonstrances of Joseph, and in utter disregard of his warnings, he took a young woman and lived with her as a wife, in addition to his legal wife. Had Oliver Cowdery waited until the Lord commanded His people to obey this principle, he could have taken this young woman, had her sealed to him as his wife, and lived with her without condemnation. But taking her as he did was a grievous sin and was doubtless the cause of his losing the Spirit of the Lord, and of being cut off from the Church." The Juvenile Instructor, XVI (September 16, 1881), 206. According to report of Charles L. Walker, President Brigham Young stated: "Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdery took to wife Miss Annie Lyman cousin to Geo A Smith from that time he went into darkness and lost the spirit. Annie Lyman is still alive a witness to these things." The Charles L. Walker Diary, July 26, 1872.

123 In 1885, President George Q. Cannon wrote: "The Church has been taught from the beginning that no amount of talent, no number of gifts, no eminence in the Priesthood were sufficient to save a man, or to keep him in the Church, without personal purity. The case of Oliver Cowdery illustrated in the most striking manner this great and important truth. Chosen to be one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, he beheld an holy angel, who turned over the metal leaves of the record in his presence, and bore testimony in his hearing to their truthfulness. After this, in company with the Prophet Joseph, he was visited by John the Baptist, and, subsequently, was ordained, with the Prophet Joseph, under the hands of Peter, James, and John to the Apostleship. Again, in company with the Prophet he beheld the Lord Jesus, and directly afterwards beheld the prophets Elias, Moses, and Elijah. It might be thought that after receiving the ministrations of heavenly messengers and beholding the face of the Redeemer, there would be no danger of his falling; but alas! he transgressed the law of God; he committed adultery; the Spirit of God withdrew from him, and he, the second elder in the Church, was excommunicated from the Church. After such an example, who expect any transgressor of the laws of God to stand?" See The Juvenile Instructor, XX (December 1, 1885), 360.
G. Williams were called to serve as counselors to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and on March 18, 1833, at the request of Sidney Rigdon, the two were formally set apart. But Oliver was not mentioned.

In Missouri, where he was serving as one of seven presiding high priests, Oliver Cowdery declared that a certain Brother Hulet had erred in suggesting that sons of perdition would be restored. The Prophet, on June 25, 1833, endorsed and commended Oliver's judgment. Early in 1833, the Prophet expressed his displeasure with Oliver Cowdery and others for their dull rendering of *The Evening and Morning Star*. A few months later, the Prophet was satisfied with the positive changes that had been made in *The Evening and Morning Star*, but according to the revelations, the Lord was still displeased with the course of certain of the Saints in Zion.

Charges of "fornication and polygamy" were leveled against the Church prior to August, 1835. There is evidence that such

124 The Doctrine and Covenants, 90:6; *History of the Church*, I, 334; and *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 563, 565.


127 The Doctrine and Covenants, 68:31; 84:58; 90:35, 36; 97: 1, 6-8; 18-25; and 101:1-10.

128 See the Article on Marriage, *History of the Church*, II, 243-247, which was presented to a conference at Kirtland, August 17, 1835. The committee, under whose direction the conference convened, had been appointed September 24, 1834. Oliver was a member of that committee. Therefore, the Article on Marriage was prepared prior to August, 1835, perhaps as early as September 24, 1834. *History of the Church*, II, 243. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 195.
charges were justified, in Oliver Cowdery's case, as early as July, 1833. 129

Late in July, 1833, mobs destroyed the press of The Evening and Morning Star, in Jackson County, and inflicted chaos and ruin across much of the Latter-day Saint settlement there. 130 It should be noted that from all who could have been selected, Oliver Cowdery was dispatched from Missouri to Kirtland to seek counsel from the new First Presidency. 131 Near the end of August, 1833, Oliver arrived in Kirtland, and it was apparently decided that he should not return to Missouri. Approximately August 4, 1833, Orson Hyde and John Gould were sent back, instead of Oliver, with messages and letters to Missouri. 133 The Prophet later explained that Oliver's

129President Joseph F. Smith contended that Oliver's illegal entrance into plural marriage was prior to the August 17, 1835, conference. He declared: "To put this matter more correctly before you, I here declare that the principle of plural marriage was not first revealed on the 12th day of July, 1843. It was written for the first time on that date, but it had been revealed to the Prophet many years before that, perhaps as early as 1832. About this time, or subsequently, Joseph, the Prophet, intrusted this fact to Oliver Cowdery; he abused the confidence imposed upon him, and brought reproach upon himself, and thereby upon the Church by 'running before he was sent,' and 'taking liberties without license,' so to speak, hence the publication, by O. Cowdery, about this time, of an article on marriage." Address at Salt Lake City, July 7, 1878, Journal of Discourses, reporter George F. Gibbs, XX, 29.

130Times and Seasons, I, 18. Compare History of the Church, I, 390-394.

131The Historical Record, p. 199. Compare History of the Church, I, 394, 395.

132The Prophet recorded that Oliver arrived shortly before August 21, 1833. History of the Church, I, 407.

continued residence in Jackson County would have further enraged the mob, perhaps because of the Second Elder's unauthorized marriage connections.

On September 11, 1833, a council of the Church in Kirtland resolved that The Evening and Morning Star, (the publication of which had been forcefully suspended at Jackson County by the mobs), should be issued at Kirtland under the direction of Oliver Cowdery until events might permit its return to Missouri.

According to the appointment of the council, Oliver Cowdery and Newel K. Whitney went east and returned to Kirtland, December 1, 1833, with a new press and type. On December 4, they commenced distributing the type, and on December 18, 1833, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and others assembled to dedicate the new printing office.

The same day, Joseph cited Oliver as possessing two evils "that he must needs forsake, or he cannot altogether escape the buffetings of the adversary." Oliver was, in the same entry, highly praised. The Prophet also cautioned him to keep the commandments

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134 The Prophet wrote: "Elder Cowdery could not lighten your afflictions by tarrying longer with you, for his presence would have so much the more enraged your enemies." Note that the Prophet wrote such an expression after the July, 1833, riot, and in fact, he wrote it December 10, 1833, after the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County. See History of the Church, I, 426-452.

135 The Historical Record, p. 199; History of the Church, I, 407-409; and Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248.

136 History of the Church, I, 448.

137 The Journal History, December 18, 1833. According to the record, the Prophet dedicated the printing office.
and hearken to the voice of the Lord, and if he would do such, his "rest would be glorious." 138

In January, 1834, Joseph, Oliver, and others assembled twice to unite in prayer to the end that their lives might be spared. Mob activity in the vicinity of Kirtland was severe. 139

Oliver was instated as a member of the Church's first high council, at Kirtland, February 17, 1834. Two days later, February 19, Joseph met with his counselors in the First Presidency, and with the "twelve counselors," (members of the High Council at Kirtland), of whom Oliver was one. 140 Oliver served as clerk of that council for several months, and eventually, he acted as president of the council, that is, he presided as the senior member. 141 On April 23, 1834, Oliver, together with others, was given the printing office as a stewardship. 142

In May, 1834, when the Prophet marched with Zion's Camp from Kirtland to Missouri, Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon were left in charge of the Saints at Kirtland. 143

In the August, 1834, issue of The Evening and Morning Star, Oliver, as editor, presented a carefully worded account of how the


139 History of the Church, II, 2, 24.

140 History of the Church, II, 28-31.

141 The Historical Record, p. 199.

142 The Doctrine and Covenants, 104:27-33.

143 Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248.
conference together. Seven Lectures on Faith had been delivered by the Prophet before the School of the Elders in 1834 and 1835. The Prophet, prior to the August, 1835, conference, revised the Lectures with the intent that they be published with the revelations, though it was distinctly understood that they were not to be considered as revelations. Oliver Cowdery had, himself, prepared two articles, Marriage, and Of Governments and Laws in General.

Oliver Cowdery had undoubtedly terminated his relationship with Annie Lyman before August, 1835, but charges of polygamy and fornication were still leveled against the Church. Oliver was acutely aware of such charges because of his previous unauthorized conduct. The article on Marriage denied that such charges were justified. Oliver apparently intended, by the article on Marriage, to make a public Church denial of the charge for which he alone was guilty. He was, therefore, most anxious to have the Marriage

163 Doctrines of Salvation.

164 Doctrines of Salvation.

165 If Oliver had been required to wait four years to be set apart as Associate President because of his unauthorized entrance into polygamy, he, of course, could never have been set apart to the same office without first terminating his improper relationship.

166 History of the Church, II, 247.

167 President Joseph F. Smith stated: "He [Oliver Cowdery] abused the confidence imposed upon him, and brought reproach upon himself, and thereby upon the church by 'running before he was sent' and 'taking liberties without license,' so to speak, 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." An Address at Salt Lake City, July 7, 1878, Journal of Discourses, reporter George F. Gibbs, II, 29. [Italics added.]
article published and, just prior to the conference, he pressed the Prophet intensely for the appropriate permission. Joseph counseled Oliver against printing the article and warned him of the trouble such a course would create.168

It was apparently the design of the Prophet Joseph to absent himself from Kirtland at the time of the August 17, 1835, conference. Even though plans for the conference were well advanced, President Joseph Smith, with President Frederick G. Williams, departed for Michigan just a few days before the appointed conference date, and, it is interesting to note, they returned to Kirtland just a few days after the conference had adjourned.169 Oliver then, according to the nature of his calling as Associate President, presided over the conference in the Prophet's absence.170

168President Brigham Young is reported to have taught, in a discourse at Logan, Utah, in 1868, that "the Appendix [the article on Marriage] was written by Oliver Cowdery against Joseph's wishes, and was permitted to be published only after Oliver's incessant teasing and Joseph's warning to him of the trouble which he could and would create." T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), p. 193, hereafter cited as The Rocky Mountain Saints. Brigham Young's reported discourse, coupled with the fact that Joseph Smith actually revised the Lectures on Faith in anticipation of the August 17, 1835, conference, seems to teach that Joseph and Oliver planned together for the conference. Compare Doctrines of Salvation, III, 195.

169President Joseph Smith was in Kirtland as late as August 10, and following his visit to Michigan, he was back in Kirtland by August 23, 1835. History of the Church, II, 242, 243, 253. Joseph was the Prophet and Seer. He had received the revelations that were to be considered by that conference. He had directed the labors of the committee that had prepared the revelations for publication. With such an interest in the conference that assembled to approve the revelations, the Prophet was, without doubt, absent by design. Perhaps it was the Prophet's intent to allow Oliver to preside.

170History of the Church, II, 176, 243.
Oliver disobeyed the instructions the Prophet had left with him, however, for on August 17, 1835, after the revelations had been approved, W. W. Phelps, (who acted under the direction of President Oliver Cowdery), read the Marriage article and proposed that it be endorsed by the conference. The motion carried unanimously. Oliver then presented the article On Laws and Governments in General, which was also unanimously approved.171 When the President of the Church returned to Kirtland to review the orders of the conference, he was extremely troubled over the unauthorized course the Associate President had taken, but, as the conference had already acted, and not wishing to attract more attention to the subject of marriage in the Church, the Prophet allowed the article to be published.172

One month later, Oliver was appointed Church Recorder.173

\[171\] History of the Church, II, 246-248.

\[172\] President Joseph Fielding Smith has testified: "So this article on marriage and this article on laws and government in general were written by Oliver Cowdery in the absence of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the Prophet knew nothing of the action that was taken ordering them printed with the revelations. These were not revelations, never were so considered, were ordered printed in the absence of Joseph Smith, and when Joseph Smith returned from Michigan and learned what was done--I am informed by my father, who got this information from Orson Pratt--the Prophet was very much troubled. Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, my father, were missionary companions; they traveled together, and my father learned a great many things from Orson Pratt of these early days. When the Prophet came back from Michigan, he learned of the order made by the conference and let it go through." Doctrines of Salvation, III, 195.

\[173\] Oliver had been released from acting as Church Historian and Recorder in order that he could assume the office of Associate President. Then suddenly, he was appointed Church Recorder again, although nothing was said about his duties as Associate President of the Church. See The Doctrine and Covenants, 47:3; Mormon Doctrine, p. 135; History of the Church, II, 273; Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248, 249.
Apparently Oliver did not entertain any feelings of bitterness for such rebuke as he may have received for his independent action at the August conference, for on September 16, 1835, he eloquently defended the Prophet in a meeting of the Kirtland High Council. 174

A few days later, on September 19, at another high council trial, Oliver represented the First Presidency. On the same day he served as scribe to the Prophet recording revelations. Late in September, Oliver sat with other members of the First Presidency to consider charges against the Twelve Apostles. On October 23, 1835, the Associate President assembled with others at the home of Joseph Smith to unite in prayer for the redemption of Zion and for other blessings. During the remaining months of 1835, Oliver enjoyed the full confidence and fellowship of the other members of the First Presidency of the Church. 175

At a conference at Kirtland, that convened January 13, 1836, Oliver Cowdery was sustained as a member of the Presidency of the Kirtland High Council. 176

An extremely important conference assembled at Kirtland, on

175 *History of the Church*, II, 278, 279, 281, 283, 291, 293, 300, and 326.

176 At the time of his elevation to the Presidency of the Kirtland High Council, Oliver had served as a member of that council for almost a year. He had also served as the Associate President of the Church for just over one year. And, at the time of his appointment to preside over the Kirtland High Council, he was laboring as Church Recorder. In addition, during the early months of 1835, he was editor of *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*. See *History of the Church*, II, 227; *The Historical Record*, p. 199; and *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248.
Sunday, January 16, 1836. The First Presidency of the Church agreed to hear grievances from members of the Council of Twelve Apostles. President Oliver Cowdery was not present at the time. Several complaints were made by members of the Quorum of the Twelve, among which was a charge against the Associate President for unchristian language to one of the Apostles. All of the charges were thoroughly investigated, and confessions and apologies were made to the general satisfaction of all concerned. In his instructions and counsel to that conference, President Joseph Smith specified that the Twelve Apostles stood next, in authority in all the Church, to the First Presidency. He then instructed that the Twelve Apostles were not subject to any but the First Presidency, namely, President Joseph Smith, President Sidney Rigdon, and President Frederick G. Williams. The Prophet next stated that in his absence, there was not a First Presidency over the Twelve.

177 On January 14, 1836, Oliver Cowdery returned to Kirtland from Church business at Columbus, Ohio, the capital of the state. But he was not listed as present at the council of January 16, 1835, in spite of the importance of the business before that council—the Quorum of the Twelve made some complaints against him. He was not listed in the Prophet's journal until January 30, 1836. See History of the Church, II, 369-388.

178 History of the Church, II, 375.

179 At the January conference, Elder Thomas B. Marsh, who was President of the Quorum of the Twelve, complained of the Twelve having been "placed, in the council of Friday last, below the Councils of Kirtland and Zion, having been previously placed next to the [First] Presidency in our assemblies." The Journal History, January 16, 1836. Compare The Doctrine and Covenants, 107:23, 33; and also History of the Church, II, 200, 285, 370-372.

180 History of the Church, II, 374.
Special note should be taken of the fact that in his listing of the members of the First Presidency, the Prophet omitted mention of President Oliver Cowdery.\textsuperscript{181} Such a course appears unusual in light of the severe rebuke the leaders of the Church had previously received for not properly acknowledging one another.\textsuperscript{182} It is also interesting because, on the date of the rebuke just mentioned, as on several other occasions, Oliver had been specifically designated as a member of the First Presidency.\textsuperscript{183} Perhaps Oliver's name was omitted simply because he was absent—or perhaps his name was just overlooked—but such explanations can hardly be sustained in view of the serious nature of the January assembly and the vast import of the Prophet's remarks.

However, an even more unusual circumstance was the Prophet's statement that, in his absence, there was no First Presidency over the Twelve.\textsuperscript{184} There was a Quorum of Twelve Apostles when Joseph Smith planned the August, 1835, conference, but the Prophet retires from Kirtland at the time of the conference and left Oliver expressly in charge.\textsuperscript{185} In fact, when the Prophet explained the nature of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[181]\textit{History of the Church}, II, 373. Oliver was acknowledged as a President of the Church on several occasions subsequent to the January, 1836, conference. \textit{History of the Church}, II, 389, 394, 402, 406, 411, 429, 435, and 442.
\item[182]\textit{History of the Church}, II, 176-178.
\item[183]The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834. See Chapter 4 of the present study.
\item[184]\textit{History of the Church}, II, 373.
\item[185]\textit{History of the Church}, II, 243. See also the present chapter, p. 97.
\end{footnotes}
office of Associate President of the Church, he specifically taught that when the President was absent, the Associate President presided over the Church. Such an expression by the Prophet is particularly interesting in view of his designation, several years later, that Associate President Hyrum Smith, and not the Quorum of the Twelve, should preside in the event of the Prophet’s death.\textsuperscript{186} Such facts point to the conclusion: Joseph Smith taught what he taught, January 16, 1836, because Oliver Cowdery, by his independent course at the August, 1835, conference, or for other reasons, had violated the Prophet’s trust in him, and had, therefore, forfeited certain of his rights in the office of Associate President.

It should also be remembered that in addition to whatever duties he discharged as a member of the First Presidency, Oliver was also a member of the Presidency of the Kirtland High Council.\textsuperscript{187} In

\textsuperscript{186}See Chapter 6 of the present study.

\textsuperscript{187}If it did not appear obvious from the Prophet’s journal entries subsequent to January 16, 1836, that Oliver was still acting as a member of the First Presidency, (see History of the Church, II, 389, 402, 406, 411, 429, and 509), it may have been suggested that Oliver was released from the office of Associate President shortly after his willful course at the August, 1835, conference. Or to be specific, Oliver may have been released as Associate President the day he was sustained as Church Recorder, September 14, 1835. On January 16, 1836, he was serving in his station as Church Recorder, and also as a member of the Presidency of the Kirtland High Council, hence his designation as President or Second Elder. There are some arrangements with regard to the First Presidency that are not clear. For example, Hyrum Smith was referred to as one of the Presidents of the Church in 1835, although he is not generally noted as a member of the First Presidency until September, 1837. See History of the Church, II, 283, 291, 382, 441, and 427. Compare Essentials in Church History, p. 569. For the purposes of the present study, it has been assumed that Oliver Cowdery continued in his station as the Associate President of the Church until September 3, 1837, the date normally for his release. History of the Church, II, 509.
the latter capacity, late in February, 1836, Oliver was appointed, with others, to draft regulations that would govern the licensing of Church officers. As chairman of that committee, he reported to the council on March 3, 1836.\footnote{188}{History of the Church, II, 400, 402.}

The Kirtland Temple was completed early in the year, and the dedication services were set for Sunday, March 27, 1836. Oliver was in Kirtland at the time, and assumed a major burden in directing the affairs of the dedication. He was apparently listed with the other members of the First Presidency, and was unanimously sustained as a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the Church.\footnote{189}{History of the Church, II, 410-427, note particularly page 417. See also The Historical Record, p. 200.} Oliver participated in a sacred assembly in the Temple, March 29, and early in April, he labored with Joseph in collecting money for the purchase of lands in Jackson County.\footnote{190}{Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 248; History of the Church, II, 434; and The Historical Record, p. 200.}

On April 3, 1836, an important and solemn meeting was held in the Kirtland Temple. President Joseph Smith and Associate President Oliver Cowdery, after attending to the ordinance of sacrament, retired to the pulpits and lowered the curtains around them so that the congregation could not see. In answer to their fervent prayers, the veil was rent that they saw the Lord. He announced to them that their sins were forgiven and that they were clean. Subsequent to the Lord's appearance, Moses, Elias, and Elijah revealed themselves
and committed important keys. Moses restored the keys necessary for the gathering of Israel, and for the leading of the Ten Tribes from the north. Elias restored the keys of the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham. Finally, Elijah restored the keys of the sealing power. It was the right of the Associate President of the Church to participate in the visions of that day. The Lord declared to Joseph and Oliver that they should lift up their heads and rejoice. Whatever the nature of Oliver Cowdery's previous sins, one thing was certain—he was clean before the Lord, April 3, 1836.

On May 16, 1836, President Oliver Cowdery preferred charges against Wilkins J. Salisbury for conduct which had tended to injure the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Elijah restored the keys of the sealing power. That meant that, at the Lord's instance, all the power, authority, rights, and keys necessary for an authorized entrance into plural marriage were on the earth. Joseph Smith probably commenced the practice of plural marriage soon thereafter. It is reported that he was sealed

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191 History of the Church, II, 434-436; The Doctrine and Covenants, 110:1-16; The Historical Record, p. 200.


193 Doctrines of Salvation, I, 211.

194 The Doctrine and Covenants, 110:5.

195 History of the Church, II, 442.

196 Elder Orson Pratt, Address at Salt Lake City, August 29, 1852, Journal of Discourses, I, 64; Doctrines of Salvation, II, 217.
to Fanny Alger in 1836. Perhaps Oliver expected, that since the pertinent authority and keys had been restored, and since he served as the second ranking officer in the Church—as Associate President, the President of the Church undoubtedly would direct him to enter the order of plural marriage. But such direction never came.

Early in November, 1836, plans were laid to found a banking institution, to be called the Kirtland Safety Society. Sometime in February, 1837, the firm of Oliver Cowdery & Co. was dissolved and the establishment was transferred to President Joseph Smith and to Sidney Rigdon. At a solemn assembly in the Temple at Kirtland, April 6, 1837, President Oliver Cowdery was one of the speakers.

The financial panic of 1837 destroyed banks in New York and Philadelphia during March and April of that year. An attitude of speculation prevailed over much of the nation. The Kirtland Safety Society, because of encouragement by Church leaders and the willing support of the members, enjoyed a short season of mild prosperity.

Early in 1837, individual Latter-day Saints began to subscribe to various business investments. A number of the members of the Church became heavily involved. Officers of the Kirtland Safety Society,

197 Benjamin F. Johnson, Letter to George F. Gibbs, pp. 8-10, on file at the Church Historian's Office, hereafter cited as Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson. See also The Historical Record, p. 230.

198 Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson, p. 10.

199 History of the Church, II, 475.

200 History of the Church, II, 479.

201 History of the Church, II, 473. Compare Essentials in Church History, p. 165.
contrary to the pledge and counsel of President Joseph Smith, issued paper currency in excess of the amount that available specie would justify. Certain officers of the Society became unscrupulous. For example, Warren Parrish, the cashier of the Society, was tried for immoral conduct by the Kirtland High Council, and afterwards misappropriated over $25,000 of Society funds. The Prophet published a warning to the officers of the Society that went unheeded. About June, 1837, the Prophet became convinced that the Society was not being managed according to sound financial principles, and, as the officers of the Society had ignored his warning, he withdrew and resigned his office in the Society. 202

Brigham Young was one of the first to discover dishonesty among the Society's officers. He had deposited privately marked bills in the Society's bank. Sometime later, he offered for sale a piece of land, the proceeds from which he intended to use to assist a needy family that was moving from Kirtland to Missouri. Oliver Cowdery, an agent for the Kirtland Safety Society, purchased the property. The Associate President paid Brigham Young with the same bills that Brigham had personally marked and that were supposed to be in safe deposit in the Society's vaults. Other agents for the Society performed the same treachery--appropriating deposited funds

202 The account of the Society presented in the present chapter does not pretend to be a thorough account. Such has been given by qualified writers elsewhere. See, for example, Brigham Young University Studies (Provo: Brigham Young University), Summer, 1971. Compare John J. Stewart, Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet (Salt Lake City: Mercury Publishing Company, 1966), pp. hereafter cited as Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet. Compare also The Historical Record, pp. 69, 430, 432, 433, 595.
for use by "speculators and gamblers," who used such illegal funds to purchase more land.203 And as the national panic of 1837 brought hundreds of institutions to ruin, it was only natural that the Kirtland Safety Society, (which had been so scandalously managed), also collapsed.204

In September, 1837, (probably for his part in the Society's dishonesty), Oliver was cited for transgression. The Prophet urged that Oliver must repent or the Church would soon have to raise their hands against him.205 At a conference of the Church in Kirtland, on September 3, 1837, Oliver Cowdery was released from his station as Associate President. His name was proposed instead as an assistant counselor to the First Presidency.206 Apparently, Oliver would not be reconciled to the decision of that conference. He announced that if he were to apostatize and leave the Church, it would break apart. He suggested such a result to Joseph, but the Prophet responded that the Church belonged to the Lord and it would roll on no matter who apostatized.207

Oliver would not be humbled, and within a few days after he

203 The Historical Record, pp. 433-435.

204 Essentials in Church History, pp. 165, 166.

205 History of the Church, II, 511.

206 History of the Church, II, 509; Essentials in Church History, pp. 563, 569.

had been proposed as an assistant counselor, he left Kirtland and
moved to Far West, Missouri. At Kirtland, on September 16, 1837,
George Robinson was appointed Church Recorder in Oliver's stead. 208

OLIVER COWDERY WAS EXCOMMUNICATED
FROM THE CHURCH

There was rebellion at Far West and Oliver seemed anxious to
participate in it. The Prophet traveled to Missouri in November,
1837. 209 Joseph convened a council of Church leaders, at Far West,
November 6, 1837, and succeeded in settling all of the difficulties
there except a matter between himself and Oliver Cowdery. 210 When
the Prophet returned to Kirtland late in the year, rebellion—as in
Missouri—was rampant. Heber C. Kimball later testified that in
those troubled days, they sustained Joseph Smith as a Prophet of God
at the risk of their lives. 211 Participants in the mob uttered such
vicious and nefarious threats against the life of any member of the
Church who sustained Joseph Smith that Brigham Young, a staunch and
loyal defender of the Prophet, was forced to flee from Kirtland, on
December 22, 1837. 212 President Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon left

208 Andrew Jenson, Church Chronology (Salt Lake City: Deseret

209 The Historical Record, pp. 434, 435.

210 History of the Church, II, 521.

211 President Heber C. Kimball, Address at Salt Lake City,
November 22, 1857, Journal of Discourses, reporter G. D. Watt, VI,
65-67.

212 History of the Church, II, 529.
Kirtland on the evening of January 12, 1838. The Prophet recorded that he fled to save himself from the apostate mob.213

On February 5, 1838, charges were preferred and sustained against Oliver Cowdery, by the High Council at Far West.214 Again, February 10, at Far West, the former Associate President was charged with improper conduct.215 On March 10, 1838, Oliver Cowdery joined David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer, in writing a letter that rejected the proper decisions of the Far West High Council.216

A conference of the Church convened at Far West, on April 7, 1838, and continued for several days. On April 11, during a session of that conference, nine serious charges were lodged against Oliver Cowdery. Six of the nine were sustained, two were rejected, and one was withdrawn. Oliver chose not to appear, but submitted, instead, a belligerent letter in his own defense. His justification satisfied only those charges which were withdrawn, however. He offered no excuse or explanation for the other charges, and at the office of Bishop Edward Partridge, at Far West, April 12, 1838, by a decision of the Bishop and the High Council, the former Associate President was excommunicated from the Church.217

The decision of that court was fair. Of the charges, the

213History of the Church, III, 1.

214History of the Church, III, 4.

215History of the Church, III, 6.

216The Historical Record, p. 200. Compare History of the Church, III, 5-7.

217Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 249.
eighth accused Oliver of participation in fraudulent financial practices. That charge, as investigated above, was justified. For want of broader limits, there is not space to justify inquiry into all of the charges. But a consideration of the second charge is vital to the present study. The second charge stated that Oliver Cowdery had falsely accused President Joseph Smith of adultery.218

It will be remembered that Oliver Cowdery's own unauthorized course in plural marriage occurred sometime prior to August, 1835, probably in the early months of 1833.219 It should also be noted that Oliver apparently repented and dissolved his unlawful relationship, for on December 5, 1834, he was set apart as Associate President of the Church, and on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, he was forgiven of all his sins.220 The keys of the sealing power were restored in 1836, and Joseph Smith probably entered the practice of plural marriage in that same year.221 (Perhaps Oliver became jealous when Joseph entered the practice of plural marriage properly and with authority.) After the keys that authorized plural marriage had

218 The Historical Record, p. 200.

219 T. B. H. Stenhouse recorded: "Cowdery would seem to have had either a glimpse of polygamy at that early day, or that he was, at the very moment of receiving revelations, a profligate in morals, for he insisted, Brigham [Young] says, upon adding to his marital relations a young woman familiar with his family, and did hold the relation of husband to her. To silence the clamour and surmising that arose over this 'second wife,' he wrote that Appendix [article on Marriage]." The Rocky Mountain Saints, p. 193. Thus, President Young clearly taught that Oliver's improper course occurred prior to the August, 1835, conference.

220 The Doctrine and Covenants, 110:5.

221 See the present study, Chapter 5, p. 103, n. 196.
been restored, Oliver probably expected to be called to participate in the order of plural marriage, especially since he had made such complete satisfaction for his previous wrong.\footnote{222}{App}arently, there is no evidence that Oliver was called to practice plural marriage after the keys were restored, and probably, for want of such a call, Oliver became bitter against the Prophet. When Joseph Smith exposed Oliver Cowdery, in the late summer of 1837, for Oliver's connection with the illegal management of Kirtland Safety Society funds, Oliver rebelled and removed from Kirtland to Missouri. Probably because of spite, Oliver charged the Prophet with adultery, when he knew full well that Joseph was not living in adultery, but in polygamy, fully sanctioned by the Lord. President George Q. Cannon maintained that adultery was the charge for which Oliver was excommunicated, and it may have been that Oliver committed adultery himself after leaving Kirtland in the fall of 1837.\footnote{223}{It was reported that when Oliver}

\footnote{222}{It will be remembered that, according to the testimonies relating to his unlawful course, Oliver insisted upon entering the order of plural marriage. Joseph Smith cautioned him against such a course by contending that the keys and command to practice it had not been given. Subsequent to 1836, the keys and command had been received. Oliver, then, at that late period, apparently could see no reason why he should not be called to enter plural marriage. See the present chapter, pp. 103, 104.}

\footnote{223}{Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet, p. 104. See The Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson, p. 10. President George Q. Cannon testified: "It might be thought that after receiving the ministration of heavenly messengers and beholding the face of the Redeemer, there would be no danger of his falling; but, alas! he transgressed the law of God; he committed adultery; the spirit of God withdrew from him, and he, the second elder of the Church, was excommunicated from the Church." The Juvenile Instructor, XX (December 1, 1885), 360. See also The Rocky Mountain Saints, p. 193. Compare Elder Orson Pratt, Address at Salt Lake City, August 29, 1852, Journal of Discourses, I, 64.}
left the Church, he felt like shedding blood. But in whatever attitude, the first Associate President had been excommunicated from the Church.

CONCLUSION

But Oliver Cowdery came back. Before his excommunication, he had commenced the practice of law. During the years of his separation from the Church, he developed the profession of law. His years of absence from the Church have been detailed by other writers, but in summary, he continued, until about 1846, to justify his course. Of note throughout all his prodigal years: he never denied his testimony of The Book of Mormon.

He planned to return to the Church in April, 1848, but was nominated for assemblyman to the Wisconsin assembly. He delayed his return until completely assured of his defeat, late in the summer of 1848. Then, after an absence of ten years, he presented himself at a conference of the Church at Kanesville, Iowa, October 21, 1848, and bore a powerful testimony. On November 12, 1848, he made humble

224The Testimony of Jacob Gates, "The Editor's Table," The Improvement Era, XV (March, 1912), pp. 418, 419, hereafter cited as The Improvement Era.

225History of the Church, III, 16.


228Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet, p. 187.

and complete acknowledgment before the Kanesville High Council, and he was baptized on that same day by Apostle Orson Hyde—a man Oliver had ordained to the apostleship some thirteen years before. 230 He hoped to move to Utah, but poor health and sagging finances kept him in Missouri, where he died, at Richmond, March 3, 1850. 231

Thus, Oliver Cowdery was the first Associate-President of the Church. He held that office from December 5, 1834, until his release September 3, 1837.

It is improper to note his release and excommunication, however, without some mention of Oliver's steadfastness, ability, intelligence, zeal, and literary gifts, all of which he, at various times, diligently applied to the cause of the Master. 232 He erred in judgment, he committed sin, and he rebelled against the man the Lord had set to be his head. But after all, it is fitting to note his humility, for Oliver Cowdery did come back, and that, more than anything else he labored to erect, stands as a quiet witness to the greatness of his soul.

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230 Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe, p. 205. See also, History of the Church, II, 189.

231 The Historical Record, p. 201. Compare Biographical Encyclopedia, I, 250, 251.

232 History of the Church, I, 265.